Everyday Family Life of Intercultural Families with Young Children

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Family Ecology and Practice

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ABSTRACT

Intercultural relationships in Canada have been increasing during the past decades. Research in this area has typically focused on the couple rather than considering the family unit and little is known about family functioning in this population. Thus, the central purpose of this study was to explore and describe family functioning of intercultural families with young children and how it is shaped by various influential factors. Data were generated through genogram family interviews with five married couples and subsequent semi-structured individual interviews with each of the five mothers and five fathers. Among the five families, all five mothers were first generation (foreign-born) and all five fathers were Canadian-born second or later generation. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Findings highlighted six main features important to successful family functioning: having effective communication, spending "fun times" together, sharing family roles, family rituals, common goals and values, and providing and receiving support. These dimensions show important similarities as well as some differences compared to previous research on family functioning. In comparison to current models of family functioning, the findings also indicate the need to consider the complex and reciprocal relationships among culture, individual factors, social and economic conditions, and family functioning.

PREFACE

This thesis is an original work by Carina Goehing. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Everyday Family Life of Intercultural Families with Young Children", No. 00040904, July 29, 2013.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Background of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore family functioning of first-generation intercultural families raising young children in Canada. "Intercultural" represents intimate relationships involving two people from multiple cultural backgrounds (Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen, & Monakes, 2011; Crippen & Brew, 2007). This is not to say that each individual is simply part of a single culture or that cultures are static (Thompson, 2010). Every one of us belongs to multiple cultural contexts reflecting multiple social identities, including gender, religion, spirituality, class, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. These social identities have strong influences on how we make sense of the world, who we are, and what we perceive as normal (Thompson, 2010). Consequently, when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together to form one family, their cultures play a part in defining each individual's perceptions about who is part of the family, the nature of the relationships among family members, family members' roles and responsibilities, and appropriate behavior (Touliatos, Perlmutter, & Holden, 2001). According to Touliatos, Perlmutter, and Holden (2001), "variations in culture and history affect every category of family functioning: composition, process, affect, and organization" (p. 2).

Currently, there is a dearth of literature concerning how cultures shape family functioning of intercultural families and there is little systematic training for practitioners to effectively work with this population (Bacigalupe, 2003; Negy & Snyder, 2000). Indeed, the majority of research investigates interracial couples, focusing explicitly on racial differences while failing to explore the impact of cultures (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). Although research on family functioning has shown that families are shaped by culture, there is a lack of direction for practitioners who continue to rely on models and assessment instruments of family functioning that are based on primarily Western perspectives and worldviews

(McCreary & Dancy, 2004). This lack of attention to culture in the literature on family functioning has implications for practice, limiting practitioners' abilities to assess and offer effective interventions for assisting intercultural families to overcome the negative aspects and promote the positive aspects of their intercultural experiences. Consequently, family assessment models and tools that reflect a Western perspective need to be used carefully as they may not take into account the cultural values, experiences, worldviews, and knowledge of culturally diverse families, including intercultural families (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013).

Research that explores family functioning of intercultural families is important because intercultural families often experience distinct challenges in relation to their cultural backgrounds (Karris & Killian, 2009; Killian, 2013). While intercultural families also face similar relationship challenges as families that share the same cultural backgrounds, their distinctive challenges require further negotiation by family members, "especially in contexts that pathologize or problematize the forging of such connections" (Killian, 2013, p. 12). The literature on intercultural families indicates that the blending of different cultures is the main characteristic that makes intercultural couples unique compared to couples from the same cultural or racial backgrounds (Crippen & Brew, 2007; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). Partners in intercultural relationships embody greater differences than partners in homogeneous couples "in a wider variety of areas, with race, religion, ethnicity, and national origin being the primary factors"(Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p. 222). The combination of differences can present a source of stress for intercultural couples as discussed extensively in the literature (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Challenges that intercultural couples can face include a lack of social support and rejection by their families of origin (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004), language and communication barriers (Cools, 2006; Crippen, 2011), and differences in expectations about gender and family roles (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000;

Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen, 2011). The recognition of unique strengths and opportunities that intercultural families have to offer has only recently become a focus of researchers in this field who acknowledge Falicov's (1995) stance that not all differences in culture will lead to conflict within intercultural relationships. Based on the small number of studies that have explored intercultural families from a strength-based perspective, it is apparent that families can develop fulfilling relationships despite and because of cultural differences (Bustamante et al., 2011; Inman, Altman, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Carr, & Walker, 2011; Yodanis, Lauer, & Ota, 2012).

Research on intercultural families in Canada is scant yet warranted given Canada's diversity along with the growing social acceptance of cultural heterogamy in Canadian society. Indeed, intercultural couples have long characterized Canadian families. Canada as a multicultural nation has a long history of immigration where every person can be considered an immigrant or a descendant of an immigrant, except for the Aboriginal peoples (Hamplová & Le Bourdais, 2010). Canadian immigrants form an integral part of shaping the country's population. Currently, 67 percent of Canada's population growth is due to immigration, with growing numbers of immigrants arriving from non-European countries such as the Philippines, China, and India (Statistics Canada, 2012b, 2013). Immigrants who were born in non-European countries consisted of 84 percent of all immigrants who entered Canada between 2001 and 2006 (Milan, Maheux, & Chui, 2010). The changing immigration patterns have increased the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity and complexity of families in Canada, such as the increase of ethnic minority families (Milan et al., 2010; Touliatos et al., 2001). Another such family form is intercultural families.

Canada's immigration policies have been identified as one of the main drivers, and a key pull-factor, contributing to the diversity that characterizes Canada's multicultural society. According to historians and archeologists, it is not clear when the first people arrived in the

Americas, estimating their arrival to date back between 10,000 and 40,000 years ago (Barbieri & Ouellette, 2012; Timpson, 2009). Historians and archeologists believe that the first people arrived by crossing a land bridge between Asia and America. The first inhabitants in Canada included diverse Aboriginal tribes who lived as hunters, fishers, or gatherers (Magocsi, 2002). Hence, prior to the arrival of the first European colonizers, Canada's Aboriginal population included diverse cultures with diverse living styles.

The early 17th century was marked by waves of European immigrants, mostly from Britain and some from France. In the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants arrived from the Unites States as well as from Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland (Barbieri & Ouellette, 2012). Throughout these early immigration waves, immigrants from non-European countries were limited by restrictive immigration policies, for example, head taxes for Chinese immigrants during the 19th and 20th centuries (Cho, 2002). In fact, during the 19th and 20th centuries, Canadian population growth was mainly shaped by high birth rates rather than immigrants (Barbieri & Ouellette, 2012). The existence of a restrictive selection system in the 1940s and 1950s, based on European national origin, aimed to boost European immigrant numbers. These discriminatory government immigration policies "divided the world's population into two parts: preferred immigrants, who were of British or European ancestry and White; and the rest of the world, largely composed of people of colour" (Henry & Tator, 2010, p. 66). This changed through the introduction of the point system in 1967, followed by Canada's Immigration Act of 1978 (Henry & Tator, 2010). The point system attributed points on the basis of kinship and required independent, non-family sponsored immigrants to score points based on criteria such as their age, education, knowledge of the official languages, occupational training and experience, and labour demand (Daniel, 2005; Tannock, 2011). Thus, it replaced the previous system that was based on country of origin or racial background with one that was "universal" and "non-discriminatory" (P. S. Li, 2003;

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Tannock, 2011). Canada's Immigration Act of 1978 created three immigrant classes: refugees, a family class, and "other", independent applicants. It re-emphasized education and occupation in selecting independent immigrants (P. S. Li, 2003). Consequently, Canada experienced a significant growth of newcomers not only in absolute numbers, but more significantly in cultural diversity, subsequently reshaping the country's demographic landscape (Hamplová & Le Bourdais, 2010; P. S. Li, 2003).

Despite Canada's history of immigration and cultural diversity, available data do not give a clear picture of prevalence rates of intercultural couples. This is because Statistics Canada only collects data on couples in what Statistics Canada refers to as mixed unions. According to the 2006 Canadian Census, mixed unions comprised 3.9 percent of all common-law, marital, opposite-sex, and same-sex relationships, an increase of 33.1 percent from 2001 (Milan et al., 2010). To be considered a mixed union, either one spouse belongs to a visible minority group or both spouses belong to different visible minority groups (Milan et al., 2010). In 2006, 3.3 percent of mixed unions consisted of one partner who belonged to a visible minority, compared to 0.6 percent of mixed unions where both partners belonged to different visible minority groups (Statistics Canada, 2011). The authors (Milan et al., 2010) adapt the Employment Equity Act's definition of visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour" including: "Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs, West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders" (p. 70). The definition of mixed unions by Statistics Canada is mainly based on physical characteristics and the social construct of "race", confounding and ignoring ethnicity and culture and dismissing the unique experiences of different immigrant groups as well as within group differences (Nestel, 2012). Hence, Statistics Canada does not include data on unions between partners who do not belong to a "visible minority" group, for example, a Swedish-

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French union. I use the term "minority" to refer to individuals or groups that are culturally or racially distinct from and subordinate to a dominant group regardless of population size (Laird, 2008). Available data on mixed families exclude significant numbers of families that include partners from different cultural but not racialized groups. I adopt the term "racialized" by Nestel (2012) to recognize the concept of "race" and racial categories as socially constructed. According to Nestel (2012), the term "racialized" seeks to emphasize that "an individual or group has had an identity conferred upon them that references racial categorizations which have historically ranked human groups hierarchically" (p. 4). In addition, the term racialized recognizes a White person's own "racial situatedness" (Malhi & Boon, 2009, p. 129). The exclusion of intercultural couples is a significant shortcoming because interracial families inevitably embody cultural differences whereas intercultural families may or may not reflect experiences including those of racialized individuals (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). Therefore, current statistics do not accurately reflect the overall prevalence of intercultural families in Canada. Indeed, as Seward (2008) points out in the context of the United States, "depending on one's definition of "intercultural", the number might be much higher" (p. 4).

Distinguishing between interracial and intercultural families may offer new understandings about the influence of culture on family functioning. All families have been shaped by a variety of factors and conditions including institutional and economic development, ideational changes, migration, globalization, and culture (Tanaka & Lowry, 2011). While studies about interracial families often focus on macro-societal influences such as social and economic resources, societal perceptions and/or racism (Soliz, Thorson, & Rittenour, 2009), research on intercultural families pays closer attention to the influence of underlying, often unconscious cultural norms and values. Indeed, recent research indicates

that both types of families represent "different types of lived experiences" (Morgan, 2012, p. 1423).

I selected "culture" as an influential factor on family functioning as the main focus area because cultures shape behaviors and beliefs, and create norms and expectations within families (A. J. Thomas, 1998). Indeed, the transmission and maintenance of cultural norms, including gender norms and roles has been identified as one of the primary functions of all families (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014). Cultures and cultural values influence child-rearing and parenting practices, sexuality and intimacy, expectations regarding gender roles, communication styles, the expression of emotions, conflict management and negotiation, ways of defining problems, coping skills, family boundaries, and form and functioning of families (Heller & Wood, 2000; A. J. Thomas, 1998). Hence, this study pays attention to these cultural influences on family functioning of intercultural families. Despite this primary focus on cultural influences and couples' "mixed" culture, I do not propose to disregard families' experiences of racism, the experiences of racialized individuals or groups in Canada, or other influential factors such as class and gender (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Gillborn, 1990). Intercultural families are very heterogeneous, culturally, linguistically, and historically and often include persons from racialized groups (Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen, 2011; Nestel, 2012). In short, while the primary focus of this study was on the role culture plays on families' functioning, I recognize the intersectionality of other social relations including class, gender, and the social construct of "race" (Nestel, 2012).

In summary, intercultural families likely represent a substantial number of families in Canada. As has been revealed in the research literature, intercultural couples are characterized by cultural differences, which have often been found to be a source of stress and conflict. Researchers have only recently begun to explore the benefits of cultural diversity within families. Overall, research on family functioning of intercultural families is

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scant (Soliz et al., 2009) and requires more in-depth accounts from intercultural families. A major shortcoming of this small body of literature is that it has not, for the most part, examined how the respective partners' different cultures influence family functioning. To study family-level processes and dynamics is important because family functioning shapes the development, growth and wellbeing of all members and affects key dimensions of communication, problem solving, and emotional and behavior control (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Regalia, & Scabini, 2011; Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller, & Keitner, 2003). To begin to address these gaps, the method of focused ethnography was used to examine family functioning processes of first-generation intercultural families with young children in Edmonton. The study was guided by two research questions:

1) What constitutes family functioning in intercultural families?

2) How is the functioning of intercultural families shaped by the respective partners' cultures (i.e., values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and worldviews), individual-level factors (e.g., age, gender, education) as well as social and economic conditions (e.g., policies, services, programs)?

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the bodies of literature most relevant to the topic of this study, highlighting the influence of culture and "interculturalness" on family functioning of intercultural families. Through the review of the literature, I reveal the rationale for my study, highlighting the lack of focus on family functioning of intercultural families, and suggest how my study starts to address this gap. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology of focused ethnography. I then provide a description about the setting in which the study took place and describe the methods I used to explore family functioning of intercultural families, from recruitment to data analysis. In Chapter 4, I introduce the participating families, and in Chapters 5 through 10, I present the five themes

that emerged from participants' accounts together with a discussion of the findings based on previous research. Finally, in Chapter 11, I return to the questions that guided this study in the first place. I present how my study contributes to research and practice in the field of intercultural families, and discuss study limitations and future directions for research. Before moving into Chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework and describe how it ties into this study. I also provide a brief description of relevant terminology.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a human ecological perspective that takes into account intercultural families' physical, social, cultural, historical, and economic contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). One of the main assumptions that human ecological theory emphasizes is the notion that "humans are a part of the total life system and cannot be considered apart from all other living species in nature and the environments that surround them" (Andrews, Bubolz, & Paolucci, 1981, p. 32). Hence, an ecological theoretical approach recognizes families' interdependence with their "natural physical-biological, human-built, and social-cultural milieu" (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, p. 419).

Interdependence in human ecological theory refers to the ways in which parts in an ecosystem relate to each other (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Rothery, 2008). The notion of interdependence between families and their near environments is important to consider for my study for several reasons. Firstly, individual family members are dependent on the emotional support, resources, and wellbeing of other family members. Any changes in one member can affect the whole family system. In intercultural families, various systems such as immigration policies and social support networks shape intercultural families' interaction with each other and their environments. This interaction and interdependence of humans with their environments is a primary focus of human ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Secondly, families and their environments are mutually dependent (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993).

That is, while physical, social, cultural, and economic environments influence families and their functioning, so too do families also shape their environments (Rothery, 2008). This last point is important as a theoretical perspective that solely takes into account the broader ecosystemic context and influences can leave individuals' who are at the receiving end of services, or practitioners who are part of the service system, feeling overwhelmed. From an ecological perspective, however, individuals are part of this context and can influence or be influenced by this context.

This study examined family functioning of intercultural families who are characterized by diverse cultural factors and worldviews that are part of the broader ecosystemic context (A. J. Thomas, 1998). In the context of an ecological theoretical perspective, intercultural families' functioning is not determined solely by internal factors such as age or gender; rather, family functioning is also influenced by families' cultural backgrounds and broader social and economic conditions (e.g., policies, services, programs). In fact, any individual is a product of his or her environment, including the social, cultural and physical context. Families do not live in isolation but interact with a variety of systems on a daily basis, such as extended family, friends, neighbors, schools, workplaces, and community organizations. In short, a human ecological perspective provides a useful framework for both examining the uniqueness of each individual family, as well as recognizing that individual factors interact with and are shaped by wider cultures and social and economic conditions (Thompson, 2010). Thus, to provide a comprehensive understanding of family functioning of intercultural families, I paid attention to partners' cultural backgrounds as well as individual factors, and social and economic conditions in my study.

Understanding Terminology: "Race", "Ethnicity", and "Culture"

Before delving into the subject of intercultural families, it is useful to first define some basic terms central to this work. This section provides an overview of the terminology of race, ethnicity, and culture and lays an important foundation for the remaining discussion. While my discussion of terminology is not meant as a comprehensive guide, it is important for professionals and researchers who are working with and writing about people from diverse backgrounds to be clear about how they refer to individuals' identities (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2006). Besides, the majority of literature in the field of intercultural families has used the terms race, ethnicity, and culture interchangeably (Qureshi & Collazos, 2011; Reiter & Gee, 2008), has not always provided clear definitions, and has not used terms consistently across contexts. For example, in the context of the United States, the term "interracial" has been used widely, based on spouses' membership of different groups limited to "alleged biological and physical characteristics" (Klyukanov, 2005, p. 12). Similarly, in the context of the Netherlands, research refers to intermarriages between Black and White partners, yet, acknowledges that couples are less often labelled based on their "race" but rather on partners' countries of origin (Huijnk, Verkuyten, & Coenders, 2007; Kalmijn, 2010). This is important as it underlines that the concept of "race", the experiences of intercultural couples, and how they are perceived by friends, extended family and communities are determined by the wider society in which they live. Other researchers (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Pearce-Morris & King, 2012) choose the term inter-ethnic, yet, still refer to racial groups of White, Black, and Hispanic. This is often the case when researchers depend on available data sets that require researchers to combine different ethnic or cultural groups into broader racial categories due to sample size limitations (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008).

The concept of "race" has "no biological basis" (Gaine, 2010, p. 91) as there is indeed only "one race or species, namely homo sapiens" (Gaine, 2010, p. 91). Yet, "race" as a social

construct is often used to categorize people on the basis of genetic and physical features, such as skin color, hair color or texture and facial features, and hence can define peoples' experiences and opportunities (Bonam & Shih, 2009; Gaine, 2010; Klyukanov, 2005). Such racialization of people, which originated in the efforts of Victorian scientists to classify the natural world, led to the discrimination and oppression of Black people who were seen as inferior, primitive, and backwards in the eyes of the White colonizers from European societies (Gaine, 2010; Gillborn, 1990). Ethnocentrism, which is defined as "the tendency to evaluate other ethnic groups from the standpoint of one's own ethnic group and experience" (Gillborn, 1990, p. 10) can consequently lead to racism. According to Nestel (2012), "the term "race" also carries with it histories of stereotyping, exclusion, and other forms of social injustice" (p. 5). Importantly, the concept of "race" differs across cultures and does not allow for any conclusions to be drawn regarding underlying similarities and differences among individuals within groups (D. R. Matsumoto & Juang, 2013).

Ethnicity is a distinct concept from "race", yet, often used simultaneously as race/ethnicity (Worrell & Gardner-Kitt, 2009). The term ethnicity is derived from the Greek word "ethnos" and means nation or tribe (D. R. Matsumoto & Juang, 2013). Ethnicity refers to an individual's membership in a group that is based on shared language, rituals, traditions, beliefs, or religion (Gaine, 2010; Klyukanov, 2005). It is different from national identity, which is associated with a country's borders, and is represented by its people's citizenship. Hence, two people can have the same national identity, yet, come from different ethnic groups (Klyukanov, 2005). The term inter-ethnic often refers to the interaction of individuals from two different ethnic groups but also between individuals from a majority and a minority ethnic group, referring to the different levels of power and the potential for oppression (Gillborn, 1990; Henry & Tator, 2010). Ethnicity is more often associated with ethnic minority groups, to the extent that majority groups often appear to have no ethnicity or

belong to no ethnic group. This is because the emphasis is on individuals' minority or majority status rather than their ethnicity (Gillborn, 1990). Yet, ethnicity is a significant aspect of anyone's identity, and, hence, it is not to be confused with the social construct of "race" (Gaine, 2010).

Lastly, the word culture is derived from the Latin 'cultura' or 'cultus' and means cultivation or tillage (Klyukanov, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Comparing culture to crops that are naturally produced, culture is cultivated by human beings (Klyukanov, 2005). Offering a multidimensional definition, Falicov (1995) refers to culture as:

> Those sets of shared world views, meanings and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a multiplicity of contexts, such as rural, urban or suburban setting; language, age, gender, cohort, family configuration, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology; migration and stage of acculturation. (p. 2)

Culture can be compared to an iceberg where only a small part, namely the artefacts, the way we dress, and our behaviors, are apparent and where the larger part, that is up to 90 percent of what constitutes culture, namely peoples' beliefs, traditions, and values that manifest the surface behaviors, are invisible (D. C. Thomas & Inkson, 2009; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). For example, people from one culture produce "symbolic creations" that are only shared by members of that same culture. In several Asian cultures, slurping is a sign of respect to the chef, whereas it may be understood as a sign of disrespect in many Western cultures (Klyukanov, 2005, p. 9).

Culture can also be seen along two different dimensions, namely individualism and collectivism. Both concepts are helpful in illustrating the extent to which people are incorporated into groups and how they relate to others (D. C. Thomas & Inkson, 2009).

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Individualistic cultures, commonly associated with Western countries, are characterized by independence and autonomy, compared to collectivistic cultures that stress the interrelations between family, community, and society and where self realization may be understood as selfish (Klyukanov, 2005; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

The majority of research on the influence of culture on mixed couples predominantly focuses on interracial couples, with an emphasis on partners' respective experiences coming from a racialized group. As the majority of research on interracial couples has been conducted in the United States, most research includes the five main racial categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Little attention has yet been focused on influential factors such as cultural contexts. Experiences of racism can have pervasive impacts on the ways interracial families function and interact with others (Kenney & Kenney, 2012) and this is an important reality for many individuals, families, and groups. However, I argue that cultural factors should be equally taken into account. Culture entails a much broader range of factors that can shape families' values, beliefs, and norms and most importantly, the way individuals define their relationships with others, which in turn reflects their culture (Bustamante et al., 2011; H. Z. Li, Bhatt, Zhang, Pahal, & Cui, 2006; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). What have sometimes been portrayed as personal characteristics of individuals, such as how people express emotions and how people view their relationships with family of origin are deeply rooted in individuals' cultures that are central parts of everyday life (Silva, Campbell, & Wright, 2012). For example, while Mexican families typically value the family and familial relationships, families in Western European and North American culture place more emphasis on the individual's independence and autonomy. This example also relates to the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic cultures. Mexican culture is collectivistic as evidenced by the important cultural value of "familism", which is defined as "a strong

identification with and attachment to nuclear and extended family" (Campos, Ullman, Aguilera, & Dunkel Schetter, 2014, p. 191). In comparison, individualistic cultures, such as Western European and North American cultures lay stronger emphasis on independence and self-determination (Cheatham & Jimenez-Silva, 2012; Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis, 2009; Umaña-Taylor, Updegraff, & Gonzales-Backen, 2011). Differences between and within cultures are seldom visible or consciously perceived as such and often only become evident when faced with a culture that emphasizes different values and norms.

I use the term "intercultural" to recognize encounters between people from different cultural backgrounds (Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen & Brew, 2007). Similar to Bustamante et al. (2011), Qureshi and Collazos (2011), and Reiter and Gee (2008), I suggest that it is problematic to propose that Blacks, for example, are a homogeneous group as any differences in language, religion, and national identity would be ignored. For example, in Nigeria only, over 500 different languages exist (Offiong & Mensah, 2012). So, it is evident that the majority of researchers who study interracial marriages do not account for the differences within racialized groups, namely any distinctions based on a person's cultural identity. There is, however, recognition by researchers (Berkowitz King & Bratter, 2007; Morgan, 2012) of the need to differentiate within racialized groups. As Silva et al. (2012) emphasize, "racial difference does not equal cultural difference" (p. 857). Indeed, it has been suggested that there is more variation within a racialized group than between different racialized groups (Harris & Sim, 2002; Morgan, 2012).

More recently, Morgan (2012) in his study of mixed couples in the United States compared couples with the same racial and ethnic background, with both interracial (e.g. Asian/White) and interethnic (e.g. Filipino/Chinese) couples, questioning the predominant focus by researchers on interracial couples. Using the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), a survey of second generation Asian and Latin Americans in Southern

California, two groups who comprise about 78 percent of all immigrants in the United States, Morgan (2012) affirmed that there are many similarities between interracial and interethnic couples (e.g., more cohabitations than marriages), yet, "interethnic and interracial couples are two different types of mixed couples" with "different types of lived experiences" (p. 1444). On the basis of these findings, Morgan (2012) calls for more research that compares interracial with interethnic relationships, especially a "qualitative study that examines in more detail the lived experiences of interethnic couples" (p. 1445).

In summary, my central interest is intercultural families. Due to the narrow definition of interracial and because of the somewhat confusing use of terminology in current research studies, my definition of "intercultural" includes couples that cross cultural boundaries and may cross racial boundaries. I acknowledge that any kind of categorization is problematic, yet, I suggest that the word culture is more holistic because it recognizes individuals' identity based on various group memberships including racial, national, ethnic, and religious groups (Biever, Bobele, & North, 1998; Falicov, 1995; Klyukanov, 2005; Qureshi & Collazos, 2011; Reiter & Gee, 2008). By focusing on culture, researchers and practitioners take into account the diversity and complexity of the families they encounter (Edwards, Caballero, & Puthussery, 2010), as well as the "richness and complexity of families' cultures and family functioning" (A. J. Thomas, 1998, p. 24).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present an overview of relevant research on family functioning of interracial, interethnic, and intercultural families, and I point out gaps in current research and scholarship on this topic. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term "mixed families" to discuss research on interracial, interethnic, and intercultural families (Edwards et al., 2010). For the purpose of this literature review, it is not useful to distinguish between research that examines interracial couples and research that investigates intercultural couples for two reasons. Firstly, interracial couples not only reflect racial differences but also always reflect cultural differences. Indeed, while studies that investigate interracial couples often focus on the racial identities of participants and issues pertaining to power differentials and racism, the same studies almost always also include discussions related to couples' cultural differences. Hence, by ignoring the body of literature on interracial couples, relevant research findings would be missed. Secondly, there is little consistency in how researchers define mixed families, making it difficult to set strict inclusion or exclusion criteria for a literature search. Indeed, I came across ten different terms that describe various forms of "interculturalness", including intermarriage, intercoupling, mixed union, interracial, multiracial, interethnic, interfaith, intercultural, multicultural, and cross-cultural. While some researchers (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006) call for a stringent differentiation between interracial and intercultural couples, so that research on intercultural couples only includes couples that do not cross racial boundaries, the existent body of literature does not allow for such differentiation.

When I discuss findings from specific studies, I use the terminology used by researchers of the study in question. The literature review is limited to neither a specific group of mixed couples nor a specific country, although most research about the topic has been conducted in the United States and focuses on interracial Black/White couples. The decision to include research regardless of the sociodemographic and cultural characteristics

of mixed couples reflects the recognition by researchers who study culture and mixed relationships (Biever et al., 1998) that individuals' experiences may be similar or different across cultural groups as well as between individuals within a specific culture. According to Biever et al. (1998), such a both/and perspective places emphasis on the value of diversity and allows for multiple realities to exist. This is also supported by others (Moriizumi, 2011; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005) who endorse a social constructionist approach when working with mixed couples.

A literature search for studies on mixed families was conducted through database searches including Academic Search Complete, Anthropology Plus, Child Development & Adolescent Studies, CINAHL Plus, PsycEXTRA, Family Studies Abstracts, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, Proquest Dissertations and Theses, Race Relations Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, and SocINDEX. To locate relevant primary empirical research as well as secondary sources, I used the following keywords: intercultural, interracial, inter-ethnic, cross-cultural, multicultural, multiracial, mixed, families, couples, unions, intimate relationships, marriage, intermarriage, and family functioning.

The first search generated 70 results, however, only two articles were deemed relevant for the topic of this study (Karis, 2003; Soliz et al., 2009). Because the literature on family functioning of mixed families is scant, the search was expanded to closely related topics, such as the functioning, coping, or experiences of mixed families. The second search generated 2300 results, all of which were examined for relevance to my topic of interest. A large number of studies did not focus on mixed families but examined immigrants and ethnic minority families, cultural dimensions and perspectives of family functioning, as well as biomedical issues in diverse families. The remaining body of literature focused on various topics concerning mixed families. In fact, researchers have studied the phenomenon of mixed couples for several decades, dating back to the 1930s (e.g., Resnik, 1933). The topic of mixed

families has been studied in terms of couples' marital stability (e.g., Bratter & King, 2008; Kang Fu & Wolfinger, 2011), marital satisfaction (e.g., Epstein, Chen, & Beyder-Kamjou, 2005; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004), psychological wellbeing (e.g., Baltas & Steptoe, 2000; Bratter & Eschbach, 2006), coping with cultural differences (e.g., Bustamante et al., 2011; Silva et al., 2012), communication (e.g., Cools, 2006; Reiter & Gee, 2008), family identity (e.g., Byrd & Garwick, 2006), parenting (e.g., Crippen & Brew, 2011), the children of mixed couples (e.g., Pearce-Morris & King, 2012; Platt, 2012), challenges (e.g., Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004), and intimate partner violence (e.g., Chartier & Caetano, 2012; Fusco, 2010). Although none of these publications examine family functioning of mixed families per se, they include some information on dimensions of family functioning (e.g., communication, roles) and on factors that have an effect on family functioning (e.g., social support). Additionally, references were obtained from these sources. A total of 89 sources were synthesised in writing this review, 63 of which focus on interracial couples, and the remaining 26 present research on intercultural couples.

There are two possible explanations of why the study of interracial couples rather than intercultural couples dominates the field. First, the prevalence of couples that cross racial boundaries is increasing as evidenced by statistics. Second, a large number of studies on interracial couples have been conducted in the United States and focus particularly on relationships between Black and White partners. This interest in interracial Black/White couples in the United States may be due to the country's past and present continuation of implicit and explicit racism and discrimination (Killian, 2001). The study of interracial couples lends itself to specifically focus on macro societal influences, including how interracial couples are perceived by family, community, and society and couple's experiences of discrimination and oppression. Indeed, research has shown that interracial couples often face negative reactions from family members and friends, leading to fewer social supports

and increased psychological distress compared to mono-cultural couples (Biever et al., 1998). Hence, crossing racial boundaries in intimate relationships can create significant challenges for those involved (Soliz et al., 2009). In short, the majority of research on interracial couples has found that discrimination and oppression represent significant challenges. However, this may not hold true for couples in intercultural relationships between partners who do not come from racialized groups. Intercultural couples are characterized by multiple differences such as culture, religion, ethnicity, and nationality (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). Hence intercultural couples can face a variety of challenges not including those attributed to oppressive attitudes, beliefs, ideals, and behaviors of individuals, organizations, and society.

The following review of literature represents the research that is most pertinent to my study, namely the various aspects of and influences on family functioning of intercultural families. Specifically, this chapter is organized into four sections that present the key foci of researchers on the topic of mixed families. First, in order to set the stage for the topic of mixed families, I present a brief overview of the individual-level factors, namely the sociodemographic characteristics across individuals in mixed families. In doing so, I outline individual factors that have been shown to influence individuals' likelihood of entering into mixed relationships. Second, I review the research most closely related to my study, namely family functioning of mixed families and the influence of the respective partners' cultures. While I was unable to find any studies that focused on family functioning per se, there are a small number of studies that have examined some dimensions of family functioning of mixed couples, including communication, gender roles and expectations, and family identity. Third, I discuss the unique strengths and opportunities of mixed families, a topic that has been discussed within the broad body of literature on mixed families, rather than as a topic itself. By reviewing the literature on mixed families' strengths and opportunities, I outline aspects of families' functioning that are positively perceived by mixed families. Fourth, the topic of

social support in mixed families has received attention by a number of researchers, and hence is included in this literature review.

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Mixed Families

There are a variety of sociodemographic factors that characterize individuals who enter into a mixed relationship. In general, researchers agree that age is a factor that can explain mixed mating probability. Specifically, people of younger ages are more likely to date, cohabit, or marry someone from a different racial, ethnic, or cultural background compared to older generations (Berkowitz King & Bratter, 2007; Chartier & Caetano, 2012; Joyner & Kao, 2005). Overall, mixed couples are also more common among those who hook up, date, or cohabit, compared to those who marry (Harris & Ono, 2005; Joyner & Kao, 2005; McClintock, 2010; Milan et al., 2010; Morgan, 2012). It seems, therefore, that mixed unions are less likely to lead to marriages than are homogeneous relationships (Joyner & Kao, 2005). This can be partly attributed to a couple's age as well as the different dynamics that characterize dating, cohabitation, and marriage. For example, research by Soons & Kalmijn (2009) comparing the wellbeing of unmarried cohabiting couples with married couples across 30 European countries showed "clear differences between the two union types and the people that chose them" (p. 1152). Differences in the wellbeing of cohabiting and married couples were partly explained by employment and religion. Cohabiting partners were found to be less religious and less often employed. Other research (Marcussen, 2005) adds that cohabitating couples are less committed, leading to a decrease in relationship satisfaction. In addition, mixed couples tend to have similar educational backgrounds that are higher than the average among homogeneous couples (Kalmijn, 2010). Higher educational attainment is correlated with more tolerant attitudes, weakened emphasis on established group boundaries, and increasing contact across people from different backgrounds (Berkowitz King & Bratter, 2007; Joyner & Kao, 2005; Kalmijn, 2010; Perry, 2013).

Influence of Families' "Mixed" Cultures on Family Functioning

Culture is as much about inventing as it is about preserving; about discontinuity as much as about continuation; about novelty as much as about tradition; about routine as much as about pattern-breaking; about norm-following as much as about the transcendence of the norm; about the unique as much as about the regular; about change as much as about monotony of reproduction; about the unexpected as about the predictable. (Bauman, 1999, p. xiv)

In the following section, I synthesize the literature on mixed couples with specific attention to how "mixed" cultures in intercultural families have been found to impact family functioning. The available literature (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Cools, 2006; Crippen & Brew, 2007; Curtis & Ellison, 2002; Inman et al., 2011; Kellner, 2009a; Soliz et al., 2009) has included a diverse range of mixed couples and focused on particular dimensions of family functioning including communication, gender roles and expectations, and family identity. Only one study, by Soliz et al. (2009), concerning multiracial/ethnic families, explicitly focuses on family functioning. The researchers examined relational outcomes including relationship satisfaction, family identity, and group salience, and how these are related to family communication in multiracial/ethnic families. It should be noted, however, that Soliz et al.'s (2009) quantitative study is guided by an intergroup perspective as well as Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) rather than a family functioning model. Consequently, to my knowledge, there is no research study that has presented a holistic examination of family functioning of mixed couples. Moreover, researchers predominantly refer to how mixed couples cope with stressors rather than function in everyday life (e.g., Bustamante et al., 2011). Additionally, the majority of studies focus on the couple or marital relationship rather than on the whole family system. However, this can be an important differentiation. A family system can consist of various subsystems

such as parent-child, husband-wife, or sibling subsystems, making a family system's processes and dynamics qualitatively different than those of its subsystems (Wright & Leahey, 2009). Given the lack of focus on family functioning, the variety of sample populations, measurements and definitions, and indeed the heterogeneous nature of mixed families, it is challenging to draw conclusions about family functioning processes of mixed families based on the available research literature.

Research has shown that mixed couples rarely distinguish themselves from homogeneous couples, that they perceive their relationship as ordinary, and that differences do not play a significant role for them (Bacigalupe, 2003; Byrd & Garwick, 2004; Killian, 2012). Differences associated with a couple's culture have been related to distinct religious practices, communication styles, holidays, traditions and customs, food, parenting and childrearing styles, family roles and responsibilities, gender role norms and expectations, conflict management approaches, expression of feelings, and support seeking behaviors (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000; Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Kellner, 2009; Remennick, 2009; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). A substantial body of research shows that often cultural differences between partners in mixed relationships result in distress and conflict (Bacigalupe, 2003; Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen & Brew, 2007; Crippen, 2011; Heller & Wood, 2000; Negy & Snyder, 2000; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005). Indeed, Bacigalupe (2003) found that differences in deeply embedded cultural attitudes and behaviors may be challenging and difficult for couples to overcome. Cultural differences may be particularly evident at certain life stages such as a couple's marriage and the arrival of the first child (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). For example, research has shown that childrearing may lead to increased conflict and such conflict may be more dramatic compared to conflict experienced by homogeneous

couples (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen & Brew, 2007; Moriizumi, 2011).

Communication in mixed families

This subsection addresses an important dimension of family functioning, namely communication (style and language). Communication is central to understanding family life and it is through verbal and nonverbal communication that family members show affection and nurturance, a primary function of the family (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002, 2013). The importance of communication as a central determinant of healthy family functioning is widely agreed upon by researchers in the field of family functioning (Epstein et al., 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003; Olson, 2000). Communication is also highlighted in the study of mixed families, because communication (i.e., language and emotional expressiveness) is highly influenced by culture. In this subsection, I begin with a discussion of Soliz et al.'s (2009) study, which explicitly focuses on communication in relation to family functioning in multiracial/ethnic families. In the rest of this subsection, I draw on research studies that include a discussion of communication in other types of mixed families. In some studies, communication in mixed families was the primary focus of inquiry, while in others it was not. In both types of studies, communication was not examined in relation to family functioning.

Soliz et al.'s (2009) quantitative study focused on communication and family functioning, in particular the function of identity accommodation, supportive communication, and self-disclosure and their impact on relationship satisfaction, shared family identity, and group salience in a diverse sample of multiracial/ethnic individuals. The study included 139 diverse multiracial/ethnic participants who provided insights about their relationships with 444 family members. Participants were provided with a choice of answering questions regarding their relationship with their mother, father, a maternal grandparent, and/or a

paternal grandparent. The study utilized seven measures to determine participants' relational satisfaction, shared family identity, supportive communication, self-disclosure, identity accommodation, group salience, and multiracial/ethnic identity. Specifically, the researchers aimed to contribute to the understanding of how communication may overcome racial/ethnic differences in multiracial/ethnic families.

Soliz et al. (2009) found that relational satisfaction and shared family identity were both positively associated with participants' perceptions of supportive communication and self-disclosure whereas identity accommodation was positively associated only with relational satisfaction but not shared family identity. The researchers point out the importance of identity accommodation in multiracial/ethnic families that is characterized by communication and affirmation about "race", ethnicity, and one's heritage. Emotional expressiveness, that is the sharing of personal information with family members, and the commitment of family members to be supportive of one another were found to play an important role in multiracial/ethnic families' overall satisfaction levels, although to varying degrees, which is reflective of the study's diverse sample. Cultural norms concerning communication vary, for example in terms of emotional expressiveness and self-disclosure. Hence, because of the heterogeneous nature of mixed families, the authors suggest to examine how racial/ethnic attitudes and behaviors influence family functioning in future inquiries as they did not investigate differences across participating families based on racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Despite the significant findings and uniqueness of Soliz et al.'s (2009) study, and its important contribution to the existing body of literature on multiracial/ethnic families, the researchers' investigation reveals some limitations. The study was concerned with racially and ethnically diverse families. Thus, participants' diverse cultural backgrounds and how these shaped their relationships and interactions with family members were not taken into

account. The researchers also did not account for potential language barriers which have been documented in other studies (e.g., Cools, 2006). In general, most individuals in mixed families often speak a different native tongue than their partner in addition to the host country's language (e.g., English or French in Canada). Often, at least one partner does not speak his or her native tongue in everyday life. Language is an important part of every person's identity as well as ability to communicate and adapt within a relationship and within society overall (Cools, 2006; Soliz et al., 2009). Hence, language as an important part of communication should be taken into account when studying mixed families and family functioning. In addition, the study only focused on participants' perceptions regarding biological relationships with their parents and/or grandparents. Consequently, the researchers did not allow for broad conceptualizations regarding who is part of a family as defined by participants themselves (e.g., siblings, extended family members, non-relatives). Finally, the study only collected data from one family member, ignoring perspectives of other family members, and limiting insight into family communication and family functioning processes.

In the remainder of this subsection, I discuss studies in which researchers include communication in mixed families as part of their research, but not in relation to family functioning per se. Overall, researchers have found that there is a higher probability for miscommunication to occur in mixed families compared to homogeneous families (Cools, 2006; Crippen, 2011; Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005). Culture plays an important role in facilitating partners' understanding of emotional expressions and ability to empathize with each other. The ability to understand each other's communication patterns becomes more challenging where mixed partners differ in their understanding of emotional expressiveness (Crippen, 2011; Klyukanov, 2005; Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2013; Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). This is further exacerbated when couples are not aware of differences in communication styles as these are deeply embedded in individuals' cultures and are

unchallenged and accepted until paired with a different style of communication (Kellner, 2009). Hence, as Bhugra and De Silva (2000) succinctly summarize, "communication difficulties are common, not just verbal but non-verbal as well. The expression of moods may be non-congruent and often misunderstood" (p. 187).

Research studies on communication in mixed families also highlight the topic of language. Indeed, language competence is a major factor concerning immigrants' acculturation into the dominant host-culture and plays a large role in individuals' ability to adapt (Cools, 2006). In the context of mixed couples, research indicates that if language barriers exist, couples' ability to co-construct a shared family identity can be impeded (Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). In addition, partners who do not speak the dominant culture's language of the host-culture fluently have been found to face additional struggles and barriers in terms of social isolation and the ability to communicate with their partner's family and friends (Cools, 2006). Participants in Cools' (2006) study reported that their lack of fluency in the dominant host-culture's language was a disadvantage compared to their native partners. However, participants also highlighted the advantages of being able to speak two languages at home, and the ability to learn together from and about each other through the medium of language (Cools, 2006).

Gender roles and expectations in mixed families

This subsection discusses the available literature pertaining to gender roles and expectations in mixed families. While this topic has not been the primary focus of researchers in the field of mixed families, it is included as part of researchers' inquiries, for example concerning the coping of mixed families (Bustamante et al., 2011). Negotiating diverse cultural backgrounds involves understanding the implications of differences in gender roles and expectations, which is crucial for mixed couples and important for understanding families' functioning (Bustamante et al., 2011; Hossain, 2001; Kellner, 2009). The division

of household labor between family members is influenced by the respective partners'
understanding of "appropriate" gender roles in the family (Hossain, 2001). The way partners
in mixed families relate to the other gender can reflect traditional cultural as well as religious
norms regarding gender roles and can be seen as unacceptable by the culturally different
partner (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Curtis & Ellison, 2002). Indeed, religion and religious
involvement (or a lack of these) can have significant influence on attitudes towards many
aspects of family life, including gender roles, sexuality, child rearing, and parenting practices
(Curtis & Ellison, 2002).

Some cultures uphold very rigid gender roles and expectations. If individuals decide
to reject such cultural norms, this can lead to sanctions and hostility by family and
community members who may not recognize that different cultures represent different
perspectives but see such difference as inferior (Kellner, 2009; Thompson, 2010). Indeed,
therapists and counsellors in the field of multicultural practice have suggested that when
assessing families whose behaviors and values are different from one's own, yet normative
for their cultural background, such difference is often judged as either pathological or viewed
more leniently (Gushue, Constantine, & Sciarra, 2008; Sue & Sue, 2013). According to
Falicov (1995), the "danger of confusing culture with dysfunction, or of ignoring dysfunction
in the name of cultural respect" is omnipresent (p. 8). The cultural stereotypes that every
individual embodies are derived from one's own cultural background, socialization, and
upbringing, and they determine our perceptions of family functioning (Gushue et al., 2008).
Stereotypes might not be incorrect, yet they are often negative. Importantly, stereotypes are
incomplete as they only reflect one part of anyone's perspective and experience and do not
reflect the complexity and diversity of individuals' reality. Hence, as Gushue et al. (2008)
reiterate, it is very important to neither interpret culture as pathology nor pathology as
culture.

Gender roles and expectations represent a culture's norms and values regarding the appropriateness of male and female roles within a family or between spouses (Kellner, 2009). In individualistic cultures, there is a greater emphasis on gender equality associated with paid work, childrearing, and housekeeping, as well as a greater focus on the nuclear family. In collective cultures, in comparison, women often have less economic independence and fewer rights compared to men and a greater emphasis is placed on the extended family (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Crippen & Brew, 2007; Kellner, 2009). Such differences can contribute to relationship distress as shown in a number of studies (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Kellner, 2009). Thus, family functioning can differ pertaining to an individual's cultural background and in relation to individuals' identification with the cultural norms regarding gender and family roles, and understanding of intimacy (Kellner, 2009).

Cools' (2006) study offers an example of gender roles difference between Finish and non-Finish intercultural couples in Finland, a "feminine society" (p. 278). Hofstede (2001) highlights that feminine societies are characterized by values of equality, solidarity, as well as wellbeing and quality of life rather than competition and achievement. In Finland, gender roles are much more overlapping and equal compared to masculine societies such as Belgium. As such, gender equality is characterized by men and women carrying out a range of tasks, including childrearing, preparation of food, shovelling snow etc. However, some of the male participants in Cools' (2006) study, who were originally from Belgium, perceived the overlapping tasks as problematic. Living in Finland together with their Finish spouses, the partners from Belgium explained that men's roles become blurred and that this can create problems in families. At the same time, they acknowledged the advantages of less gendered roles in terms of childrearing practices (Cools, 2006). Unfortunately, Cools' (2006) study did not offer in depth accounts regarding participants' own cultural backgrounds and how couples negotiated different gender and family roles. As mentioned previously, mixed

families are characterized by a variety of differences, which often result in conflict. Therefore, gaining enhanced knowledge of how families combine and integrate their cultural backgrounds, including differing gender roles and expectations, could contribute to the current literature on family functioning of mixed families.

A qualitative study by Bustamante et al. (2011) found that intercultural couples benefit from gender role flexibility to overcome different gender role expectations. Gender role flexibility relates to an open dialogue about different expectations and a more equal distribution of responsibilities as well as one's willingness to find compromises. While this is similar to homogeneous couples, mixed couples can differ more extensively in their perceptions about what are "appropriate" gender roles. The researchers (Bustamante et al., 2011) point out that there are apparent differences in the degree of role flexibility; however, overall, participants in their study indicated that communication about cultural norms regarding traditional gender roles can facilitate flexibility in family members' roles and responsibilities. Despite the apparent importance of gender role flexibility, the researchers (Bustamante et al., 2011) indicate that the extent to which role flexibility occurs across all intercultural families is not clear. Clarity on how intercultural couples manage traditional gender roles could provide a better understanding of role demands and shared family responsibilities and work-family balance in intercultural families.

Gender roles and expectations are constructed by cultural and social norms. In a study by Wieling (2003), family and friends reported stereotypes based on culturally ascribed gender roles, for example perceiving male Latino partners as dominant and abusive and female Latino partners as perfect wives and homemakers. Interestingly, while stereotypes can have negative impacts on individuals and groups in general, Bustamante et al. (2011) found that intercultural couples in their study used humor to address cultural stereotypes. This coping behavior was described by participants as a way of dealing with potential stress

related to cultural differences and a way of overcoming such stress. It was not meant to hurt the other spouse or extended family members. This finding has not been shown elsewhere and cannot be generalized as an effective strategy for all couples involved in mixed relationships. Therefore, further investigations of the different gender roles and expectations of both partners and about how partners handle cultural stereotypes are needed (Bacigalupe, 2003).

In summary, few studies address cultural influences on gender roles and expectations in mixed families. Those studies that have examined the roles of culture and gender in mixed families identified differences in gender roles and expectations and the division of household tasks as significant stressors, accentuated by cultural differences. Bustamante et al. (2011) found that flexibility, humor, and communication were potential solutions in overcoming different gender role expectations in mixed families. Yet, this finding was not reported in other studies, warranting further research on the role that culture plays concerning gender roles and role demands in mixed families.

Family identity of mixed families

In entering a relationship with a partner from a different cultural background, spouses' awareness and understanding of their family roles may evolve, a finding discussed in the literature on mixed couples (Byrd & Garwick, 2006; Crippen & Brew, 2007). Partners in mixed families integrate different aspects from the other partner's culture and the dominant host society's culture. In addition, they preserve and celebrate aspects of their own culture. Indeed, as a number of studies have shown, negotiating cultural differences can lead to the development of a shared family identity (Bustamante et al., 2011; Inman et al., 2011; Killian, 2001, 2012). Negotiating differences includes "agreeing to disagree" (Killian, 2001, p. 31) and couples' commitment to experience shared events and memories. Indeed, Heller and Wood (2000) found that by negotiating their differences, intercultural couples "experience

strong intimacy and mutual understanding" (p. 248). Furthermore, in a study on intercultural couples by Bustamante et al. (2011), participants described ways of dealing with cultural differences, one of which included bringing together or transforming cultural perspectives, a process the researchers named cultural reframing. Cultural reframing referred to the building of a new third culture in order to maintain a satisfying relationship. This was expressed by participants in terms of drawing on the positive elements of both cultures and making it work for both partners by forming a shared belief system. Yet, there is little research on the development of a shared family identity and how cultural values such as the role of family networks in decision making of both partners are preserved, integrated, or relinquished (Crippen & Brew, 2007). While building a shared identity may pose unique challenges for mixed couples due to different cultural backgrounds, Crippen and Brew (2007) concur that the task of developing a shared family identity may be even more difficult during the transition to parenthood.

Childbearing and child-rearing present important milestones in families' developmental life cycle (Wright & Leahey, 2009), and hence, are the focus of much research in the field of mixed families. During this life cycle stage, families are often faced with new challenges. These can include changes in couples' relationship and dynamics, marital quality, and roles, including childcare responsibilities and the balance of family and other responsibilities (Wright & Leahey, 2009). The childbearing and child-rearing stages can also include the integration of extended family members and their changing roles, which can lead to intergenerational support as well as conflict over child-rearing and parenting matters, such as methods of discipline (Crippen & Brew, 2007; Wright & Leahey, 2009). In short, family identity can shift and change during marriage, childbearing, and child-rearing life stages. Importantly, marriage, childbearing, and child-rearing are stages of families' developmental life cycle that are unique to each family's developmental path and can be influenced by

culture, ethnicity, religion or spirituality, race, gender, social class, and other environmental factors (Wright & Leahey, 2009). For instance, roles and responsibilities in terms of child-rearing are strongly, yet, often unconsciously influenced by cultural beliefs and norms. As a consequence, on the one hand, the birth of a child can potentially be the vehicle for conflict as different parenting styles and the nature of family relationships are culturally influenced (Crippen & Brew, 2007). On the other hand, it can bring families closer together and overcome discrepancies by celebrating the new family member (Byrd & Garwick, 2004).

The importance of developing a shared family identity to a family's functioning is demonstrated in the literature on family functioning in general, and in the literature on family strengths in particular (Stinnett, Beam, & Beam, 1999). A shared family identity is associated with greater commitment and connectedness among family members, and reinforced by family rituals and family traditions. Developing a shared family identity not only helps to develop and strengthen family relationships but the identity of each individual family member (Stinnett et al., 1999). In order to understand family identity development as an important dimension of family functioning of mixed families, it is necessary for researchers to explore the social and cultural backgrounds of both partners (Renzaho, Green, Mellor, & Swinburn, 2011). However, this is a major shortcoming in the current literature as little emphasis has been placed on how mixed families develop a shared family identity, that is, what is it that families do together to combine and incorporate both partners' cultural backgrounds.

Unique Strengths of Mixed Families

This section focuses on family strengths. Family strengths are defined as relationship patterns, skills, and characteristics that promote positive family identity, positive family interaction, effective coping skills, and supportive relationships among family members (DeFrain & Asay, 2007a, 2007b). Although family strengths vary across families, all families

have strengths which are essential to families' wellbeing, development, and life. In research on mixed families, family strengths have not been researchers' primary focus. Research has repeatedly shown that mixed couples differ from mono-cultural couples because of partners' different cultural backgrounds, leading to more challenges and stressors (Bratter & King, 2008; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Yet, mixed couples do not necessarily perceive their cultural differences as pessimistically as do family, friends, and the broader community, and this has been also recognized in the literature that addresses the many challenges mixed couples face. Therefore, this section draws on the small body of research that has examined the unique strengths and opportunities of mixed families. To reiterate a point by Sullivan and Cottone (2006), "intercultural couples in distress show how partners can be driven apart by differences, whereas successful intercultural couples demonstrate how even the greatest of differences can be overcome" (p. 224).

A few studies have shown that mixed couples often complement each other and experience greater richness and wealth in possible solutions compared to homogeneous families (Crippen & Brew, 2007; Molina, Estrada, & Burnett, 2004). In addition, researchers (Bustamante et al., 2011; Molina et al., 2004) have stressed that mixed couples might be more similar in their beliefs and values than often portrayed in the literature. Intercultural partners may have a shared experience of immigration, less traditional values, and more tolerant attitudes. In Inman et al.'s (2011) qualitative study, participants indicated that they shared important similarities such as openness to diversity, and a similar understanding of the importance of both education and family. Other research (Bustamante et al., 2011; Heller & Wood, 2000; Molina et al., 2004; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004) indicates that, compared to homogeneous couples, mixed couples enjoy greater opportunities to reflect on their own culture, to learn about and from different cultures through understanding and humor, to acquire a new language, and to develop greater mutual understanding, a step towards each

other's celebration of difference. In fact, Bustamante et al.'s (2011) qualitative study indicated that participants valued the opportunity to learn from their partner by being exposed to a culture that is different from their own. The ability to learn from each other combined with the partner's openness was perceived as an advantage and a positive element in the participants' lives. Hence, entering a mixed relationship may also involve the development of greater awareness and acceptance of differences (e.g., gender roles and expectations, traditions, religious rituals, food, and relationships with family members) (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Biever et al., 1998; Inman et al., 2011).

Overall, the literature has shown that some couples consider their differences as opportunities to be involved with one's partner's culture and worldviews and that this enhances their relationships in unique ways (Inman et al., 2011). Learning about one's own and one's partner's culture is an important factor that increases both partners' sense of belonging and satisfaction (Biever et al., 1998; Inman et al., 2011). Biever et al. (1998), in their article on therapy with intercultural families, argue that extended family opposition can result in couples both growing closer together and increasing their awareness and acceptance of each other's cultural background. As such, difficulties and stressors can facilitate intercultural couples' commitment to their relationship and the willingness to overcome differences and celebrate similarities and respect for different cultures (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Biever et al., 1998). Similarly, a study on South Asian/Danish couples by Singla and Holm (2012) showed that realistic plans, negotiating and integrating everyday practices, and focusing on positive aspects can promote intercultural families' wellbeing, and that these families can experience excitement and enrichment despite struggles regarding gender roles and conflicts with others.

Collectively, a small but growing number of research studies on mixed couples suggest that couples have opportunities that are not common in homogeneous relationships,

including learning about other worldviews, parenting models, ways to problem solve and developing cultural sensitivity, cultural adaptability, and a sense of cultural belonging. Viewing diversity as enrichment and an opportunity to grow and develop rather than as a stressor was a common theme among mixed couples. However, even with this increasing recognition of strengths in mixed families, the predominant focus on challenges and stress in mixed families persists.

Social Support and Family Functioning in Mixed Families

As discussed previously, mixed families may face a wide array of challenges maintaining a satisfying relationship due to, among other considerations, micro level factors including differences in culture, language, religion, age, immigration status, acculturation, and socioeconomic status, and macro level factors, including family and community opposition, weaker social supports, and discrimination and racism (Byrd & Garwick, 2004). On the whole, the literature has increasingly focused on the considerable psychological, emotional, and social impact that marriage outside of one's own culture or "race" can have on individuals, the couple, and the family (Inman et al., 2011; Killian, 2001). Evidence about the challenges and stressors that mixed families experience is important as it can assist researchers and practitioners in understanding the underlying causes for mixed families' struggles, and why marital satisfaction is often lower and divorce rates higher compared to homogeneous couples. It may also assist in the development of effective interventions and may bring to light specific contextual factors. In this section, I discuss the body of research that reports lack of social support as a challenge for couples. I draw on research studies that include a discussion of social support in relation to mixed couples' marital quality and wellbeing. Social support has not been examined in relation to family functioning of mixed families (Kang Fu & Wolfinger, 2011).

The necessity for social support within as well as outside the immediate family and its positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities has been highlighted in the literature on family functioning in general, and research on mixed families in particular (Bernardi, 2011; Olson & Gorall, 2003; Taylor, 2007). Strong social networks can protect individuals from the effects of stress and can support individuals in overcoming stressful events or times (Cutrona, 1996). While support from one's partner is crucial for marital and relationship satisfaction and quality, I focus on the support (or lack thereof) from family, friends, and community as highlighted in the literature.

Research has shown that mixed couples have weaker social support from extended family and community compared to homogeneous couples (Child, 2006; Inman et al., 2011; Kang Fu & Wolfinger, 2011; Molina et al., 2004; Moriizumi, 2011; Neufeld, Harrison, Stewart, Hughes, & Spitzer, 2002; Romano, 2006; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004). Mixed couples who face relationship distress in relation to their cultural differences cannot draw on their families and friends in order to deal with their relationship stress (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). The disapproval of mixed couples' families of origin adds to their relationship stress and has negative consequences in terms of spouses' psychological wellbeing. According to research studies, reduced social support, specifically parental support, accounts for lower relationship quality and higher divorce rates (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Hence, if support from one's own family and community is limited and social disapproval exists, this has negative impacts on couples' functioning (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000; Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Fusco, 2010; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Silva et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that research has shown that lack of family support may represent a significant stressor in the lives of some mixed couples, research findings about the role and impact of social support are not consistent across studies and across samples. Research findings differ in relation to racial or ethnic backgrounds and the various constellations

among mixed couples. For example, a number of studies (Child, 2006; Romano, 2006; Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Yancey, 2007) suggest that Black/White couples experience more extreme family opposition resulting in less social support compared to couples involving Euro-American, Asian, Latino, or Hispanic partners due to a long history of oppression based on racial variations (Killian, 2001). In an interpretive descriptive study, Byrd and Garwick (2004) found that White female partners faced explicit family rejection of their Black male partners. In particular, fathers of White women showed strong rejection to the point of cutting off their relationship with their daughter. The eight couples reported that the support from their families of origin was restricted and limited, particularly at the beginning of their relationships, which often left couples feeling alone and which also had negative consequences on their marital satisfaction in the long term.

Consistent with the body of literature on Black/White couples, research on marriages involving Asian and Latino partners also reported experiences of family resistance, albeit less extreme than reported in studies in Black/White couples. For example, in Inman et al.'s (2011) qualitative study, Asian Indian (AI)/White couples reported initial resistance from their families of origin, which was mainly explained by differences in cultural and family values and norms. However, this initial family resistance decreased gradually, and couples received support from their families over time. Similarly, a qualitative study by Wieling (2003) found that while intermarried couples including Latino partners did not face the same family and community opposition as Black/White couples, responses by family and friends were different, for example with regards to concerns around parenting, compared to how they would respond to same-race partners. While White partners reported that members of their families and communities had initial "serious reservations" (Wieling, 2003, p. 51), family members and friends were willing to get to know the spouse from the culturally different

background. Couples stated that if their partner would have been Black, this would have caused more serious rejection, and this was mentioned by both Latino and White partners.

A key suggestion by researchers who have studied social support in mixed families is that social support is context specific (Byrd & Garwick, 2004; Inman et al., 2011; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; Molina et al., 2004; Wieling, 2003). For example, a quantitative study (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004) examined the dynamics of interracial couples using mail surveys to examine racial identity, social support, and experience of discrimination as predictive variables for marital quality. Among the 76 participating interracial couples, of which the majority, 52 couples, included an African American male and a White female spouse, racial identity was the strongest predictor of marital quality before social support and experience of discrimination. The researchers noted that social support offered a relatively weak explanatory variable for marital quality. The researchers acknowledge that they cannot conclude that social support is unnecessary for the participants who reside in a region where interracial marriages are more common and accepted. However, they propose that the couples from this region might experience less stress and, hence, may rely less on their social support networks in order to deal with or reduce stress. Consequently, compared to a number of research studies that have shown that the lack of social support couples receive is a major stressor (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Molina et al., 2004), no generalizations can be made with regards to the meaning of social support (or lack thereof) for mixed couples based on the relatively small body of literature.

Overall, contextual factors such as the racial composition of a neighbourhood, community, school, and society have been shown to influence the likelihood and experience of mixed relationships (Berkowitz King & Bratter, 2007; Kaduvettoor-Davidson & Inman, 2012; Yancey, 2002). That is, families who reside in neighborhoods that are diverse in terms of the ethnic, racial, cultural, and economic composition may face less community opposition

and discrimination and, hence, couples feel less need to draw on their support networks compared to couples in more homogenous settings. Importantly, the meaning of social support is dependent on an individual's cultural beliefs, values, and norms that determine an individual's support seeking behaviors (Bernardi, 2011; Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008). Hence, a better understanding of couples' experience and understanding of social support and family interactions can contribute important knowledge about family functioning of mixed families.

In summary, some research suggests that couples in mixed relationships tend to have less social support from family and friends, neighbors, and communities compared to homogeneous couples. This can include a complete severing of relationships by the couples' family of origin or more subtle types of rejection, including serious hesitations and questioning of the racial or culturally different partner and concerns around the couple's family plans. However, research has not shown consistent evidence regarding this lack of social support for mixed couples and how family disapproval affects a couple's relationship and family functioning and it certainly does not allow for generalizations across all mixed families.

Summary of the Literature Review

This review of research on mixed families highlights that the combination of the respective partners' cultural backgrounds is a major factor that differentiates mixed families from homogeneous families. Cultural contexts can play a part in key dimensions of mixed families' functioning, such as communication, gender roles and expectations, and family identity. Often, cultural norms are unconsciously embedded in a person's life and reinforced throughout childhood. A majority of research focuses on the stressors that mixed families experience as a result of cultural difference between spouses. Hence, cultural influences are acknowledged and studied in the current body of research on mixed families; however,

comprehensive examinations of family functioning of mixed families are scant. Shortcomings in the current literature include: 1) a predominant focus of the literature on interracial families, thereby ignoring families that cross cultural but not racial boundaries; 2) an emphasis on heterosexual couples, specifically couples who are married, thereby excluding cohabiting couples and families belonging to sexual minorities; 3) a lack of emphasis on family-level processes by paying attention primarily to the couple system, and 4) a lack of research that explores the influence of couples' "mixed" cultural backgrounds on family functioning. This study aimed to address some of the shortcomings by exploring family functioning of five intercultural families with particular focus on the influence of couples' "mixed" cultural backgrounds on family functioning.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

I used a focused ethnographic approach for this study to understand how the day-to-day functioning of intercultural families with pre-school children is shaped by a range of factors including family members' cultures and characteristics as well as the broader social context in which families are embedded. Understanding a research method is important because it is the foundation of data generation and data analysis strategies (L. Richards & Morse, 2013). Making the links between research method and procedures explicit contributes not only to the credibility of the research study but also assists the reader to assess the significance of the study's findings. This chapter begins with an overview of the main characteristics and concepts of traditional (or conventional, classical) ethnography in which focused ethnography is situated (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). I then discuss key characteristics and methodological processes central to focused ethnography. Specifically, I explain how key characteristics differ between traditional ethnography and focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Muecke, 1994), and justify the use of focused ethnography in this research study as an appropriate research inquiry. Following the description of the research method, I present an overview of the research procedures utilized in this study. First, I describe the research setting. In doing so, I inform the reader of the sociocultural context in which this study is embedded. Reporting the study's context also facilitates its transferability to other research settings. I also describe the recruitment strategies and sample, and summarize data generation and data analysis processes. Then I discuss the researcher's role as the primary instrument to generate data as well as ethical considerations and standards necessary to conduct this study. Finally, I identify steps taken to achieve rigour.

Ethnography

The word "ethnography" is derived from the Greek words ethnos, "people", and graphei, "to write", and literally means "to write about people or cultures" (Marvasti, 2004, p.

36). Ethnography is part of the larger paradigm of qualitative research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It is one of the oldest research methods and is based in cultural anthropology of the late nineteenth century, originally with a focus on studying "non-Western", "underdeveloped" or "non-literate" cultures and societies (Agar, 2006; Liamputting, 2009; Mayan, 2009; Merriam, 2014; Roper & Shapira, 2000; Tedlock, 2000). In fact, early ethnographies are characterized by "professional strangers" (Agar, 1986), "going out into "the field" and describing a group of "exotic" people" (Roper & Shapira, 2000, p. 2). The issue of ethnocentricity, that is the belief in superiority of one group over another, is thus pertinent in historical traditional ethnographies whereby the ethnographers' "representations of the reality, culture and traditions of indigenous peoples were frequently eurocentric and framed the peoples' experiences as inferior, bizarre and primitive" (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013, p. 37). Ethnocentricity is still prevalent in much research and practice due to cultural socialization that often takes place on an unconscious level which, according to Ting-Tommey and Chung (2012) "encourages the development of ethnocentrism" (p. 14).

The interest of ethnography, however, has shifted. Previously, anthropologists paid attention to particular groups of people who share a sense of belonging founded on similar cultural, religious, or political beliefs and traditions, and common language and residence. Today, ethnographic studies are abundant, and researchers from various disciplines engage in ethnographic research to explore both distant, unknown, and closer-to-home settings (Liamputting, 2009; Merriam, 2014). Today's ethnographies, then, can include a particular social group that share in common "a work site, a lifestyle, a nursing home, or a management philosophy" (Morse, 1994, p. 161).

The primary goal of ethnographic research is to understand or discover what occurs in a natural setting in ordinary life for a group or culture from the "native's point of view" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Ethnography involves the researcher's observations of a group's

shared behaviors, beliefs, knowledge systems, and language. It places the ethnographer's observations, insights, and encounter of a group or culture into the larger context including the particular location, surroundings, and historical or other influential conditions or factors (Tedlock, 2000). The ethnographer's observations cannot be separated from the larger context because it is the context that warrants meaning and understanding of people's behavior (Morse, 1994; Roper & Shapira, 2000; Tedlock, 2000). This context includes the ethnographers depiction of people's physical environment combined with an understanding of the underlying circumstances and reasons that lead to the human behavior observed (Morse, 1994). Ethnography, then, is "the art and science of describing a group or culture" (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1) that allows the reader to experience and learn about another group, community, or culture.

Roper and Shapira (2000) state that ethnography is "a research process of learning *about* people by learning *from* them" (p. 1). The researcher is thus the primary instrument for data generation and analysis. Data generation can take many forms, such as participant observations, semi-structured and structured interviewing, researchers' observations captured in field notes, and the study of available documents or any other relevant sources (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013; Roper & Shapira, 2000). In its most common form, ethnography entails extensive fieldwork experiences through the researcher's overt or covert participation in people's day-to-day lives to learn about why people do what they do from their patterns of behavior, interactions, language, and their environment (Fetterman, 1998). Participant observations over extended periods of time serve the ethnographer to learn about the insider's or native's world views, also known as the emic perspective. The insider's views are based on the researcher's descriptions and his or her understanding of the people or culture (Roper & Shapira, 2000). The emic perspective thus requires the researcher to appreciate the insider's subjective experiences. Combined with the ethnographer's outsider or etic

perspective of the collected data, ethnographies produce an account that is "neither subjective nor objective" (Agar, 1986, p. 19). As such, ethnography acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, and is both a process and an end-product (Agar, 1980; Roper & Shapira, 2000). According to Agar (1986), the aim of ethnographers is to "show how social action in one world makes sense from the point of view of another", which requires "an intensive personal involvement, an abandonment of traditional scientific control, an improvisational style to meet situations not of the researcher's making, and an ability to learn from a long series of mistakes" (p. 3).

Focused Ethnography

Focused ethnography is one branch in the field of ethnographic research that concentrates on shared experiences or distinct issues among sub-groups of people within a specific context (Cruz & Higginbottom, 2013). According to Knoblauch (2005), it is the focus on "small elements of one own's society" that makes focused ethnography distinguishable (p. 5). As a complementary rather than conflicting form of traditional ethnography, Knoblauch (2005) states that "the pluralisation of life-worlds and the enormous specialisation of professional activities demands ever detailed descriptions of people's ways of life and their increasingly specialised and fragmented activities" (p. 1). As such, focused ethnography is context-specific, problem-focused, and time-limited (Knoblauch, 2005). Focused ethnography is not a new research method but has been used for decades. According to Knoblauch (2005), "focused ethnography can be traced back to researchers such as Goffman (1952), Gumperz and Hymes (1963) or Festinger (1964) who focused on the life of a small group and utilised the then revolutionary tape recorder" (p. 9).

While exhibiting key characteristics of traditional ethnography, focused ethnography diverges from traditional ethnography in several ways. The research scope of focused ethnography is narrow, focusing on discrete experiences, aspects, or situations, whereas the

scope in traditional ethnography is broad and open. As Knoblauch (2005) notes, "the entities studied in focused ethnographies are not necessarily groups, organisations or milieus but rather situations, interactions and activities" (p. 11). Data generation is usually short-term and intermittent. Contrary to data generation in traditional ethnography, semi-structured or structured interviews are often the primary and only data generation strategy in focused ethnography, generating a large amount of data in a comparatively short time frame. Data intensity, thus, counterweighs the extensive, prolonged fieldwork and observations employed in traditional ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005). Participant observations may or may not be conducted in focused ethnography, and when utilized are more often of short-term nature. Finally, in focused ethnography interviews with a limited number of key participants are typically audio-recorded compared to traditional ethnography that employs predominantly participant observations and field notes. According to Knoblauch (2005), audio- or video-recorded data that can be made available to others are "less dependent on subjective perspectives than are field-notes" (p. 9). Audio-recorded data are subsequently transcribed verbatim, allowing the researcher to access the large quantity of data for rigorous and time-intense analysis (Knoblauch, 2005). In addition to recorded interview data, field notes are typically compiled to capture the researcher's perceptions of and observations during the interviews. In short, the main features of focused ethnography are its focus on a small group of individuals embedded in a specific context who are purposively selected because the knowledge or experience held by the individuals is of interest to the researcher (Higginbottom, Pillay, & Boadu, 2013; Merriam, 2014).

Rationale for using focused ethnography for this study

As highlighted previously, focused ethnographies have limited scope (Robinson, 2013) and pay attention to specific elements, such as interactions, activities, or situations, within a specific setting that is familiar to the researcher. However, as Roper and Shapira

(2000) highlight, focused ethnographies still assist the researcher in understanding "the complexities of common situations" (p. 9).

My study focused on a specific topic and population, that is, family functioning of intercultural families within the city of Edmonton. Hence, the specific focus was to gain insights into family functioning of intercultural families and how it is influenced by various factors and conditions. In the context of this study, culture is not referred to as belonging to a specific geographic setting (e.g., a nation) (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012) but is understood as a set of beliefs, norms, and values that are shared by a group of people within the larger society. Individuals in intercultural families belong to different cultural communities and it is their coming together as a couple that creates shared experiences. In short, the specific focus of the interrelatedness between everyday family life and the wider cultural context combined with the time-limited exploratory nature of the study within a specific population warranted the use of focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Savage, 2006).

Research Setting

The city of Edmonton, located in Alberta, is Alberta's second largest metropolitan area after Calgary and together with Calgary and Red Deer, the area is the fourth largest populated area in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2002). Demographically, Alberta is the fastest growing province in Canada and home to a diverse population, with 18.4 percent of Alberta's population being visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2013). According to data from the Census and National Household Survey (NHS), the "visible minority" population in Canada includes ten particular groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asians, Korean, and Japanese (Statistics Canada, 2013). Alberta's population includes 3,645,257 people of which 644,100 are foreign-born, 9.5 percent of all foreign-born people in Canada. Alberta's share of recent immigrants increased from 9.3 percent in 2006 to 12.4 percent in 2011.

Economically, Edmonton and the province of Alberta recorded positive growth in labour force and job creation in 2013. Alberta has one of Canada's strongest economies mainly driven by its booming energy sector as well as manufacturing, forestry, and agriculture industries (Statistics Canada, 2013). Alberta's unemployment rate of 4.7 percent (November of 2013) is Canada's second lowest following its neighbouring province Saskatchewan with a rate of 4.1 percent. Canada's overall unemployment rate is 6.9 percent (Statistics Canada, 2013). Furthermore, Albertans benefit from the highest standard of living and the lowest living costs in the country including low personal income taxes and no provincial sales tax (Labour Market Bulleting, 2013). This also has positive impacts on families living in Alberta who benefit from the highest median after-tax income of $83,800 in 2011, followed by the provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario with $75,000 and $70,400, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2012). As a result, Alberta has evidenced high levels of in-migration from people from other provinces as well as international migrants.

Edmonton is a fast growing city that comprises a diverse population including individuals from more than 60 ethnic and cultural groups (City of Edmonton, 2014b). As of the 2012 Municipal Census, the City of Edmonton had a population of 817,498 people including 232,195 immigrants, of which about 50,000 were recent immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2011. In total, 4.3 percent of the 1.2 million recent immigrants who arrived in Canada between 2006 and 2011 settled in Edmonton (Statistics Canada, 2013). South Asians comprised 22.9 percent of all visible minority members (3.9 percent of Edmonton's population), and make up the largest visible minority group in Edmonton, followed by Chinese, and Filipinos. In comparison, the three largest visible minority groups in Canada are South Asians, Chinese, and Blacks (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Edmonton is home to many recreational and cultural facilities. It has several theatres, art galleries and museums, more than 30 festivals year round, the Alberta Legislature

Building, house of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and the largest urban park in North

America. It has also a number of post-secondary colleges and universities including

Concordia University College of Alberta, MacEwan University, the King's University

College, NorQuest College, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), and the

University of Alberta. Edmonton has also several high ranked hospitals such as the Stollery

Children's Hospital and the University of Alberta Hospital (City of Edmonton, 2014b).

Sampling Methods and Recruitment Strategies

I used purposive sampling which involves the selection of participants based on

selected criteria because of the contributions participants can offer to the breadth and depth of

the particular research study (Merriam, 2014). I included participants based on the following

selection criteria:

- Families who were residing in the City of Edmonton.

- Families who self-identified as intercultural with children who were all under six

  years of age.

- Families who included at least one parent that was a foreign-born first generation

  immigrant from any cultural and/or ethnic background.

- Families where both mothers and fathers were at least 18 years of age, living in the

  same household, and willing to participate in interviews that were audio-recorded.

- Parents who self-identified as heterosexual common law or married partners.

- Parents who were able to communicate verbally in English.

I used the following two recruitment strategies to identify participating families. First,

I placed posters and pamphlets in agencies that provide programs to families with young

children, including pre-school and childcare centres, as well as organizations with a particular

focus on the multicultural community in Edmonton (e.g., Family Resource Centres,

Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB), Edmonton Immigrant Services Association (EISA)). I

also distributed posters on the University of Alberta campus, MacEwan University City Centre Campus and NorQuest College's Downtown and Westmount Campuses. (See Appendix A for posters).

Second, I contacted community agency directors and community members and explained the purpose and process of the research study, outlined the eligibility criteria, and discussed what participation involved in hope that they could put me in touch with program facilitators or other community members who met my selection criteria. In some cases, agency staff and community members provided me with contact details of families (with the families' permission) that might be eligible and interested in participating. In other cases, I was contacted directly by the interested families. This latter recruitment strategy proved to be the most successful strategy as I recruited the majority of participating families (80 percent) through agency staff and community members who had already existing trusting relationships with individuals in their communities. All participants were retained over the course of the study.

Some challenges during the recruitment process were related to recruiting multiple family members as participants. That is, recruiting fathers as well as mothers is more challenging compared to recruiting only one family member (Lewis, 2009; Rönkä, Sevõn, Malinen, & Salonen, 2012). In addition, participants in my study had to be able to speak English, another barrier for participation in some cases.

After receiving families' contact information or once I was contacted by interested families directly by phone or email, I provided participants with further information about the study over the phone or via email, answered any questions or concerns family members expressed, and determined whether individuals met the eligibility criteria to take part in the study. If individuals met the eligibility criteria for the study, I arranged a first meeting with

the whole family. The majority of the initial contacting and scheduling of interviews took place by email.

Data Generation

The three main tools for data generation included a family genogram interview, individual interviews, and interview notes. First, I conducted a family genogram interview with each participating family to elicit sociodemographic data and information about the family's internal and external structure and context. Second, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured in-depth interviews with each parent. Third, I compiled interview notes following each family genogram interview and each individual interview. All interviews were conducted in person and all individual interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by me to facilitate data analysis.

Family genogram interview

After determining families were eligible to participate, I scheduled the family genogram interviews with each family to gather information about family structure and context that are essential for understanding family functioning. All Family Genogram interviews took place in the families' homes at their convenience. Children were always present in the same room. The interviews lasted between half an hour and one hour. Prior to compiling the family genogram, informed consent was obtained from each parent. Hence, I provided parents with a written participant Information Sheet and Consent Form and pointed out specific areas to ensure participants were fully informed about the voluntary nature of the research study, particularly emphasizing their rights to withdraw from the study, and how I would ensure privacy of personal information (See Appendix B). I ensured that family members understood the purpose and process of the study by answering their questions and providing them the time they required to review the Information Sheet and Consent Form. In all cases, this was a straightforward process.

After I obtained written consent from each participant, I compiled a family genogram together with the parents (See Appendix C for a genogram guide). A genogram is "a family tree depicting the internal family structure" (Wright & Leahey, 2009, p. 72). The purpose of the genogram interview with each family was threefold. First, the genogram provided a visual representation of the internal structure of the family (Parker & Bradley, 2010; Wright & Leahey, 2009). The genogram revealed important information about who is in the family. Some cultural groups do not differentiate between biological and non-biological family members and there can be cultural distinctions about how individuals define and describe family and family relationships (Parker & Bradley, 2010; Singh, 2009). I was aware that individual participants might have different understandings about who is considered as "family" compared to my own understanding about family structure and family relationships. As Singh (2009) emphasizes, "kinship is culturally constructed" (p. 360). Therefore, I collected information about families' "nuclear" and larger family networks, as well as families' involvement with people outside their immediate family, such as friends. This proved to be important information as it revealed participants' perceptions of their relationships with their immediate family as well as the external world (Parker & Bradley, 2010).

Second, in addition to learning about each family's internal and external structures, I gathered basic sociodemographic and contextual information including family members' age, gender, social class (i.e., educational attainment, income, and occupation), employment status, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, immigration history, relationships between family members, and birth order of children (if applicable) (Wright & Leahey, 2009). Using a genogram provided me with diverse and important information about the participating families and enhanced my understanding of the families' structure and cultural contexts.

Third, I used genograms in this study because they can facilitate building rapport and trust between the researcher and the participants. Building good rapport begins with the first contact between researcher and participant and needs to be developed throughout interviews (Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, & Wilkes, 2011). Genograms promote families' participation as each family member can be actively involved in compiling the genogram. In doing so, family members are in control of what they would like to share about themselves and their family. As Parker and Bradley (2010) emphasize: "Using genograms is a participatory activity" (p. 42). Compiling a genogram with both parents required me to be sensitive to each family member's needs (Parker & Bradley, 2010). While children were present at each family genogram interview, they were not actively involved in the process. Rather, their presence provided me with an important, albeit limited insight into parents' interaction with each other as well as their child(ren). Thus, by meeting the whole family including their children, I had the opportunity to gain insights into information about the family's structure, dynamics, relationships, and verbal and non-verbal communication and interaction processes. At the end of this first meeting, I affirmed the parents' consent to take part in the study, thanked them for their time, provided them with a $20 gift card, and scheduled the individual interviews with both parents.

The family genogram interviews were not audio-recorded in order to protect confidential information as well as to facilitate building trust and rapport with participating families. Information that family members shared during the interview was captured on an A3 paper. I used the information collected in the genograms specifically to prepare for the one-on-one interviews with each parent as well as to assist in the interpretation of the primary data gained from individual interviews. I provided a copy of the genogram to each family at the end of the study.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews

For this study, audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with each parent were used as the primary strategy for data generation. The interviews took place during a three-month period between September 2013 and November 2013. The individual interviews varied in length between 36 and 89 minutes with most interviews lasting approximately one hour. The length of each interview was influenced by participants' time commitments, interruptions, and detail of participants' responses (Elmir et al., 2011; O'Mahony, Donnelly, Este, & Bouchal, 2012). Each interview took place at the participants' homes, as chosen by the participants, and most interviews took place in the evenings. In all but one case, I scheduled the individual interviews with both parents in consecutive time slots on the same day on request by the families. Scheduling interviews at a time and place convenient for participants was important to elicit rich and in-depth information about their everyday family life experiences (Elmir et al., 2011). Specifically, this interview schedule allowed one parent to look after their child(ren) while I interviewed the other parent.

Interruptions were common during the interviews, yet mostly not a disruptive factor. The spouse that waited for their turn to be interviewed often stayed in the family home and adjourned to a different room together with their child(ren) and/or left the house during their partner's interview. However, on some occasions, the parent that I interviewed was required to also look after his or her child. On the few occasions where children required the attention of their parent during an interview, either the parent asked me to stop the recording or I stopped the audio-recording as warranted by the situation. In other circumstances, children who were looked after by one parent during the other parent's interview sought the attention of the parent who was interviewed, which led to a few interruptions. On one occasion, after I commenced the interview with the first parent, the parent who adjourned to another room joined me and the other parent. On this occasion, I stopped the audio recorder and politely

reminded both parents that I needed to interview each of them separately without the presence of the other parent in the same room. Despite the interruptions that took place throughout the ten interviews, parents worked well together to allow each other to focus on the interview without continual interruptions and to accommodate me within their family home.

The purpose of conducting one-on-one interviews was to gain in-depth accounts of family functioning processes of intercultural families as experienced by each participant from his or her own perspective. Participants were interviewed separately to enable them to talk about topics and experiences that may not be shared if they are interviewed as a couple together (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). Separate interviews can further contribute to the richness of information that is generated based on contributions of more than one family member. In addition, individual perspectives can be verified through triangulation, which can increase the trustworthiness of the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Qualitative interviewing allowed me to gain insight into the experiences of intercultural families. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasize: "Qualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (p. 1). In particular, I used a semi-structured interview format that included a number of structured questions to guide the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study because I sought to gain specific information about family functioning of intercultural families (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Probes or follow-up questions in reply to participants' responses provided "greater depth and breadth for answers" (Rothe, 2000, p. 96) and allowed for some flexibility during the interviews. In short, semi-structured interviews provided consistency and allowed the participants to discuss topics in more detail.

All interviews were conducted face-to-face for two reasons. First, in-person interviews can facilitate communication and allow the participant and the researcher to seek clarification if necessary. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasize: "Communication may be even more difficult when you are interviewing people very different from yourself" (p. 18). In this study, conducting in-person interviews allowed both the participant and the researcher to observe non-verbal communication (e.g., facial expression, gestures) that can facilitate understanding of verbal, spoken language (Shuy, 2003). This was especially beneficial as English was not the first language for both the researcher and five of the participants and accents can sometime hinder the flow of the conversation. I was mindful to re-phrase questions if they weren't understood by participants and I attempted to use plain language. Second, in-person interviews allowed both participant and me to build on the rapport that was initiated in the genogram interview more easily than might be possible in phone interviews. Building rapport between the participant and researcher can facilitate the sharing of participants' experiences with the researcher (Shuy, 2003).

Interview notes

I compiled interview notes after each interview to capture details about my observations and perceptions about the interviews, the interview setting, and any other remarks about the interviews. Regarding the family genogram interviews, I also recorded my observations about interactions between family members and kept my interpretations and reflections under a separate heading. This is a typical data generation strategy in focused ethnographies to capture the interview experiences.

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Data Management and Analysis

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The purpose of data analysis in ethnographic research is to understand and explain themes elicited from participants (Agar, 1980). Data analysis is a key step in the research process as interview data without the researcher's interpretations have little to no

significance. The importance and challenging nature of data analysis is highlighted by Bryman (2001):

> Regardless of which analytical strategy you employ; what you must not do is simply say – 'this is what my subjects said and did – isn't that incredibly interesting'. It may be reasonably interesting, but your work can acquire significance only when you theorize in relation to it. Many researchers are wary of this – they worry that, in the process of interpretation and theorizing, they may fail to do justice to what they have seen and heard; that they may contaminate their subjects' words and behavior. This is a risk, but it has to be balanced against the fact that your findings acquire significance in our intellectual community only when you have reflected on, interpreted, and theorized your data. You are not there as a mere mouthpiece. (p. 402)

In the subsequent sections, I first describe how I managed the interview data, and then discuss the steps I followed starting from preliminary data analysis to writing the qualitative research findings.

Data management

The verbatim transcription of interview data was the first important step in data analysis. As highlighted by Knoblauch (2005), transcriptions "confront the researcher in a very intensive way with the data" (p. 10). The transcription process is often taken for granted, rarely discussed in publications and delegated to a professional transcriptionist. However, transcription is anything but a simple task because transcripts are not neutral reproductions of audio-recorded interview data; rather, transcription involves a process of interpretation and reduction due to the complexity of any verbal interaction (Bailey, 2008). For example, audible speech always involves nonverbal communication, such as facial expression, body language, and may often include laughter, pauses, false starts or repetitions (Tilley, 2003). Hence, the researcher or transcriptionist has to decide which parts of the verbal interaction

between the interviewer and participant to include in the transcripts and which ones to exclude.

In my study, I personally transcribed verbatim all digitally audio-recorded interviews. The transcription process was time-consuming, as expected; however, it was made especially difficult at times due to different accents. Data transcription was facilitated by utilizing transcribing software that expedited the repetitive playback of audio recordings and allowed me to simultaneously type during playback. I did not record or include non-verbal language, as it was neither necessary with regards to the purpose of this research nor was I trained to systematically document non-verbal language in a meaningful and systematic manner. Further, I only included laughter, pauses, and encouraging noises (such as 'uh hum') in square brackets and did not transcribe other features of talk such as the speed or tone of voice, or emphasis, despite recognizing their importance for data interpretation. I also did not further specify the type of laughter (e.g., nervous laughter) as this would have required further interpretation which would have been influenced by my own background and would have required making judgments that could alter the meaning of what was said (Bailey, 2008). Rather, by including laughter and pauses, I intended to provide the reader with important features from the audio recordings about the way something was said by a participant to facilitate data interpretation by the reader. When providing quotes from participants, I further omitted some of the false starts, or repetitions of encouraging sounds, in order to facilitate the readability of participants' accounts. Following the transcription of interviews, I checked all transcripts for accuracy, removed any identifying information, and replaced names with codes. In my thesis, I replaced participants' codes with pseudonyms.

Data analysis – Approach and method

I used latent content analysis, "the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the [qualitative] data" (Mayan, 2009, p. 94), to examine participants'

descriptions of family functioning. Data analysis took place inductively, throughout the data generation period. In ethnographic research as in most other cases of qualitative research, data analysis progresses along with data generation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As interviews were conducted, data were synthesized, interpreted, and communicated by jotting down notes and interview observations to reflect meaning of the data (Polit & Beck, 2004).

As described earlier, transcribing of interview data was the first step in data analysis, which allowed me to make notes about similarities or differences across participants and note anything that stood out from the data, a process known as coding. Once transcription of all interviews was completed, I familiarized myself with the entire data set by reading and re-reading each transcript, a process that is consistent with latent content analyses (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), and keeping in mind my two research questions: (1) What constitutes family functioning in intercultural families?, and (2) How is the functioning of intercultural families shaped by the respective partners' cultures (i.e., values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews), individual-level factors (e.g., age, gender, education), as well as social and economic conditions (e.g., policies, services, programs)?

I analyzed the data from the family genogram interview and the individual interviews together. Therefore, I compiled a word file for each participant, consisting of the family genogram, the transcript from the semi-structured audio-recorded interview, and the interview notes from the family genogram interview and the one on one interview. I was interested in similarities and differences across couples, as well as similarities and differences across mothers' and fathers' experiences. Hence, I sometimes refer to individual participants, to all mothers or all fathers at other times, and to couples' accounts occasionally, based on how participants talked about their experiences and what patterns emerged across interviews.

One of the first key questions that I had to address during data analysis related to what data were relevant, and hence, worth concentrating my attention upon, and what data were

unrelated to answering my research questions. Due to the exploratory nature of my study, I discovered that the majority of my interview transcripts, which consisted of approximately 215 pages of transcribed text and 25 pages of interview notes, appeared to be relevant to my research questions and only a limited amount of data was omitted in the final presentation of my research findings.

Once the initial coding process was completed, I uploaded all files into the software program NVivo10 (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2013). I used NVivo to organize data according to codes. Because of the semi-structured interview format that I used in this study, most questions turned into a code and some questions that included different sub questions turned into more than one code. Going through all transcripts, some parts of the interview data were coded several times as they were important to different codes. Upon completing the coding process, I created twelve separate files for each code from all interviews. This allowed me to compare participants' accounts for each code.

I used the codes derived from the semi-structured interviews to create themes across all participants' responses and identified and grouped them into six common themes. The six common themes represent the dimensions of family functioning that were significant to participating families. I then identified appropriate subthemes by reviewing the interview transcripts repeatedly. The subthemes were then assigned to one of the six themes. (See Figure 1)

One particular challenge I encountered when comparing data across families was that of families' unique circumstances. I wondered how I could accurately represent each family's unique circumstances when looking for similarities across participants. However, as became evident from the data, participants revealed many similarities despite their unique circumstances. A second challenge in data analysis was related to my second research question, namely how is the functioning of intercultural families shaped by the respective

partners' cultures, individual-level factors as well as social and economic conditions. I found

that there was no straightforward way to determine how each partner's cultural background

influenced family functioning because of the complex and reciprocal concept of culture, that

is, culture shapes all aspects of family functioning. Hence, I often could not separate

individual factors from cultural factors from social and economic factors, a struggle that was

equally reported by participants. Therefore, I chose to combine individual, cultural and social

and economic factors as they were raised by participants with each dimension of family

functioning where identifiable, rather than addressing them separately. However, often,

culture and other factors cannot be separated.

Figure 1. Effective Family Functioning Represented in Themes and Sub-themes
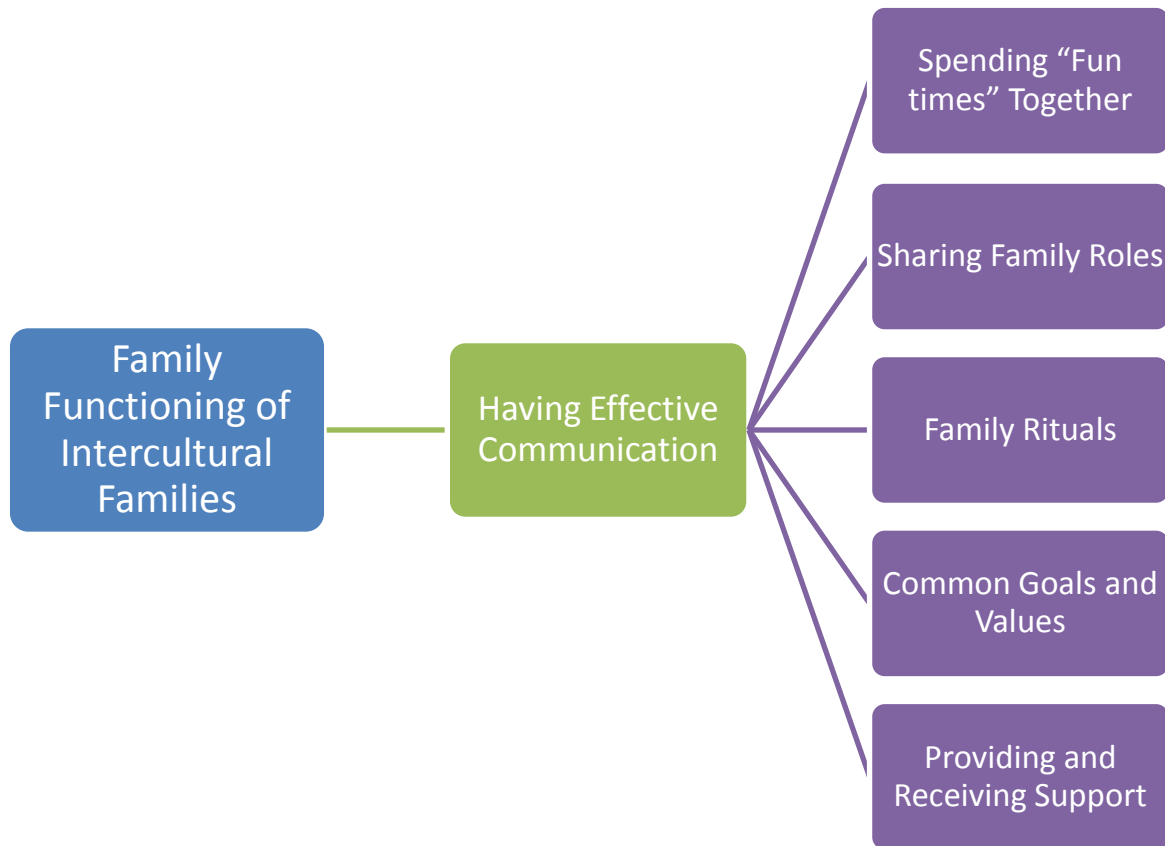
The Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of data generation and analysis (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). As Rubin and Rubin (1995) highlight: "In qualitative interviewing, the researcher is not neutral, distant, or emotionally uninvolved" (p. 12). It is not the aim of qualitative research to be value free or neutral nor is it useful or a possibility in any human interaction. Indeed, according to Rose (1985): "There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases" (as cited in Corbin Dwyer & Burke, 2009, p. 77). Any interaction between researcher and participant are influenced by the researcher's values, beliefs, biases, age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, ethnicity, nationality, language, class, privilege, ability, education, professional status, and life experiences (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Merry et al., 2011; Ravitch & Riggan, 2012).

For this study, it was important for me to be aware of my biases, cultural assumptions, norms, values, and so on, and how these might influence my interactions with, and interpretations of participants' accounts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher's role, that is, his or her insider (the emic) or outsider (the etic) role status is widely discussed in ethnography. For example, in ethnographic research, the interpretations of participant observations and interactions are shaped by the researcher's cultural values and norms and social locations (Creswell, 2009). Similarly, participants have their personal biases, values, norms, and beliefs that will influence their communication and interaction with the researcher. In short, these factors shape the researcher's questions as well as the participants' answers, and constantly determine the researcher's and participant's interaction and relationship (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000).

As the primary researcher of this study, reflecting on my personal background is important as my experiences and social locations determine my perceptions and interpretations of my participants and their experiences. I am a white German female in an

intercultural relationship and therefore have personal experience of the role of cultural contexts in intercultural relationships. As many of the participants in this study, I have experienced moving to different countries, acquiring new languages, and by doing so adopting to and learning about my own as well as different cultures. However, unlike all participating families, I do not share their experience of parenthood. I recognize that there can be benefits of being a member of a group, such as acceptance by members of that group, knowledge and sensitivity to group members' experiences, as well as disadvantages, such as biases of an insider's status. Nevertheless, I concur with Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) who highlight that: "Holding membership in a group does not denote complete sameness within that group. Likewise, not being a member of a group does not denote complete difference" (p. 60). In fact, according to Agar (2006), the researcher's emic and etic views are essential in ethnographic research. Showing empathy and being open, honest, and curious facilitates any encounter between researcher and participant and contributes to ensuring accurate representation and a balanced account of participants' views and experiences (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Elmir et al., 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

This research study was approved by the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board 1. Ethical approval was sought prior to the start of recruitment of participants. Anticipating and actively addressing ethical issues and dilemmas in all phases of research is important in order to protect participants, circumvent misconduct, and uphold studies' and researchers' integrity (Creswell, 2009). The main ethical considerations within this study include ethical issues during data generation and data analysis, including beneficence and non-maleficence, autonomy, and anonymity and confidentiality.

Beneficence and non-maleficence

The potential benefits and risks of participation in this study were minimal and the benefits outweighed the risks. First, sharing everyday life experiences with the researcher who was genuinely interested in the participants' stories transpired as a positive experience for participants and offered an opportunity of self-reflection. For example, some participants reported that the interview encouraged them to think about what helps their family to work and what does not help their family to work well, as well as helping them to take a step back and putting everything in perspective. Other participants appreciated the opportunity to think about their family in a more structured way during the interview than they would usually do and others appreciated the opportunity to talk about their personal experiences with someone else.

A second benefit is that the findings of this study will contribute to the limited research on intercultural families in Canada. It is also hoped that the findings of this study will potentially inform the practice of support agencies who offer services to newcomers and diverse families in Edmonton.

Considering potential risks to participants, I recognize that some relationship issues and personal experiences can be difficult topics for individuals, and can bring up difficult emotions. However, I do not think that the topic of this study, namely family functioning in everyday life, can be considered to be of sensitive nature - "that is, one that has the potential to arouse strong emotional responses" (Walker, 2007, p. 39). On the contrary, this study was primarily interested in the everyday life and common experiences among participants. Hence, participants were only asked to share with the researcher what they felt comfortable with and were not asked to share events that were of sensitive nature to them. As it was, sharing with me their everyday family life experiences did not appear to be a problem for participants in this study.

Autonomy

The topic of informed consent is widely discussed in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method research (Creswell, 2009). Following the principle of "Respect for Persons", participants' autonomy was respected in this study by following standard research procedures with regards to free, ongoing, informed consent (Tri-Council, 2010). In particular, I gained written consent from participants by following the subsequent steps. I handed out a written information sheet and consent form. The information sheet informed participants about the purpose of the study, identified the researchers, and outlined the research process, what participation entailed, topics to be discussed in the interviews, and participants' rights with regards to informed consent. It also explained how confidentiality and participants' privacy would be protected. In addition, I verbally explained the study to participants, providing them with detailed information about the purpose of the study, highlighting confidentiality, and how findings would be used. Participants were also provided an opportunity to ask questions prior to signing the consent form. Finally, I provided participants with a copy of the information sheet and consent form for their reference and record.

Although obtaining written informed consent is important, I also drew on process consent, an ongoing consensual process whereby the researcher ensures that participants are informed at all stages of the research (Byrne, 2001; H. M. Richards & Schwartz, 2002; Sinding & Aronson, 2003; Walker, 2007). Particularly, I reminded participants prior to each individual interview that their participation was voluntary, of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage up until one week after completion of individual interviews, of their right not to answer specific questions, and their right to terminate the interview at any time.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Similar to informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality in research is extensively discussed by scholars (Clark & Sharf, 2007; Smith, 1992; Walker, 2007). Confidentiality

implies that participants' personal information is kept confidential, for example by storing personal information separately from identifying information in a secure location. While anonymity in face-to-face interviews is not possible (Walker, 2007), anonymity of research participants was attained by protecting their identity in all documents, for example by assigning pseudonyms (King & Horrocks, 2010). When presenting research findings, I carefully considered which contextual information can be kept and which needs to be left out in order to protect anonymity. Names were replaced with code numbers in transcripts, and subsequently replaced by pseudonyms in my thesis. Transcribed documents are kept on a secure password-protected network, which ensures the protection of confidential data. Only the researcher and supervisory committee members have access to confidential information.

The issue of confidentiality is important in this study with the aim of exploring family functioning of intercultural families from the perspective of two adult family members. Including both parents in this study was important as each family member has an important role in family functioning. However, studying family level processes from the perspectives of two family members also added complexity and methodological challenges to my study (Kashy, Jellison, & Kenny, 2004; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). In particular, separately interviewing two people within one family needs to take into account ethical issues with regards to confidentiality between participants (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Forbat & Henderson, 2003). Upholding confidentiality of participants' data from one-on-one interviews within a family is difficult as it is likely that members of one family are able to identify each other's quotes. I upheld confidentiality between participants by being clear with participants that one-on-one interviews were confidential. I did not share any information I learnt from one partner with the other participating partner and did not probe into topics that were brought up by one partner unless the topic was brought up by the other partner too (Forbat & Henderson, 2003). In addition, I did not share transcripts with participants or

discuss my interpretations with participants in order to uphold confidentiality of the partners' interviews (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). In one case, this was brought up by a participant who was concerned that what the participant shared about her/his family and the other participating spouse might cause discomfort for the other participating partner or between the couple. I again assured the participant I would uphold the anonymity of each partner in presentations and publications. In another case, one participant expressed interest in receiving a copy of the electronic transcript so that the couple could listen to the interview together. After consulting my supervisory committee, we agreed that this did not breach confidentiality and that ultimately the participant is the owner of the content of the interview. However, the participant did not follow through with this request and no electronic transcripts were made available to any participants. Overall, participants seemed to be comfortable with the fact that they may be able to recognize each other in publications and all couples talked about sharing with each other what they talked about during the interviews with the exception of the above noted participants.

Rigour

I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for ensuring rigour whereby trustworthiness is established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility, which is the equivalent concept to internal validity in quantitative research, reveals that "a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented" (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). In this study, credibility was achieved through peer review with my supervisor that allowed me to examine my developing ideas and challenge my own assumptions (Shenton, 2004). In particular, my supervisor was presented with a substantial amount of data to examine findings for credibility.

Transferability, which is comparable to external validity, is concerned with the applicability of the findings to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By ensuring that

enough contextual information, including information about the participants as well as data generation, is provided, I enable others who read this study to make an informed choice about its transferability to other contexts. Dependability, which is similar to reliability (Shenton, 2004), was demonstrated by reporting processes within the study and operational aspects of data generation in detail, which allows the research to be traceable. Transferability and dependability are linked closely together and, hence, ensuring transferability was a step toward ensuring dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, confirmability, which is comparable with objectivity, is concerned with ensuing that "the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). This was achieved by reporting detailed methodological description through keeping an audit trail that outlines research procedures step-by-step. "Research is never objective" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252), however, it is important as a researcher to reflect on my assumptions, values, and worldview and how they shape my research so that confirmability could be achieved.

CHAPTER 4: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FINDINGS AND THE FAMILIES

In this chapter, I introduce the five families who participated in this study to provide the context for the presentation of the research findings in the following six chapters. At the outset, I present an overview of participants' backgrounds and key sociodemographic data to introduce the commonalities and differences across participants. I then present brief biographies of each family to highlight their unique circumstances and provide the reader with an overview of their family background. All families in this study were in the developmental stage of adjusting and adapting to the needs of their infants and pre-school children, and faced similar normative challenges associated with energy depletion, lack of privacy, and loss of individual or couple time. However, at the same time, each family's experience was unique and each family faced unique circumstances that affected their family's functioning in distinctive ways.

Following the introduction of the participating families, I present the research findings (Chapters 5 through 10) as related to the two research questions that guided this study. However, rather than having separate sections in which I discuss the findings pertaining to each research question, I chose to organize the research findings as follows: I describe each of the six themes that constitute family functioning, which emerged from participants' responses to questions about a typical day for their family, what family members do together and for each other, what it means to say a family is working well and what helps their family to work well. Therefore, I address my first research question. The six themes are (1) Having Effective Communication, (2) Spending "Fun Times" Together, (3) Sharing Family Roles, (4) Family Rituals, (5) Common Goals and Values, and (6) Providing and Receiving Support. For the sake of clarity, I discuss the themes in separate chapters. However, the family processes that comprise each theme are somewhat interrelated. This interrelatedness between

different dimensions of family functioning has also been highlighted in the literature (Epstein et al., 2003).

As part of the discussion about each dimension of family functioning identified by families, I address individual-level factors as well as social and economic conditions that influence families' functioning as described by participants. I also draw attention to the role that cultural values, beliefs, and norms have on each aspect of family functioning based on participants' accounts. I provide supporting quotes from participants to illustrate their experiences. I also examine research regarding the way these family level processes and factors assert themselves in previous research about mixed families as well as other family contexts.

Introduction to Participating Families

Participants in this study were five intercultural two-parent families with pre-school children residing in the City of Edmonton. My definition of intercultural families includes families in which both partners come from different cultural backgrounds. Partners might also come from different racialized groups. The participants varied in terms of their immigration status (Canadian citizen, Permanent Resident, Student Visa) and their countries of origin. Among the five families, all five mothers were foreign-born first generation and all five fathers were Canadian-born second or later generation. Mothers had been in Canada between two and ten years. Two fathers were born and raised in Edmonton. One father was born and raised in Edmonton but left the country for employment for the last 15 years before returning to his home city six months prior to taking part in the study. Two fathers were born and raised in Central Canada and relocated to Edmonton for employment opportunities.

All participants were married heterosexual couples. The mean length of marriage was 3.4 years ($SD = 3.3$), ranging from one to five years. Participants ranged in age from 32 to 46 years ($M = 36.8$, $SD = 4.7$). Their seven pre-school children ranged in age from eight months

to four years ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.2$). There were only slight variations in family size. One family was composed of three generations with a total of four family members including one child, two parents, and one grandparent. Two families were composed of four family members including two parents and two children, and two families were composed of three family members including two parents and one child. Two mothers were practicing Roman Catholics, one mother was practicing her country's indigenous religion, and two mothers were not religious. One father was practicing Roman Catholic, one father was not actively practicing his religion, and three fathers reported to be not religious.

Overall, the participating families in this study were highly educated, middle- to high-income families. Most study participants had a post-secondary education (80 percent), with two having college degrees, four having undergraduate degrees, and four having graduate degrees. Participants' estimated annual household incomes ranged from $49,000 to about $140,000, the mean being $101,800 ($SD = 36,002.77$). This reflects affluence for couple families in Edmonton as well as the province of Alberta in 2011, the median total income being $100,620 and $98,510, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2013). However, participating families reflected greater affluence than Canada's population at large, the median total income for couple families being $79,530 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Participating families consisted of three dual-earner households, one single-earner household, and one household with no-income earner. The family with no-income earners were living off their savings at the time of the interview. For this study, employment is defined as work for payment, whether working inside or outside the family home. Among the male participants, four participated in full-time paid work in the non-profit, private, or public sector. One father was not employed. Among the three employed mothers, two participated in full-time paid work in the private or public sector and one mother was a full-time student and worked part-time. The remaining two mothers were full-time homemakers. Of the five

families, three were home owners in middle to high income residential areas in the City of

Edmonton. One family was transitioning from a rented property to their own family home in

a middle to high income residential neighborhood, and one family was renting in a low to

middle income residential neighborhood[1].

Overall, participants in this study varied in terms of their immigration status, country

of origin, and employment status. Participants were similar in terms of their marital status,

number and age of children, and socioeconomic indicators. In the paragraphs below, I present

biographies of each family. Participants' real names are replaced with pseudonyms.

John, Valentina, and Nathan

John was born and raised in Central Canada and relocated to Edmonton for

employment opportunities. Valentina is from South America and has lived and studied in

many different countries. Valentina immigrated to Canada in 2008 and was in the process of

applying for permanent residency in Canada when I interviewed her. The couple met in

Edmonton and married in 2012. Both parents are practicing Roman Catholics. At the time of

the interview John was 46 years of age and Valentina was 41 years of age. They have one

son, Nathan. John speaks English with his son while Valentina is trilingual and speaks

Spanish with Nathan. English is the couple's common language in their relationship.

Valentina was pursuing a graduate degree at a local university and John was employed full-

time and holds an undergraduate degree. At the time of the interview, Valentina was on

maternity leave and was working part-time in the evenings. The family owns a family home

in a middle- to high-income neighborhood. John's siblings live in Central Canada, and John

talks to his oldest sibling over the phone every few weeks. They visit each other about once a

year. Valentina's siblings and her parents all live abroad. Valentina talks on Skype with her

mother about three times per week. Often, Nathan is present too, so that grandmother and

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[1] I determined a neighborhood's economic situation by attaining area profiles from the City of Edmonton
website that contains information about neighborhoods' housing and economic indicators (City of Edmonton,
2014a).

grandson can see each other. Valentina has close friends in Edmonton who she considers uncles and aunts to her son. At the time of the interview, the family was adjusting to the addition of their son to their family and all the changes that come with a new baby. With John being employed full-time and Valentina being a full-time student and working part-time, the family feels overwhelmed at times and is lacking the practical support from extended family such as childcare provision. The family is considering moving closer to John's family in Central Canada.

David, Isabella, and Ana Sofia

David is from Edmonton and Isabella was born in Central America and immigrated to Canada in 2009. David and Isabella met in Central America and married in 2009. Isabella is a permanent resident of Canada. At the time of the interview both David and Isabella were 33 years of age. They have one daughter, Ana Sofia. David is not actively practicing his religion while Isabella is Roman Catholic. Ana Sofia will be baptized. David speaks English with his daughter while Isabella speaks Spanish with her. English is the couple's common language in their relationship. David and Isabella both have graduate degrees and are both employed full-time in similar fields. Both are very passionate about their work. Their daughter Ana Sofia is looked after by a nanny during the day. David and Isabella love to travel and have lived and worked in many different countries before settling in Edmonton in 2009. The family recently purchased their own family home in a middle- to high-income neighborhood. David's parents live in Edmonton and are in contact about once a month. Isabella's parents and extended family live abroad. Isabella has a very close relationship with her mom and is in frequent contact via text messages and phone. They visit each other at least once a year. Ana Sofia's godparents are close family friends and an important source of support for the family. The family has had a rough couple of years due to the premature arrival of their daughter. Ana Sofia spent an extended period in hospital and required the full attention of her parents.

During this time, Isabella had to take a leave of absence to fully support her daughter in hospital. David continued to work and was supported by his employer who offered flexible work hours that allowed David to take off time from work when he needed to be with his daughter and wife. While still adjusting to a life with a young child at the same time as being employed full-time, both would like to continue to pursue their passion for travelling and introduce their daughter to many different places. Edmonton may not be the family's final destination.

Jean, Mai, Ayako, and Suzu

Jean was born and raised in Edmonton. He left Canada for employment opportunities before returning to Edmonton six months prior to participating in the study. Mai was born and raised in Asia. The couple met abroad while working together. They lived and worked in many different countries, married in 2008 and settled in Edmonton in 2013. Jean is not religious while Mai is practicing her indigenous religion. At the time of the interview Jean was 39 years of age and Mai was 41 years of age. They have two daughters, Ayako and Suzu. Ayako was attending pre-school three times per week. Both parents are bilingual and try to raise their daughters as trilingual. Jean comes from a Francophone family and hence speaks French with his daughters while Mai speaks her first language with them. English is the couple's common language in their relationship. Jean's parents and siblings live in Alberta. Jean is very close to his family and they are very supportive. Mai's parents and siblings live in her home country. They visit each other about once a year and talk over the phone frequently. Mai is very resourceful and had already made a few friends since her arrival in Edmonton. Jean is currently not employed and is building the new family home. He holds an undergraduate degree. At the time of the interview, Mai was staying at home as a full-time mother to raise her two daughters. She also holds an undergraduate degree and would like to pursue employment in her field in the future. The family has experienced a big lifestyle

change from travelling and working in many different countries for more than 12 years to return to Jean's birth city and settle down. The family's main reason for returning to Edmonton was Jean's extended family, the need to settling down because of their two daughters, and the comparative ease for Mai to immigrate to Canada.

Daniel, Chen, Kelly, and Julie

Daniel was born and raised in Edmonton. Chen was born and raised in Asia and immigrated to Canada in 2008. The couple met online and married in 2008. Both parents are not religious. At the time of the interview, Daniel was 34 years of age and Chen was 32 years of age. They have two daughters, Kelly and Julie. Julie was born premature and stayed at the hospital for the first few weeks. Daniel speaks English with his daughters. Chen speaks her first language with her daughters. English is the couple's common language in their relationship. Daniel's father, siblings, and some other extended family members live in Edmonton. They are in contact about once a month and get together on holidays. Chen is an only child. Her parents live in Asia. Chen talks nearly every day with her mother via video chat. Often her oldest daughter is also involved. The family went to her home country a few times together to visit Chen's extended family. Daniel is employed full-time and holds a college degree. Chen is staying at home as a full-time mother to raise her two daughters. She also holds a college degree and would like to pursue employment in the future. The family is adjusting to their second child. Daniel is focused on his career with his goal of pursuing a better job opportunity that would allow his family to purchase their own home. Currently, the family is renting in a low- to middle-income neighborhood. The family may consider moving to Asia in the future.

Mathew, Jin, Tom, and Maylin

Mathew was born and raised in Central Canada and relocated to Edmonton in 2011 because of employment opportunities. Jin was born and raised in Asia. She immigrated to

Canada in 2003. The couple met in Canada and married in 2011. Both parents are not religious. At the time of the interview, Mathew was 34 years of age and Jin was 35 years of age. They have one son, Tom. Jin was pregnant with their second child. Mathew speaks English with Tom and Jin speaks her first language with him. English is the couple's common language in their relationship. Mathew's parents, who immigrated to Canada in the 1970s, live in Central Canada. Mathew is very close to his parents and talks to them nearly every day using FaceTime. This also gives his parents a chance to see their grandson growing up. They visit each other about twice a year. Jin is an only child. Jin's father passed away recently. His sudden death was a shock for the family and set off many changes. Following the death of Jin's father, her mother, Maylin moved in with Jin and Mathew. The family would like to sponsor her. Before Maylin's arrival, the family purchased their own home. As both parents are full-time employed, Maylin takes care of her grandson during the day. Both parents hold graduate degrees. Mathew recently was promoted to a management position and is adjusting to his new responsibilities. Jin is planning to pursue a different type of employment after her maternity leave with her second baby. The family is considering moving back to Central Canada as this is where most of their friends and extended family live.

CHAPTER 5: HAVING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The most frequent topic addressed by participants was that of communication. Therefore, I discuss the theme of communication first. Similar to all major models of family functioning that address the role of communication in family functioning (Epstein et al., 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003), all five families in this study revealed that communication is an essential aspect of their families and their families' functioning in everyday life. According to participants in my study, communication is the most important factor that influences and determines the effectiveness of all other aspects of family functioning.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I present participants' accounts regarding the importance of communication for effective family functioning. While each family had slightly different understandings about the importance of effective communication, four common functions of communication emerged, which I discuss in the following order: (1) expression of emotion, (2) problem solving, (3) decision making, and (4) nurturing. As well, each family faced different challenges in achieving effective communication. However, one common challenge was that both spouses in each family had different communication styles which shape their communication. The second set of findings is about language, which plays an important role in communicative functions, including the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions (Samovar et al., 2013). Language was considered an important subject by all families. Some participants also spoke about language barriers they faced. Third, I present findings about other influential factors.

Participants revealed how "having conversations" was important to the family's overall functioning and a means to share feelings, needs, and preferences. Participants considered effective communication the main influential factor for family relationships to be successful. Participants emphasized that other family functions and processes are reliant on the effectiveness of communication in families. In response to a question about what helps

their family to work well, many participants emphasized the importance of communication.

Two parents, John and Mai, explained:

> "Well, it's communication I think, it helps you and it hurts you. If you're communicating lots it helps, if you're not communicating enough it hurts, so, I think everything starts and ends with any relationship with communication."
>
> John, father

> "If the family is not working well, or communicating well, it's always not comfortable, right. So, it helps me to go through difficulty. If I feel the support from Jean and if I have good communication with Jean, I feel strong to deal with kids, basically, [Laughingly]."
>
> Mai, mother

The effectiveness of communication is also tied to the amount and presence of communication. For instance, in response to a question about what makes it difficult for his family to work well, David emphasized that lack of communication leads to deterioration in family functioning because family communication is connected and crucial to a family's ability to accomplish other functions of the family:

> "When we're not communicating effectively, when, when that breaks down either because we're stressed out, sometimes money if there's a shortage of it, if, that's a difficult piece that we have difficulty communicating around sometimes, many families do, but, um, we've different views on that, um, and we're getting better at it but sometimes that causes problems and challenges. […] Lack of communication I think is when it doesn't work well, is when that breaks down somehow, and usually it's because, I think it's because of things like, we're stressed out because of work or there some, usually another situation, or some issue that we haven't been able to come to some sort of resolution, and, and then that's when it deteriorates a little bit, and then that causes stress and then we're not functioning in a, in a great way, we miss those things that recharge us, those fun times that we spend together and, and it makes it harder to do those things and how to be effective."
>
> David, father

David's quote underlines the connection between communication, stressors (e.g., external stressors, unresolved issues), and the family's ability to accomplish tasks effectively, especially with regards to a family's ability to spend enjoyable time with each other, a vital function of the family according to the participants in my study.

On the contrary, lack of or infrequent communication, communication that involves

constant arguing, fighting, and losing tempers, and communication that is closed was

described as ineffective communication and contributed to challenges within families. Two

mothers explained:

> "I think not arguing is when it's working well. So, when the communication is
> a little bit, flows really well, because what can happen is, we'll end up doing
> things, but there's like arguments to get to do those things. So if you end up
> doing those things and communicating in a way where you're not arguing and
> they get done, I think that's when it's working really well."
>
> Isabella, mother

> "I think that our family versus the family I grew up, because John is in our
> family, we have better things, like in my family was always conflict. Our way
> to communicate was fighting, all the time, and conflict and crying and, you
> know and it was very loud and everybody had an opinion. And because John
> is in our family, and he is the person that never fights, [Laughingly], so our
> family is more peaceful."
>
> Valentina, mother

Expression of emotions

All participating families reported that communication that is characterized by the

expression of emotion is vital for effective functioning. With regards to affective

communication, Jean stated that it is essential and an important coping strategy. Jean also

explained that he would like to make sure that his daughters feel comfortable to express their

feelings and to be able to openly talk about everything:

> "It's something that I would like more for the girls for them to be able to
> discuss openly. I don't like the idea of, not hiding but not feeling comfortable
> talking about your feelings and where you're at. I don't think that's a
> particularly helpful coping strategy. So, communication for me is extremely
> important, and it's something that I think the whole family, I think that's
> something I bring to the family, more than anybody else will, just cause it's a
> big part of me, and who I am."
>
> Jean, father

Sharing feelings with each other included both positive feelings, for example what

spouses appreciated and admired about each other, as well as negative feelings, such as times

when spouses were upset or angry. For example, Valentina pointed out that her ability to

continuously express her feelings was valued by her partner. Valentina recalled:

> "So, I'm the one that when we were dating he said, 'Well, I like that you always say too much because I always know where I stand'. Because I will tell him everything, when I like him, when I didn't like him, when I was upset, when I was happy, when I'm sorry, I will always tell."
>
> <div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Participants also explained that the ability to express one's feelings, while necessary for

effective family communication, is not always easy and is an ongoing learning process:

> "It's an ongoing process, really open communication about what's going on in our heads and it's improving but certainly not where it is, where I would like it to be."
>
> <div align="right">Jean, father</div>

Some participants acknowledged that sharing their feelings and being able to openly

communicate was not their strength. Mai explained that while she was not used to openly

share her feelings and emotions, she acknowledged the importance of doing so. Sharing her

feelings with her husband enabled Mai to become aware of her own feelings:

> "I have problem explaining what I feel, what I wanna do, because of my English skills, but Jean said it's not English abilities, just myself, my mind, but, [Laughingly], maybe, still myself is not really used to talk about emotions, feelings, and kind of things, but trying to put in word, because if you don't say it you don't know, right, so, just trying to do it."
>
> <div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

Similarly, John explained that he struggled to openly share his feelings and acknowledged

that this can result in problems in family relationships:

> "That's probably the thing I struggle the most with because I'm very quiet and shy and she tells you what she is feeling. I never really open up all the time and so that causes a bit of grief."
>
> <div align="right">John, father</div>

Problem solving

Participants also highlighted that effective communication fulfilled another important

function of their families, namely to problem solve, a finding that is consistent with previous

research (Epstein et al., 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003). Nearly all families mentioned the

occurrence of conflict in their families. Participants talked about conflict as a normative

aspect of family functioning and family communication. Effective problem solving included

family member's ability to accommodate and be responsive to different opinions,

perspectives, and needs. When David responded to my question about what helps his family

to work well, he explained that effective communication allowed his family to resolve

conflicts by facilitating a process that enabled both spouses to better understand each other's

perspectives:

> "I always think, even though it doesn't always work, if our communication is going well then that tends to be when things go best, right, because if there's a problem then if you can communicate that effectively and the person can respond and take that in and understand it, you can sort of move through that issue. So communication is really big."
>
> David, father

The ability to introduce such conversations was seen as a skill not every family

member is able to implement. Mai appreciated her partner's ability to introduce conversations

about conflicts and issues. According to Mai, by giving her sufficient time to express her

feelings, she and her husband are able to better understand each other and work through

conflicts effectively. Mai explained:

> "Jean really likes to talk about things if there is some conflict or some misunderstanding. It's been good in a way that he asks me: 'so tell me, what's going on?' Then, at the beginning, my English wasn't good enough to explain what's going on in me, what I feel, what I'm thinking about. Then I said I need the time to think about what I feel. So then he gives me time and then I talked to him when I'm ready and then we understand each other. But I really like it and then we still need to work on sometimes but I'm happy about those things and I'm happy that he brings up the issues that we need to talk about."
>
> Mai, mother

Talking with each other facilitated better understanding among family members and

allowed them to move through any issues and disagreements as opposed to being stuck using

ineffective communication or no communication. Thus, lack of communication was

considered by participants as the source for problems whereas effective communication

enabled family members to come to an understanding of each other's perspectives and move

through disagreements:

> "I feel that if there is a difference or if there is an argument, for example, me and my wife can, we'll have our fight, we'll have our talk, but we'll still talk it through until, you know, we both understand each other's positions."
>
> Daniel, father

> "I think the good thing is that one of us will usually, if somebody is not doing what they need to do, one of us will be aware of it, and we usually have a chat about it, or an argument about it. And, [Laughingly], we work through it somehow and have that conversation. We spend a lot of time, perhaps because of me, and I'm a very, I like talking about things and talking about, talking, talking, talking. We spend a lot of time talking about our relationship, and working through it, and having those conversations. So we're very aware that, or at least I feel, we're always a work in progress and always keep trying to make things better and adapt to changing circumstances."
>
> David, father

While effective communication facilitated the process of overcoming disagreements,

families also recognized that some topics of disagreements involved an ongoing process of

communication. Such a negotiation process seemed more important than finding a quick

solution. This was highlighted by Jin who provided an example of a disagreement between

her and her husband:

> "When we talk about that, yes we always have different opinions. For example, I told him I want him go to a very good reputation school, for that I would rather to buy another house move to another district area in order to go to a nice school. But he doesn't agree with that. He said he went to a school very close to his house, but he was very good in every school, so it doesn't make any difference to which school you go. If you're good kid then you're good kid. I don't know, in a way, we might do that, we might not. So, I think maybe in the future in terms of education we might have some disagreement."
>
> Jin, mother

Asking Jin how she was coping with disagreements, she stated that she did not have a

resolution at this point but appeared confident that she and her husband would come to a

solution in the future:

> "I don't know. I didn't think about that, I think. When it comes we'll have solution [Laughingly]."
>
> Jin, mother

Decision making

I further inquired about the decision making processes engaged in by families because it is an "unavoidable, daily process" (Turner, 2003, p. 394). Decision making and problem solving are integrated family functioning processes, and decision making usually follows from problem solving. Based on participants' descriptions, decisions ranged from small to big, including what to eat, how to discipline children, how to use resources, and where to live, for example. However, I only gathered limited information from participants regarding family decision making processes, as participants seemed to find it difficult to discuss.

As a process that involves the input of family members and innately involves some form of communication, decision-making reveals important information about families, their communication patterns, and power relations (Turner, 2003). According to Isabella, the process of decision making in her family could be improved as it was often one-sided. Isabella explained that she was more likely to overpower her husband when making decisions due to her direct communication style, which was different from her husband's indirect style of communication. Isabella recognized that improving her and her husband's ability to understand each person's perspective would facilitate a decision making process that involves both partners equally:

> "Figuring out, probably we could do a better job with me not dictating things, because I do have that really strong direct communication and if I don't stop and take the time to figure out what David is really saying, I think I can overpower things and end up doing things my way which I probably need to like slow down, be like, okay, you communicate a little bit differently so what are you trying to say and what questions do I need to ask to find out what you really want instead of just bulldozing ahead, which I can do a lot."
>
> Isabella, mother

Overall, participants reported that decision making in their families was dependent on the type of decision to be made, but usually involved discussion between the parents. Two fathers described that they were usually the ones making the bigger decisions and primarily those outside the family home whereas the mothers were usually the ones making the smaller,

yet essential decisions within the family home, for example regarding household tasks and childcare:

> "I feel that, I mean I think they work fine, because I feel that I get to exert my authority over a lot of the larger decisions and so obviously that works well for me. And I think that it works well for Jin, too, because I feel that she delegates that authority to me for lots of things, it's not that I step up to take it, I often will, you know, at length ask her for some input where she, and she doesn't either care, and that's fine, or she doesn't want to have the pressure of the decision for whatever reason and in those circumstances I feel I have to make those kinds of decisions, which is okay."
>
> Mathew, father

> "Well, it depends on what the decision is, I think. I tend to make, everything's a discussion of course, you know, I don't make unilateral decisions, but I tend to suggest the bigger decisions to be made in life whereas Mai tends to make all the kind of important smaller decisions, you know, to ensure that things work, you know. So, a bit like moving here, of course we talked about it, you know, is this a good idea, you know, but it was not a big kind of fight for her to try to get me move to [Asian country], you know, instead of coming here."
>
> Jean, father

Decisions with regards to where to live are often difficult decisions to be made and can be described as an ongoing decision making process rather than a discrete event (Segrin & Flora, 2011). All families in this study talked about potentially moving elsewhere, either within Canada or to another country due to a variety of reasons, including being closer to their partner's family of origin, as was the case in three families, or because parents desired their children to live in different countries. Of course, deciding where to live is a challenge that is not unique to intercultural families but perhaps a common challenge in many families, for example due to employment opportunities and immigration (Sanagavarapu, 2007).

Most children in this study were two years of age or younger, limiting their ability to provide input into family decisions. Nevertheless, one father also talked about starting to involve his children in the decision making process, suggesting the importance of involving all family members:

> "We try to involve the girls more and more and getting them to be responsible for making decisions and why. I try to get them to, okay, you know you wanna do this, well, why do you wanna do this, and try to think through the decision

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making process. And, I mean at [their age] they're not experts at it, but I think it's important for them to understand why they make decisions and how they make decisions and that, you know, if we make decisions as a family, we're gonna go here, we gonna do this or whatever else that, you might not wanna do this but, everybody else might, and some other time you get to do something and nobody else might wanna do it, but, you know, there's gonna be give and take and that's part of being a family."

<div align="right">Jean, father</div>

Nurturance

Participants further highlighted the important role that communication played in fulfilling the central function of nurturance within their families. While family members used different ways of carrying out nurturing behaviors and nurturing communication, it was clear that the nurturing function was central to all families and family relationships, promoting connectedness in the family system. Participants revealed that nurturing each other was one major function that was facilitated by both verbal and nonverbal communication and included communication that was encouraging and supportive. Nurturing behaviors attended to spouse's physical, intellectual, and emotional development and included encouragement and support, love and appreciation for each other, and family members spending fun times together and enjoying being around each other. The quotes by David and Mai illustrate how nurturing each other through communication resulted in happiness and satisfaction in their family life:

"I also really find her super supportive in terms of just being a partner and, being, like all that stuff, being able to come home and talk about what's going on, I feel very safe with her, so to me that's, I really value that relationship."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

"When Jean shows me how much he loves me or supports me, then I feel happy and I'm so lucky to have him."

<div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

Besides nurturing each other, parents also talked about how they focused on nurturing their children's development including their children's physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. Families and family relationships are the primary environment for

infants and pre-school children and as such exert the biggest influence on shaping their physical, emotional, and social development and wellbeing (Borkowski, Ramey, Landesman, & Bristol-Power, 2002; Luvmour, 2010; Patterson & Vakili, 2014). Nurturing children included communicating and interacting with them in developmentally appropriate ways, attending to their physical needs, and being involved in their children's life. Nurturing communication was described as one essential aspect of the family's nurturing function:

> "It's just, [Sigh], these things are so hard to put into words, you know, I see Isabella's really close relationship with her mom, and I see that growing between her and Ana Sofia that is just, they have a really intimate connection, because I think they went through so much together and they just, Isabella just is able to entertain Ana Sofia endlessly and talk to her and they have conversations, and Ana Sofia can't even talk yet, so it's very enjoyable to watch them interact and see how happy they make each other."
>
> David, father

It is evident from participants' quotes that communication plays a key role in family functioning, particularly concerning expression of emotion, problem solving, decision making, and nurturing. This finding converges with previous literature suggesting that "family communication is viewed, at least implicitly, as either the cause of some family problems or the route to a cure", and that "virtually everyone can benefit from efforts to improve family communication" (Segrin & Flora, 2011, p. 370).

Language – An Important Cultural Link?

In this section, I consider my findings about language use. Language includes both verbal and nonverbal communication means that enable individuals to express and respond to feelings and needs (Klyukanov, 2005). Languages are embedded in the larger cultural context and it is through the medium of language that cultures, traditions, and customs are preserved and transmitted (Frie, 2013). Language is also often used as an indication of the retention of traditional cultural values (Almeida, Molnar, Kawachi, & Subramanian, 2009). In this study, all five families consisted of family members with different native languages and all families practiced bilingualism or trilingualism by reading stories or watching television in both

languages, or being in regular contact with friends or family members who spoke the parent's native language. Hence, all children acquired two, and in one case three languages from birth as their first languages as opposed to their immigrant mothers who acquired a second or third language later in life. While all mothers attained good knowledge or fluency in English, none of the husbands were able to speak their wife's first language fluently, although two fathers reported some knowledge of their wives' language. This may be expected as fathers did not need to speak their spouse's native language in order to communicate or function in Canadian society or had limited time and energy to invest in acquiring a new language, compared to their spouses whose knowledge of the English language was necessary for them to communicate with their husbands and others. Bilingualism or trilingualism appeared to be a natural as well as deliberate choice. Three fathers, David and Daniel, both English speaking, and Jean, bilingual in English and French explained:

> "Language is important, you know, learning and having to speak more than one language is important. English will be the primary language at one point but they'll pick that up very well so teaching them [my native language] right now is very important, to give them a base, and having them learn [my partner's native language] is very important, just because otherwise they will not have access to that culture. If you don't have the language, it's difficult to fully access a culture without the language. You can partially, but I don't think you fully can until you speak it and understand it very well."
>
> Jean, father

> "What I really wanna focus on, I'm pretty sure Isabella does as well is ensuring, you know, that that language is strong, Isabella's language, that she's well connected with the understanding of what it means to be Latina, and what it means to have her mom be an immigrant and that history, that family, those connections, those values, that she has opportunities to explore those."
>
> David, father

> "As far a language goes, that just came naturally really. It wasn't something that we just decided; it was just something that was innate. She would talk to Kelly in [her native language] and I would obviously talk to Kelly in English. And Kelly would pick up both really quickly."
>
> Daniel, father

As revealed by participants' accounts, parents played an active role in developing and promoting their children's bilingualism or trilingualism. Bilingualism or trilingualism was of

cultural importance to the fathers, predominantly in terms of enabling their children to access their partner's "minority" culture in addition to Canadian culture. Children's ability to acquire English was seen as innate and the norm of living in Canada. It appears that fathers essentially associated the important role of language in terms of the transmission of their spouse's minority culture, overlooking or dismissing the connection between language and Canadian culture. One plausible explanation for this pattern across fathers is concerned with being monolingual and part of the majority culture. In this study, four of the five fathers were monolingual in English with only limited or a beginner's level of command of their spouse's first language and therefore spoke English with their children and their spouses. One father was bilingual and spoke his first language with his children and English with his wife. It appears that fathers only linked culture to their spouses who came from "another", "different", and "minority" culture. As suggested by Frie (2013):

> When culture is associated only with difference or minority groups, the role of language in the transmission of culture and meaning is overlooked. The point is that all speakers are cultural beings engaged in a process of language acquisition and implicit cultural understanding, regardless of ethnicity or linguistic ability. (p. 18)

Hence, it seems that despite and due to the dominance of the English language, all of the families in this study put emphasis on the "minority" language. Therefore, the primary focus was for children to learn their mother's native language so that they were able to access and understand their cultural identity of their mother's country of origin. While raising their children bilingual or trilingual was the main task of parents, children were offered different possibilities of reinforcing their language learning, such as talking to extended family over the phone or internet as well as meeting with friends and their children who speak the same language. Hence, consistent with previous research, the family provides the primary

opportunity for learning heritage languages and cultures while the larger social context offers children opportunities to learn about mainstream Canadian culture (Phinney, 1990).

Acquiring the host country's dominant language has often been considered an indicator of acculturation (Phinney & Flores, 2002). All mothers who were newcomers to Canada and did not speak English as their first language had a sufficient command of English that allowed them to take part in the interviews carried out in English, and some mothers were fluent in English. While English was the common language among all couples, as well as the common language between four fathers and their children, the mothers' goal for themselves and their children was to become bilingual with an emphasis on teaching their children their first language.

Consistent with previous research focusing on language use and bilingualism which has shown potential benefits of raising children bilingual, including cognitive benefits (Bialystok, Luk, Peets, & Yang, 2010; Costa, Hernández, & Sebastián-Gallés, 2008; Golash-Boza, 2005; Lazaruk, 2007), linguistic and academic benefits (Golash-Boza, 2005; Lazaruk, 2007), and stronger family cohesion (Portes & Hao, 1998), all mothers talked about the many benefits of talking more than one language. Some recurring explanations included the ability to communicate with extended family and friends in their home countries, the ability to communicate with more people and to live in different countries, neurological benefits, and increasing life opportunities. Two mothers, Isabella and Mai, explained how transmitting their native languages and thereby their cultural heritage was important to them.

> "I think neurologically, it's really important to speak multiple languages. I think for brain plasticity and for her, like just neurologically it's really important then as well as opening doors and providing you different opportunities, I think it's really important. And to be able to communicate, I mean you can communicate with more people, [Laughingly], if you speak more languages and so I think, it gives that piece that I really value about the world being just larger than where you live, I think language can provide that, especially because the way that [my native language] is. It's very descriptive and it's almost more around emotions and feelings, and so I think if she was to

have that, it's easier for her to get in touch with that side of that culture of hers because she has the language to support those pieces."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

"Yeah, because, obviously [name of language] is my mother tongue and even though I'm still having hard time explaining my feelings, in [my first language] because we don't have sometimes words to explain the feelings, somehow. So then, English is sometimes easier in a way, it's strange but, even then, it's my mother language so that it's easier to explain to them everything anyway. And also for my parents, and my family in [my country], they all speak [my first language], no English, they all kind of understand English but not really. So then if you were to talk freely with them, for that reason, too, that I want them to understand [my first language] really well."

<div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

As can be seen from the mothers' descriptions, language is considered crucial to support cultural knowledge. That is, knowing a language does not only mean knowing the vocabulary and grammar, but more importantly implies knowing cultural behaviors and norms. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) emphasize that "to really connect with a culture, we must understand the language of a cultural group" (p. 118). With regards to the above quotes, it is noteworthy that for Mai, English seemed to enable her to more easily talk about her feelings and emotions whereas Isabella noted that her first language rather than English would allow her daughter to more easily get in touch with her emotions. Here, the relationship between language, communication, and culture becomes evident. Cultures shape what is perceived as appropriate or inappropriate in terms of conveying or holding back emotions (D. Matsumoto, 2006), and there are different rules in different cultures.

Language - A barrier?

Speaking multiple languages among family members did not come without challenges. Challenges varied depending on families' unique circumstances, but included lack of English language skills and disjointed conversations among family members. Some mothers mentioned that they lacked the vocabulary to explain something to their partner, and desired to become more fluent in English, a finding consistent with current research on mixed

families (Cools, 2006). These mothers felt that it was easier to explain things to their children in their mother language. Two mothers explained:

> "I just feel my English is not that good, [Laughingly]. I just want to talk more, explain more, but sometimes I don't know how to say and Daniel always thinks my English is good, always thinks he can understand me, but I'm thinking, maybe not. But he always thinks, no, it's not English. Sometimes I'm thinking it is English thing, so, [Laughingly]. I'm a little bit frustrated about my language as it should be getting better."
>
> <div align="right">Chen, mother</div>

> "I think the communication problem. I speak English, but when I'm tired, the English part shuts down. I think that, you know, like if we were from the same culture and we spoke the same language, when you are tired, you know, that will be better."
>
> <div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Two families in particular talked about the challenge of disjointed conversations because of lack of understanding of each other's language. For Jean, who is bilingual in English and French, dinner times in particular presented a challenging time for family conversations:

> "I dislike, well it's not really what I dislike about the family, I dislike that I don't understand enough Mai's language, and I imagine Mai probably dislikes the fact that she doesn't understand enough my language. There are a lot of conversations that are three-ways, you know. So, it's either me and the two girls, or Mai and the two girls. And we end up being kind of left out of some conversations, that is difficult. I try pick up on what they're saying and I can to a certain degree but as they get older and conversations get more complicated, or more in depth, I'm going to struggle understanding what they're talking about and being able to be part of that kind of thing, and so there's going to be a discussion I guess at one point about how we're going to manage that as a family, cause right now at dinner there's three languages going on, the girls understanding us, you know, understand better than they, than they speak it, and so they understand what we're saying, but I don't always understand what they're saying or Mai doesn't always understand what we're saying, and so conversations sometimes are a little bit disjointed, totally unrelated because, you know, we didn't understand what the other one was saying. So, I find that difficult and, you know, it'll be interesting to see how we resolve that kind of moving forward."
>
> <div align="right">Jean, father</div>

Another family reported that communication among all family members was difficult due to the father's lack of language fluency in his wife's first language and his mother-in-law's lack

of fluency in English. In this family, conversations were often disjointed and the bilingual wife often reported to take on the challenging role of the translator. The couple explained:

> "Communication between me and Jin's mom isn't very easy, some days I'm more motivated than others to try and then I'll bring my tablet down and translate, like I type something out is usually more effective when Jin is not around, that we can manage a conversation. Actually, the best conversation we sort of ever managed to have is around trying to draw out our family trees and talk about things together […] so that was a good conversation we managed to have with just a pen and paper. But it's intense to have a conversation."
>
> Mathew, father

> "Make it difficult, I think maybe it's my mom cannot talk the same language as my husband. So, if she can talk same language, we three can always sit together, talk about something, something happened today, it's funny, or it's sad, so, it's my husband, before he complains like two families, she stay one place, we two stay another place. So, it feels like a little bit separate."
>
> Jin, mother

Based on families' descriptions, language seems to be a crucial medium for family togetherness. Without speaking the same language, communication is difficult to achieve and without communication, it is hard to build a shared family identity through shared family time. Limited English language fluency can also lead to other negative outcomes, such as social isolation or access to health and social care services (Jacobs, Karavolos, Rathouz, Ferris, & Powell, 2005), and this point was raised by Mathew regarding his mother-in-law:

> "Now, the cold of the winter is setting in I worry that will lead to a little bit of isolation for her mom and I'm not as comfortable with her going out on a really bad cold snowy day with Tom not speaking English and like, you know, what if something went wrong and she can't communicate to someone, it wouldn't be a great situation."
>
> Mathew, father

Canada is home to a linguistically diverse population reporting more than 200 languages as mother tongues (Statistics Canada, 2012a). In 2011, the majority of the Canadian population, that is 75 percent, or 24.8 million people reported speaking English as their first official language, and for 58 percent of Canadians, English was their mother tongue. In comparison, 23.2 percent, or 7.7 million people in Canada reported speaking French as their first official language, and for 22 percent of the population in Canada, French

was their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2012a). By contrast, roughly 20 percent of Canadians do not speak either English or French as a mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2012a). English is considered a minority language in only two Canadian provinces and territories, with 44.7 percent of residents in Nunavut reporting to speak English as their first language and 10.6 percent of residents in Quebec reporting to speak English as their first language (Ricento, 2013). Canada is officially considered a bilingual country with its two official languages, English and French. However, a large percentage of Canadians are bilingual, speaking English as a second language along with their native language that is often not French. As suggested by Ricento (2013), "Canada is a country with multiple bilingualisms, multi-multiculturalisms" (p. 484). It is interesting to note that the census question regarding home language use does not consider the equal use of two or more languages spoken at home as is the case in all families that participated in my study.

In sum, all mothers in this study highlighted the importance of retaining their native languages, suggesting its significance to their cultural heritage and identity. None of the participants reported conflicting opinions regarding language use at home and all fathers revealed that they valued their spouses' ability to transmit cultural values and identities embodied in their native language (Lundén & Silvén, 2011). However, the use of more than one language posed some ongoing challenges for families and required ongoing reflection.

Influential Factors

In this section, I discuss factors that shaped participants' communication. All participants mentioned a variety of internal and external influential factors that have shaped their communication and could potentially explain differences in communication between family members. These include a person's upbringing, previous interactions, and the external environment, including cultural norms.

Communication and culture are interconnected and "produced through a dynamic relationship with the other" (Shirato & Yell, 2000, p. 2). Cultural values, norms, rituals, and customs are transmitted and preserved through human interaction, as without communication, cultures could not be shared. However, culture is not static; rather, culture evolves over time and thereby shapes communication patterns. In intercultural encounters, individuals often bring with them linguistic habits, language differences, and value orientation differences that reflect values and norms of the culture they are, or have been part of and further convey individuals' unique personalities and identities (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). Communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds can be referred to as intercultural communication and refers to "the symbolic exchange whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities attempt to negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation within an embedded societal system" (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012, p. 24). Intercultural communication is not new but "has been occurring for thousands of years as cultural groups waged war, conducted commercial activities, and engaged in social exchanges with each other" (Samovar et al., 2013, p. 2).

According to Hall (1976), "human interaction, on a broad level, can be divided into low-context and high-context communication systems" (as cited in Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 123). Low and high context communication refers to how people communicate in different cultures, in particular, "the degree to which families create a climate where all family members are encouraged to participate in unrestrained interaction about a wide array of topics" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2013, p. 184). In low-context cultures, such as many Western or individualistic cultures, for example Sweden, Finland, and Switzerland communication emphasizes verbal directness, transparency and explicitness to convey meaning, assuming the stance of "say what you mean, and mean what you say" (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012, p. 123). Canada and the Unites States are considered moderate

low-context cultures (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). In contrast, in many high-context cultures, including many collectivistic cultures such as South Korea, China, and Japan, communication is implicit and indirect, assuming that understanding is developed through shared or embedded cultural or situational contexts. Hence, nonverbal behavior is an important part of understanding verbal messages (Brislin, 1993). Communication in high-context cultures take on the stance of "don't say anything that will hurt other's feelings" (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012, p. 123). This classification can vary, of course, depending on "assumed identities, intentions, interaction goals, relationship types, and the situation" (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012, p. 125).

In intercultural encounters, individuals engage in communication that can often result in misunderstandings, based on individuals' predisposition to make cultural judgments about divergent high-context and low-context communication characteristics (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). However, intercultural encounters can also result in the creation of shared experiences, allowing individuals to become aware of their own cultural values, norms, and expectations that shape individuals' understanding of what is deemed appropriate or right, or inappropriate or wrong in human interaction. Hence, intercultural encounters can facilitate individuals' critical thinking and questioning of their cultural socialization that encourage people to think that "what is real to us becomes comfortable; what is comfortable becomes right. What we do not understand becomes less than right to us" (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012, p. 156).

As part of the cultural socialization process, individuals acquire cultural beliefs, values, and norms regarding communication, however, these are most often attained on an unconscious rather than conscious level. In fact, in response to a question about his cultural values and norms, one father talked about how norms operate on an unconscious level which makes it difficult to name one's own norms:

> "I'm sure there are tons of those, the tricky thing about norms is that they are normalized so you often, you're not really aware of them. I almost wish you could, I hope you asked Isabella what she thought my norms were cause she'd probably tell you better."
>
> David, father

Cultural socialization often directs individuals to view, explain, and understand the world based on their own cultural system. Without interaction with individuals from different cultural systems, differences are often not recognized (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). According to Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012), "without a comparative basis, we may never question the way we have been conditioned and socialized in our primary cultural system. Cultural socialization, in one sense, encourages the development of ethnocentrism" (p. 14).

According to participants in my study, cultural norms are one among many possible influential factors that shape individuals' communication style, including unique personalities, previous communication experiences, and upbringing. In response to a question about what they liked least about their family life, something that they would change if they could, two fathers, David and Mathew, commented:

> "It's something we work on. And I'm sure both of us wish we didn't have to work on that as much as we did and like, could be chalked up to cultural difference, it could be chalked up to personality difference, so it's hard to know what is what, you know, and I'm sure you're familiar with the complexities of culture, and, you know, somebody else might say, 'oh it's because her culture is that way', and I'm not so sure it's just culture, I think a lot of it has to do with our personalities, and all those complexities. So, communication is something sometimes we struggle, figuring out a good way to come to resolution of something that we don't agree with on the whole but on the whole, we generally can figure it out, it's worked pretty good."
>
> David, father

> "Sometimes I feel there's cultural misunderstandings where like I'm, why are you angry, I don't understand how you're angry, I was making a statement and you took it right away to some kind of far negative place and it was more of a question or something like that, so that kind of thing that I'm not sure if it's cultural, or cultural misunderstandings."
>
> Mathew, father

In response to a question about if Mathew and his wife differ in terms of their values,

Mathew explained that certain topics generate differences in opinions. However, Mathew was

not sure if this was based on cultural values or other factors. He explained:

> "Sometimes, we have conversations and I'm not shy and sometimes
> [Laughingly], I feel I lecture her on certain things where I feel she might have
> a perspective that's not correct and I'm not shy to tell someone I think they're
> not correct about something that I think is an absolute, or right and wrong, that
> kind of stuff, and I'm not sure if it comes from her culture or from, you know,
> lack of engagement in that topic cause it's not as in importance to her as it is
> to me."
>
> Mathew, father

When asking Isabella if there is anything in her family life that she would change if

she could, Isabella explained:

> "It's just trying to figure out how do we communicate in a way where like,
> we're both sort of understanding each other, and I think we realize that it's just
> he grew up with that style of communication and I grew up with a very
> different family and dynamic."
>
> Isabella, mother

Isabella linked her and her husband's style of communication to their family of origin

norms, which are arguably also influenced by cultural norms.

For one father, however, differences in communication, particularly with regards to

self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness, appeared to be more directly related to cultural

differences between him and his spouse:

> "Mai being [name of nationality], they don't, I talk about my feelings, I talk
> about anything all the time, you know, I have no problems with it, and what's
> on my mind it comes out because that's kind of, you know, let's talk about it,
> let's get it out, and let's, you know, find a solution, while the [name of culture]
> don't so much talk about their feelings. And so, certainly initially, it drove me
> nuts. And so learning to read the subtleties of the culture of her is, whether it's
> her specific, but I think it's a cultural thing, but read the subtlety of those
> things has been difficult, but now that I'm starting to get it it's much nicer."
>
> Jean, father

In his quote, Jean exemplifies how Different cultures assume differences in

expressing emotions. For example, it is acceptable to express emotions openly in

individualistic cultures, but it is not acceptable to do so in collectivistic cultures (Samovar et

al., 2013; Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). This, of course, can be observed on a broad level, and is dependent on many factors, such as situation, relationship between individuals, and personality (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). At the same time, Yang, Yang, and Lust (2011) highlight that cultural differences interact with and are shaped by geographical location. Hence, individuals' values and norms regarding communication can change based on the socio-cultural environment and this process is highly individual.

Despite slightly different explanations for differences in communication, all participants seemed to go through an ongoing process of communication that requires both to be flexible communicators, learning about each other's differences and integrating those into a shared family communication (Samovar et al., 2013; Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012). As suggested by Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1994 cited in Schrodt et al., 2009), "married couples bring different ideologies and communication patterns to the marital relationship, and that these interaction patterns, in turn, help contribute to the types of family communication environments that emerge once children are born into the family" (p. 854).

In sum, participating families in this study reported differences in how individual family members communicate. However, participants did not associate their differences exclusively with cultural differences, rather, they highlighted that such differences may be the result of a variety of factors like personalities, upbringing, and earlier communication experiences. Previous research in this area has primarily shown that differences in communication based on cultural differences leads to conflict in intercultural families (Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen, 2011). This is consistent with findings in this study, as participants talked about the challenges associated with communication. However, by and large participants talked about communication as a process that was working well, and that facilitated effective functioning. Participants showed awareness about possible explanations for their different communication patterns and rather than perceiving this as a problem,

considered it as an ongoing process that had improved over time, suggesting that communication is a family process that is often a "work in progress".

In conclusion, it appears that communication is not just one of various aspects of family functioning, but one that shapes all other aspects of family functioning, a finding consistent with the Circumplex Model (Olson & Gorall, 2003). Overall, participants portrayed communication as shaping, defining, and managing their family systems (Galvin, Bylund, & Brommel, 2012; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013). According to Arnold (2008), "family is a product of communication" at the same time as communication is a "product of the family" (p. 4).

CHAPTER 6: SPENDING "FUN TIMES" TOGETHER

In this chapter, I discuss another important dimension of family functioning, namely shared family time. When describing their everyday family life, all participating families revealed the importance of spending enjoyable time together as a family. Participants not only described the extent to which family members spent time together, but they also talked about the importance of spending "fun times" together, for example, in enjoyable leisure activities. Previous research has shown that spending time together is an important indicator of family functioning and an aspect of family life that is beneficial to families' functioning and the health and wellbeing of individual family members (Denham, 2003; R. Larson & Richards, 1994). Family time is related to communication and the nurturing of family members as revealed by participants in this study. Similarly, previous research has shown that sharing time as a family has positive effects on the quality of family communication and family relationships and that engaging in enjoyable family time creates a sense of togetherness and enhances child development and wellbeing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fiese, Foley, & Spagnola, 2006; Fiese, 2006).

Qualitative interview data on families' routines provide "qualitative or textual ''averages'' of respondents' representative time schedules" (Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005, p. 87). While the focal point of the semi-structured interviews in this study was not solely on families' daily routines, participants provided a wide breadth and depth of information and examples of family time. Hence, exploring families' daily routines of how they used time together during typical or usual weekdays and weekends provided me with many examples of the activities they engaged in together. Therefore, in this chapter, I first discuss participants' accounts of their family time, which refers to all activities engaged in together as a family including indoor and outdoor playtime, eating meals together, going to activities and local events outside the family home, and visiting friends or relatives. Second, I discuss

sociodemographic and contextual factors that are related to families' experiences and accounts of family time.

Across participants, time spent together as a family was valuable and enjoyable and a process to strengthen family relationships. Families' ideal included quantity as well as quality time. Quantity time was particularly achieved on the weekends as parents did not have to leave for work. Quality time included doing activities together inside or outside the house, playing with their children together, and being relaxed. Family time as described by participants was both structured and unstructured, but tended to be more structured during weekdays and more unstructured during weekends. Participants reported that family time during weekdays was often more structured to meet children's needs around dinner time and bath and bedtime. Because of children's relatively young ages and early bedtime, time spent together as a family was often limited to two to three hours in the evenings and mostly included time spent inside the family home.

All five families reported spending more time together as a family on weekends, and putting more effort into activities that could be described as leisure activities rather than maintenance activities such as doing household chores. Parents emphasized the importance of spending fun times together with their children as a way of connecting, what scholars have often referred to as "quality" time (Christensen, 2002; Gillis, 1996; Tubbs et al., 2005). Such quality family time was often lacking during the week because of parents' limited amounts of time. As expected, family members had fewer individual commitments over the weekends and hence more time to spend with their family in leisure activities than during weekdays. Exploring the daily routines of the five participating families and how families used time together during typical weekends, families provided many examples of family time spent together:

> "On the weekends, Isabella and I pretty much spend the whole day together, if, unless there are errands that are just easier to run solo, you know, like

yesterday we went to the Farmer's Market and that was something that we did together. So, we always try to do one activity on the weekend, it seems, that sometimes it's not planned, sometimes it is, where we're all together and doing something that isn't, you know, just running errands, something that's just for fun."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

"Sometimes, you know, half of the times, I'll say John sees that I'm awake, so he will bring Nathan to our bed and we will just be relaxing, Nathan crawls all over us, so he knows that it's the weekend because we are relaxing. And then we'll get up and we have breakfast. So, that's the difference between the weekend, I think that we spend more time together, where in the week it's more like either I am with Nathan or he is with Nathan and the other one is trying to get something done, like, going to work."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Consistent with previous research, what matters is both, the amount of time spent together as well as the kind of activities families engage in when together (Offer, 2013). The findings in my study showed that family time is an important part of daily family life. Sharing fun moments together enhanced family members' wellbeing, family togetherness, and helped shape positive outcomes. In response to a question about what helps her family to work well, Jin commented:

"I think like these whole family activities will help us work better, that we all go to, let's say, find interesting movie to watch together, bake cookies together, those things will bring everyone together."

<div align="right">Jin, mother</div>

Previous research (Stinnett et al., 1999; Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985) on strong families has shown that spending time together is one of six characteristics that strong families have in common, facilitating the building of close family relationships. In particular, family members in strong families made an effort to adjust their schedules in order to make family time happen.

Based on descriptions of participants in my study, parents' expectations of family time and the actual time spent together were mostly congruent. Overloaded schedules or family members' individual demands outside the home, such as volunteer or leisure commitments, were not brought up as an issue or concern for families in this study. Families

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were not involved in many scheduled activities on weekends, such as preschool classes, extracurricular activities, or sport clubs. Hence, children and parents alike were able to engage in unstructured and spontaneous family activities over the weekends that allowed families to enjoy each other's company. Activities included playing in the family home, watching TV, outings with friends or relatives, going for walks or to the park, attending local events or activities, sharing meals or eating out at restaurants, or going shopping or to the mall. Weekends also allowed families to recharge and to relax. Some of these activities outside the home were consumption-based activities. However, a lot of family interactions took place inside the family home, including the sharing of meals, watching television, talking, and family playtime activities which promote family's enjoyment. Playtime with children was more frequent for stay-at-home mothers compared to working mothers, but was engaged in by all participants:

> "I rough-house with them a fair amount and I treat them like boys, you know, I'll rustle with them and they'll do the same thing with themselves."
>
> Jean, father

> "Do crafts, reading, play with the lego, go for a walk, and shopping, we went to museum sometimes"
>
> Mai, mother

Spending time with their children and each other was of importance to many of the participants. In response to a question about what gives them joy, most parents referred to just spending time with their children and their partners rather than being involved in some form of activity:

> "The times that we are laughing together; it's not the big moments, like the big things, going to the corn field, but it's the little moments when Nathan is like standing up on his own and both John and I were like watching him, you know, and giving his first steps, so, at times though I try to Nathan, for Nathan to eat a new vegetable, he makes faces and we both laughed with John. I think that the little things are the things that John and I enjoy."
>
> Valentina, mother

> "I also enjoy spending time with her, so, it's definitely a big part of our relationship is that we like each other and we get a kick out of each other.

> When we're all out and doing things together and experiencing the world as a family, is quite fun. That gives me a lot of hope and excitement as well, because I imagine all the things that we gonna do"
>
> David, father

Given the fact that eating "is universal and routine" (Musick & Meier, 2012, p. 477), it is not surprising that the majority of participating families in my study incorporated shared family meals into their everyday family routines. Shared family meals, such as dinner, are repeated on a regular basis and involve instrumental tasks, such as grocery shopping or cleaning up. In my study, four of the five participating families engaged in eating meals together, and three out of the four families shared meals on a daily basis. Routines around eating together mostly differed during the week compared to the weekends due to spouses' employment commitments but mealtime in these four families was part of their family life, regardless of whether it was a weekday or weekend. Families typically shared the evening meal during the week and meal preparation and eating together was an everyday routine that included all family members including the children, regardless of their ages.

Sharing in many of the tasks of dinner, such as meal preparation and cleaning up, was common among all families, although to varying degrees. Two families in particular talked about sharing the tasks related to dinner preparation, and having both spouses helping each other seemed to facilitate the ease of meal preparation and the regular sharing of family meals. For example, in these two families, one spouse engaged with the child allowing the other spouse to prepare dinner hassle free. Participants explained:

> "When we come home we usually make dinner together, often I'll play with Tom a little bit while she's preparing some dinner. Then we'll sit down and we'll eat together with her and her mum. Then afterwards we'll clean the table and put the dishes in the dishwasher or do the dishes, play a little bit more."
>
> Mathew, father

> "I will be with Ana Sofia while he is making dinner. So he usually, he does most of the cooking. If it wasn't for him, I don't think I would eat. So he will make dinner, and then we'll all sit down and eat together. So, either myself or David will feed Ana Sofia and we just all eat together."
>
> Isabella, mother

Breakfast routines in all families varied with regards to spouses' employment status and families' childcare arrangements and often focused on getting ready for work on time. For example, in two families where both parents were full-time employed and childcare arrangements included a nanny in one case, and a grandmother in the other case, parents had their breakfast without their children. Overall, during the week, breakfast was frequently shared with one parent and one child or both parents while the child(ren) ate later, but by and large, breakfast was less often spent together as a whole family on weekdays compared to the evening meal or compared to breakfast on the weekends. In cases where the mother stayed at home, breakfast as well as lunch was often shared together between the mother and her child(ren). This pattern where one parent ate together with one child and the other parent ate separately has been referred to as "serial meals" in earlier research (Tubbs et al., 2005, p. 83). Limited time in the mornings resulted in some family members having breakfast on the way to work. However, despite the different factors impeding families from sharing breakfast as a whole family, participants talked about sharing breakfast often with at least one other family member:

> "Even breakfast, that is David waking up and me getting dressed; we try to eat our cereals together, even though Ana Sofia eats a little bit later."
>
> Isabella, mother

> "The older one, Ayako, is normally up super early so I have a few minutes to spend with her in the mornings while Mai still sleeps, make myself breakfast. I eat usually alone or with Ayako when she's up. And then I'll work all day."
>
> Jean, father

On weekends, families often shared all meals together, or engaged in a special Saturday or Sunday breakfast or brunch or dined together outside the home. Scheduling mealtime was more flexible on the weekends and less structured, allowing families to engage in a lengthy brunch, for example. Participants explained:

> "Normally we try and sleep in a bit, it's about 8, if I can push it 8:30 or so. Maybe Tom would wake up and then he'll come and join us in bed for a little bit. Then we'll go downstairs and then we'll make breakfast. So, usually I

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often make breakfast on the weekends, we might have, depends on the mood of the day, you know, depends on the mood of the day, we might wanna make some biscuits, we might wanna make some oatmeal. And then we'll sit together, have breakfast, then we'll go relax a little bit usually. We usually are more likely to eat a lunch than a dinner I would think in a more formal kind of way we'll sit down have a lunch, but, I mean we definitely eat something and most likely, it's not as often, like I'd say we're more together for dinner during the week than on the weekends."

Mathew, father

"She does really well when we eat out, so David and I like to eat out at restaurants a lot, [Laughingly]. So we'll go and have a lunch or breakfast and go for coffee or something. That's very typical."

Isabella, mother

Overall, family meals appeared to be an important part of families' everyday routines and offered families an opportunity to spend time together. Family meals provided stability and structure to families' everyday lives while at the same time strengthening family member's relationships and sense of belonging.

Previous research has examined associations between the frequency of family meals, in particular family dinners, and child and adolescent outcomes, as well as its importance to family functioning (Fiese, Winter, & Botti, 2011; R. W. Larson, Branscomb, & Wiley, 2006). The substantial body of literature focusing on family meals has included primarily families with adolescents rather than families with infants and pre-school children (Quick, Fiese, Anderson, Koester, & Marlin, 2011) and has revealed many benefits related to eating together, such as enhanced family togetherness and closeness (Fiese, 2006; Tubbs et al., 2005), strengthened family values (Fiese et al., 2006), better school performance (Eisenberg, Olson, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Bearinger, 2004; Miller, Waldfogel, & Han, 2012), reduced risk of substance use and adolescent delinquent behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2004), improved nutrition (Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, Story, Croll, & Perry, 2003), and intergenerational transmission of cultural values and traditions (Larson et al., 2006).

However, more recently, scholars have questioned the causal influences of family meal frequency on children's outcomes, suggesting that other factors may confound these

causal associations. Such factors may include family composition, socioeconomic status, relationship quality, and other family aspects and routines that may have positive effects on child outcomes and family functioning (Eisenberg et al., 2004; Fiese & Schwartz, 2008; Fiese et al., 2011; Musick & Meier, 2012). In particular, researchers (Fiese & Schwartz, 2008; Musick & Meier, 2012) draw attention to the limitations of existing research such as lack of longitudinal data and a reliance on cross sectional data that does not allow researchers to determine causal effects or whether effects persist over time. Further, Fiese and Schwartz (2008) identified a lack of emphasis on sociodemographic factors, for example cultural or ethnic background of families, family composition, or socioeconomic status and how these factors are related to family meal frequency, child and adolescent outcomes, and family functioning. Indeed, with few exceptions (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Garcia Coll, 2001; Fiese et al., 2011; Flores, Tomany-Korman, & Olson, 2005) there has been little research on family meal frequency in relation to families' ethnic or cultural background, and socioeconomic status. In addition, current research on family meal frequency and sociodemographic factors is not consistent, with some research reporting differences in family meal frequency, while others showing that results did not differ with regards to parents' ethnicity or level of education (Fiese et al., 2011). Despite limitations in current research to fully ascertain causal benefits of family meals on a number of child outcomes, Fiese and Schwartz (2008) insist that there are "few other collective settings in family life that have this potential across the child's early years into adolescence" (p. 7).

Influential Factors

In this section, I discuss factors that influence families' ability to spend time as a family. In particular, participating families in my study reported that lack of time or conflicting schedules presented barriers to spending more time together, both as a family and as a couple. Perceived lack of time was often a result of important contextual conditions

including full-time employment, long working hours, or other demands such as housework.

In response to a question about what family members do for each other, Jean, a father of two preschool daughters who was full-time engaged in building a new family home, recognized that his long days at work kept him from spending time with his family. For Jean, spending time as a family was an important sign of a family that is working well:

> "The last four, five months I haven't really been involved in family life deeply, so it's probably not a good indication of how it's gonna be moving forward but it's the reality of what it's been."
>
> Jean, father

When I asked parents what they liked least about their family or what they would like to change if they could, lack of time was mentioned often. Isabella, like many other parents in dual-earner households, bemoaned that:

> "I think probably just the lack, I guess this is not really the family, but it's the lack of time."
>
> Isabella, mother

In the same vein, Mathew commented:

> "He also takes away for some time that we have to spend together a little bit, that's, I don't not like that I think that's understandable and it's okay but it certainly can be challenging from time to time."
>
> Mathew, father

For another father, John, lack of time was a result of conflicting work schedules between him and his partner:

> "Well, I think just the fact that our schedules are almost in conflict with each other. Like I work all day and then she works all night, so [Laughingly], that makes it difficult, too. So sometimes you don't see each other that much in the evenings and like this is the time of the year, like September to December where she's the most busy with her [employment] and that so I think, that the scheduling is tough, then that creates a bit of strain on the family at times."
>
> John, father

It appears that parents often sacrificed personal as well as couple time in order to spend time as a family. However, parents equally stressed the importance of personal time. For example, John explained:

> "I think it's good for the relationship, too, if you have that personal space. Like some people take personal vacations, and they just have their own activities and separate, they do things together but they also have things on their own. And I think that's important."
>
> John, father

One family did not engage in regular family meals, unlike the other four participating families in this study, and most dinners during the week took place without the father. Asking Chen what she might change in her family if she could, she explained that eating meals together as a family was a norm in her family of origin and integrating more regular family meals was about bringing the family closer and was mainly important now that they have two children:

> "This year I find important. Before I just, he eat a little bit, I eat a little bit, and watch TV, so relaxed, but right now, no. Is family, is like full family now. I like my children, right now, she growing, I want her have more family cause when I grew up, my family always together eating. I think dinner together is connecting to family information, like, what you did today and how you're feeling, I want to do that part. Yeah, talk more to each other; know more about each other during the day, and talking with the kids and building that."
>
> Chen, mother

In response to a question to Daniel about if his family shared any meals together, Daniel seemed apologetic about the fact that he did not engage in shared meals. Daniel explained that his priority was for his daughters to get nutritious food and that he was able to provide for his family's basic needs as a single earner:

> "We do have meals together; it's mostly suppers, mostly on the weekends, not so much during the week. Yeah, it's a bad habit on my part and I admit to it. It's just because of the work schedules, it's because of, [sigh], where I am professionally, and what I'm concerned of, [pause], due to the fact I'm, you know, yes my family is very important, but also making sure that I can put, you know, a meal on our table. That's, this is the main importance, roof on, roof over head, meal on table, clothes on our backs type of deal. Okay, just put it bluntly, I got the typical breadwinner mentality, and, okay, sacrifice needs to be made but overall we do, I admit we eat in the living room and we gotta get better habit of eating in the kitchen."
>
> Daniel, father

In summary, participants stressed the importance of spending time together as a family. All families in this study emphasized that family time, such as shared family

mealtimes, play time, or doing activities, was enjoyable, and helped to their families to work well. Participants also talked about common barriers to family time, such as lack of time due to full time employment or due to conflicting schedules. However, overall, it seems that all participating families prioritized spending fun times together as a family.

CHAPTER 7: SHARING FAMILY ROLES

In this chapter I examine the topic of family roles, another important aspect of family functioning as discussed by participants in my study. I first discuss findings concerning how participants divided family roles, such as housework, meal preparation, grocery shopping, childcare, and nurturance. I then discuss factors that influence family role division as noted by participants. It is important to consider family roles in the context of this study because family roles are an aspect of families' everyday lives, and when performed successfully, contribute to effective functioning (Epstein et al., 2003). Previous research (Bustamante et al., 2011; Forry, Leslie, & Letiecq, 2007; Hill & Thomas, 2002) has shown that differences in gender role expectations between spouses based on their gender role norms are a potential source of stress within intercultural families. However, with regards to mixed families, there is little research about how they navigate differences in gender-based family role expectations and the impact such differences have on families' functioning (Bustamante et al., 2011).

To find out about family roles among intercultural families, I asked participants about their daily routines, starting at the beginning of the day until all members go to bed, and who is doing what in the family. All families need to carry out tasks in everyday family life and often family members take on set roles to meet the needs of the family (Epstein et al., 2003). In the context of their everyday family lives, and in response to questions about what family members do for and with each other, participants in my study reported that having every family member helping out and participating in chores was an essential aspect that helps them to work well. Families also emphasized that having clear role expectations while at the same time maintaining flexibility regarding who is performing which role was important for their families to work well. One father, Jean, exemplified the value of shared roles in families:

> "Well, I think if a family works well, you work well. I think that everybody has a role to play in the family, no matter how small. Everybody has to take the responsibility of being part of the family and they need to understand that I think from, you know, from birth essentially, you know like, I mean, or when

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they start understanding the fact that this is what you do and this is how it's gonna be done and we're not going to do anything for you, you need to learn how to be part of this unit, you know, you're an individual but you're an individual in this unit, this core unit, and if you're not doing what you're meant, what we expect of you or what the family expects of you, then somebody else is doing it and that means somebody else is doing an unfair load that way. Of course it doesn't mean that all four of us are doing an equal load in the family, [Laughingly], but it means that what you can do, you do and if you cannot do it and somebody else will take the load, and then when somebody else cannot do it you will take the load and that's just kind of the way it works cause without that, if chores or whatever they are divided exactly then, never really does work because a family unit needs to be flexible cause that's what makes a family unit is that people need to be able to do more or less depending on situations."

<div align="right">Jean, father</div>

In all families, parents collaborated with each other to perform everyday family tasks and meet their families' needs, however, the degree of sharing tasks among family members varied across families. A balanced or equal division of family roles was exemplified by two families. In these two families, mothers and fathers shared care giving and household chores evenly. One family in particular shared family roles and perceived their "tag-team approach" to task allocation to be based on need rather than traditional gender roles. That is, the family worked together to meet their everyday family needs. This is how Isabella and David explained how they shared family roles:

"We just tag team everything, well except for the fact that there's set things that he does like the meal making and I do a lot of the tidying up. It's just asking each other for help because we're so busy and tired, that it's like can you do this and I'm gonna do that and just it's constantly I think tag-teaming and asking for help. So, I'm really tired today, can you do the bath and then the bottle and I will wake up early tomorrow and do this, [Laughingly]."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

"We often have, as in all families, we have kind of defined things that everybody does, you know, and try to keep up to speed on those things, the chores I guess, keep things clean and keep things running […] I, like for today, for example, I did laundry, I guess I shouldn't say we all have defined chores, there's things that sometimes I tend to do more and sometimes Isabella tends to do more. Isabella tends to tidy and clean, she's very good at that, and keeps things going in that respect, she did the grocery shopping today, I did it last weekend, what else, I mow the lawn [Laughingly]. That's one thing that I do definitively."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

When asking David about who prepares meals in his family, he stated:

> "Yeah, [Laughingly], I'm curious what Isabella said. I probably prepare meals more often, but it's not necessarily my job. Isabella will often make meals as well. It's a very, I like cooking, I think a little bit more than Isabella probably enjoys it."
>
> David, father

And David went on to explain:

> "Isabella really, I would say she really took care of the childcare thing, unfairly maybe. I didn't do as much with that but she sort of manages that and ensures that they're paid and all of those kind of things. Childcare is pretty much, almost, I would say pretty much equal. I'm, when Isabella is at home from work, she definitely spends way more time with Ana Sofia, during maternity leave, but that was just cause she was home and I was at work. [...] There isn't anything really that I don't do nor is there anything I believe that Isabella doesn't do or wouldn't do if she didn't have to. Mowing the lawn is the one thing, I know she, she, I do that. I don't think she's ever mowed the lawn, but that's it. And she probably knows there is something that I've never done, trying to think of something that only she does. Isabella pays, that's the one thing she does, she pays most of the bills, so the utility bills, she nearly does all of that for us."
>
> David, father

The above quotes suggest that both parents were responsible for specific family tasks, with Isabella routinely doing the cleaning as well as organizing childcare for their daughter and David routinely doing the cooking and mowing the lawn. Other tasks, however, were carried out by taking turns doing each task, such as bathing their daughter, cleaning up after dinner, doing grocery shopping, and doing laundry.

Another family emphasized sharing household chores and childcare responsibilities based on each partner's availability. Valentina and John either shared specific housework, such as laundry, or took turns caring for their son, with Valentina caring for him during the day and John taking over in the evening and on the weekend. This is how Valentina and John explained their approach to sharing household and childcare responsibilities:

> "He will do the dishes; usually he is the one that puts the dishes away. I would say ninety percent of the time he does the dishes for all of us and he will, you know, get up in the morning and he will put the dishes away. And, of course, we do everything for Nathan, [Laughing]. Like doing the bottles, and,

usually when I'm tired or busy, like now that I'm working, so John will do the laundry for all of us and I'll put the laundry away the next day."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

"She'll make my lunch sometimes, we just have defined roles, I would say. It's just, certain things I do and certain things she does, like I do a lot of, the only thing that might be, we both do would be laundry type of thing. But, I take out the garbage, I watch the kid when I get home. So, we pretty much know our roles; it's not like what we do for each other, we just, we know what we have to get done on a daily basis, we're both fairly busy, so I just allow her to work so I kind of take over in the evenings."

<div align="right">John, father</div>

Based on the descriptions of these two families, knowing each other's responsibilities and tasks was important. Both families stressed the need for flexibility in dividing tasks as they come up, based on each partner's availability, schedule, needs, and energy levels. In response to a question about what helps their families to work well, two participants highlighted:

"I think the roles is a big piece, is that we, there is no set role, like I was saying, like we just step in and whoever can do whatever works, and I think, I think the structure has helped a lot, so like being able to figure out who's doing what within a certain time frame, that helps Ana Sofia."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

"Just expectations, I think defining expectations also helps. Like if you know what the other person expects from you whether it's a household chore or doing something for Nathan or, I don't know, whatever needs to be done like, it's good to know what they expect you to do, right?"

<div align="right">John, father</div>

In contrast to the balanced role division in these two families, descriptions of family roles in the three other families in this study revealed that mothers were the main caregiver and attended to the majority of the household tasks, a finding that is consistent with previous research on gender ideology, the division of housework, and paid and unpaid work (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000; Sayer, 2005; Solomon, Acock, & Walker, 2004). These mothers carried out most household chores and childcare tasks and often felt responsible for ensuring their children's safety, wellbeing, and nurturance while the fathers' provision of

housework and childcare was more limited. Hence, family roles were more segregated and gender-based. One mother stated:

> "I cook in the house. If it's traditional food for sure, it's me. And my mom cook for us in the weekend sometimes, because we want to have dumplings or onion cake, those things in the weekend so she can make nice dough, so she cooks for us in the weekend, but if it turns to cookies or pasta, those things, my husband would cook. And I think I like to do cleaning, I always clean. He doesn't like to do cleaning that much unless I ask him to do."
>
> Jin, mother

Jin goes on to explain that due to her husband's employment demands, he has less time to do household tasks, but that he helps, especially on the weekends:

> "But as I said, he got that position recently. It's a very busy and he has to bring some work back home. It's very busy and I think he doesn't have too much time to do housework when he stays home. And the weekend, he does the vacuum and the entire front yard and the backyard work."
>
> Jin, mother

Similarly, Jean explains that his wife does the majority of chores such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping, as well as childcare tasks. Jean explains that he does not think that this arrangement is ideal for his family and that he would like to be more involved and hopes to achieve this in the future:

> "Mai makes my lunch which is, maybe sounds small but is huge for me. And Mai does most of the cooking actually. She's an excellent cook, and I am an awful cook, mostly, although I expect that when we move in, it's something I'm very interested in learning how to cook properly, cause I love the idea of everybody cooking together, you know, and so, and the girls help out Mai a lot that way as well. What do I do for them? I don't know if I do much, anything for them, right now, [Laughingly], quite honestly which is, get them to bed. I wash dishes after every meal and stuff like that, but mostly I'm not like the last four, five months I haven't really been involved in family life deeply, so it's probably not a good indication of how it's gonna be moving forward but it's the reality of what it's been […] but essentially the family life right now is, Mai leads it and runs it, she runs the household fully, completely, you know, she does the grocery shopping, she does the cooking, she does lunches, cleans up the majority, like we, we clean up as a family together every night, you know, before going to bed, everybody puts the toys away, everybody helps out and I do what I can but I'm just not around to do very much."
>
> Jean, father

Another father, Daniel, explained that he is taking on the breadwinner role in his family by providing financially for his family while his wife, who is staying at home to take care of their children, is taking care of family members' wellbeing:

> "I make sure that we have a roof over our head and bills are paid and, you know, food coming in type of deal. She makes sure I'm eating healthy whether I want to participate in that or not but I still have to do it, you know, grudgingly I fall along. Her thing is really big on health, my thing has been trying to keep exercise, trying to keep busy, trying to keep exercising and stuff like that, so that we don't end up like couch potatoes. Uh, what else? As far as, like, we're there emotionally for each other, we're always there emotionally for each other. I tend to be her, a lot of times I tend to be the strong point, she tends to be, handle my emotional point [Pause] from what I can tell, she definitely covers the typical Asian wife with caring for the wellbeing and the health of the family. She's really good about that."
>
> Daniel, father

Although mothers in these three families clearly did the majority of household chores and childcare tasks, fathers were nevertheless involved and helped out in various ways. Participants explained:

> "He read books to kids often. He sits down on the ground with kids and prays with them and he does like acrobatic training, [Laughingly], for kids. Yeah, he puts kids on the back and then Ayako stands up on him and then just slowly walking as he's standing up, Ayako walking on to his shoulder kind of thing. Yeah, this are good but I can do it but I don't like it cause it's hard on my body, then Ayako likes it to do it with Jean. Folding clothes he does, sometimes, now, then he used to do often but now he doesn't have much time."
>
> Mai, mother

> "I'm happy to see Tom and play with him a little bit, I think that my wife does, you know, a great job of, more of the home stuff than I do, I do recognize that and I pitch in a little bit here and there as much as I can. My role is usually the bigger picture stuff, or the pieces that require connection to outside the family."
>
> Mathew, father

On the whole, participants talked about dividing roles in their families as a process that is working well for them. However, when I asked participants if they would change something in their everyday family lives, some participants also spoke of being dissatisfied with some aspects of how roles were shared in their families:

"I mean, I think for me the process works very well. I think for Jin, she's probably more tired. I think that like the one thing is, I feel she brings some of it on herself because of her, you know, her desires that I want to make sure this is done this way and this is done this way, and I don't think I need to share those values with her. I don't mind that she has them, but I think that you shouldn't clean the floor every day on your hands and knees, especially when you're pregnant, and I'm certainly not going to do it, but I want her to say, oh, I keep waiting for the moment when she's like, 'huh, I can't possibly maintain all this stuff and have my kids and do this kind of stuff', but that moment hasn't come yet, [Laughingly], so that's the one thing I don't like."

Mathew, father

"I think I'm, now because he's, Jean is really busy so that I'm doing most of the roles at home. But, when, once he finishes this project, he will be back to do, like giving them a bath, or, not really bath, bath is my role, [Laughingly], but reading books more, and then pray with them more, and take them for a walk and stuff, so that I think we had been doing good in balance, but if he does cook sometimes, that will be easier for me, [Laughingly]."

Mai, mother

As suggested by the above two quotes, participants in the families that divided family roles mainly based on gender nevertheless emphasized the importance of making sure that one partner wasn't overburdened. This was also evidenced by fathers helping out with household and childcare tasks.

Influential Factors

In this section I examine factors and conditions that shaped family role division in the participating families. Hence, this section addresses my second research question, namely how individual's cultures, individual-level factors, and social and economic conditions influence family functioning. There are many possible factors and conditions that influence individuals' expectations and norms pertaining to family roles including demographic factors, such as religion, culture, and socioeconomic status, or wider societal factors and conditions, such as policies and laws, and cultural values and norms (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014; Dion & Dion, 1993; Kellner, 2009; Perrone-McGovern, Wright, Howell, & Barnum, 2014). Participants talked about three specific influences that may explain differences in how the five intercultural families in my study divided family roles. Throughout the interviews, some

participants talked about family-of-origin influences, an important microsystem influence (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Another topic noted by participants was that of work-family interface, which can be conceptualized as the mesosystem according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. A mesosystem consists of interrelations between different microsystems, in this case the family and work microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In particular, participants offered examples of positive and negative spillover from work to family (Voydanoff, 2002; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). Lastly, findings from my study also indicated that family roles were related to and influenced by macro factors, such as cultural norms.

Before delving into the subject of the different influential factors on gender roles in intercultural families, it is useful to first define gender and gender roles. Gender and gender roles are socially constructed (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014; McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012); consequently, gender is "not something a person *is*", rather than what "a person *does*" (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014, p. xvii). Gender roles prescribe how individuals are supposed to behave as they "reflect the ways in which society defines and determines the customs, behaviors, and practices deemed appropriate for people based on their biological sex and assumed gender identity" (McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012, p. 260). Gender ideology, which is defined as "how a person identifies oneself with regard to marital and family roles traditionally linked to gender" (Greenstein, 2000, p. 323), can affect aspects of family functioning, such as the division of household labor (Davis, 2007). Indeed, gender role norms are an important external influential factor on family functioning as they "place that person in a particular environmental niche that defines his or her position and role in society" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 814). Hence, taking into consideration gender roles within families' lives is important because "families and gender are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand one without reference to the other. Families are not merely

influenced by gender; rather families are organized by gender" (Haddock, Zimmermann, & Lyness, 2003, p. 304). Families that hold a more traditional gender ideology reflect a more gendered division of housework (Steven, Kiger, & Riley, 2001). This traditional gender ideology where women perform the majority of housework and men take on the role of the "breadwinner" is also evident in families where both women and men are employed in the labor market (Greenstein, 2000). Families that have less traditional or more egalitarian gender-role attitudes will likely have a more balanced division of housework and will perceive an unequal division of housework as unfair (Greenstein, 2000; Lavee & Katz, 2002; Steven et al., 2001).

Family-of-origin influences

Family-of-origin dynamics, norms, and behaviors can influence individuals' understanding of marital and family roles (Klever, 2009; Orbuch, Bauermeister, Brown, & McKinley, 2013; Yoshida & Busby, 2011). As can be expected, family-of-origin provides role modeling by teaching children about appropriate behavior and family role expectations (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014). Factors such as closeness to family-of-origin can also increase family-of-origin influences (Sadeghi, Mazaheri, Motabi, & Zahedi, 2012). In my study, family-of-origin norms concerning family and marital roles seem to be one influential factor that shaped individual's own norms and which affected both parents as discussed by some participants. In particular, one mother reported that her partner's gender role attitudes resulted from his upbringing, which did not encourage him to help with household chores. She viewed her partner's upbringing as less egalitarian and talked about how she would like a fairer share of housework among all family members, including her children:

> "He doesn't like to do cleaning that much unless I ask him to do. I think it's because in her, in his family, his parents never asked him and his sister to help too much housework. His mom always does everything, but I said no, I don't do that. And, I ask him to help me and later I will ask Tom to help me, too, [Laughingly]."

> Jin, mother

Differences in participants' upbringing are one possible explanation for the differences in role division among participating families. In the three families that engaged in a more gendered division of household labor and childcare, the fathers seemed to have been brought up with a similar role division. This was described by Daniel who explained that he was looked after by his mother during the day while his father worked. Daniel goes on to describe that his mother did the housework and meal preparation while the children watched TV and played together:

> "Typical day with me growing up was my dad would go to work, or depends on the age bracket but, you know, when I was Kelly's age, my dad would go to work, my mum would stay home. She would kind of take care of us but we mostly be watching TV or take upon our toys at that age. But she'd be watching TV and do a little bit of housework and dad would come home and we have a meal together and then we, at Kelly's age we would be playing with our toys and stuff."
>
> Daniel, father

Family-of-origin influences on individual's gender roles are closely linked to cultural norms regarding gender roles, a topic that was also brought up by participants in this study.

Work-family interface

Another topic of discussion that is closely related to family roles was that of work-family interface, in particular with regards to work-to-family spillover. Work-to-family spillover refers to how work hours, work environment, and satisfaction at work affect family life (Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2007). The effect of work on family life can be both positive and negative (Stevens et al., 2007; Wayne et al., 2007). In my interviews with participants, I inquired about participants' employment circumstances and how this impacted their family life. Taking into consideration a family's employment arrangements and experiences was important in this study, as balancing work and family roles can affect family functioning in various ways (Voydanoff, 2002, 2004). In families where parents work full time, time spent as a family together in leisure activities is likely to decrease and combined with family and household tasks can represent a heavy time burden, especially for families

with pre-school children (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Craig & Mullan, 2010). Moreover, experiences at work can also have positive effects on families' functioning as work can offer resources and opportunities for personal development. Hence, parents' work experiences and work hours are likely to impact all family members and the relationships between family members (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011; Kinnunen, Gerris, & Vermulst, 1996). Therefore, parents' paid work is an important microsystem to consider in relation to family functioning as it interacts with the family microsystem (Buehler & O'Brien, 2011).

Two of the participating families consisted of dual-earner couples. While one family employed a nanny to take care of their daughter during work hours, the other family relied on their son's grandmother to care for their son during the day. Fathers in both families reported that they valued their employer's support of a work-life-balance and that the fathers' ability to balance work and family life had positive effects on their ability to spend time with their family and meet their family's needs:

> "It's usually, I try not to let it impact me in the sense of having to work at home, but I do sometimes have to work at home, and I feel that the work life balance is actually pretty good through my job and I feel that my boss is good about that, too."
>
> Mathew, father

> "My work environment is a very positive work environment for me […] The positive is that work place culture, it's like a family, it's very supportive when we were having challenges, when Ana Sofia was having challenges. There's no qualm about me taking time off, that kind of thing. […] In terms of my work-life balance, that's the other thing, it's really good work-life balance, so there's not, I'm not expected to come home and do a lot of work in the evenings and that's very explicit amongst our leadership and, so I have a lot of agency, a lot of the things that people say are important in a work place."
>
> David, father

The mothers in the two dual-earner families, in contrast, emphasized that their priority was their family. Both mothers were on maternity leave before returning to work full time, and therefore experienced different challenges than the fathers in the dual-earner families in

terms of their work and family life. One mother, Isabella, explained her experiences returning

to her full-time employment after maternity leave:

> "It's also taxing because I'm still learning to adjust to being back after mat
> leave and so it's an entirely different rhythm, [Laughing]."
>
> Isabella, mother

Asking Isabella what gives her joy, hope, energy, pride or faith, Isabella further explained:

> "I guess my relationships are what give me all of those things. Yeah, not work
> actually, no, I mean, I really like what I do, and I think it's a good job, but I
> think if I were to not work where I work anymore, I'd still feel really good.
> And it wasn't that way before. Like it is that way now with Ana Sofia, I think,
> you, like my priorities just shifted a bit and that's what makes me feel really
> good."
>
> Isabella, mother

Another mother, Jin, who also took maternity leave before returning to work full time,

explained that working full time negatively affected her ability to socialize with friends and

attend different programs and groups during the week.

> "Since I go back to work it's not that easy, maybe like once a month or
> something, but before I see them, I see my mommy's group every week, like
> Monday, Tuesday, all the time."
>
> Jin, mother

Asking Jin what it meant to her if her family was working well, Jin explained that her

priority was her family and not her job:

> "I think it's my, […] I'm not a workaholic, so I would rather stay home. If my
> husband makes enough money, I'd rather stay home; take care of him and
> kids. So if my family works well, I think for me it's all my life. I can just live
> without working but only, you know, off about my family."
>
> Jin, mother

Previous research in the field of work-life balance and family functioning has

demonstrated important links between an organization's workplace culture that supports the

integration of family and work and increased levels of family cohesion (Voydanoff, 2004). In

this study, family-work-life balance was also supported by parents' regular work hours and

having some flexibility in work hours and work tasks.

Cultural norms

Cultures can influence groups' and individuals' understandings and definitions of male and female roles and the appropriate division of those roles. According to McGoldrick and Ashton (2012), "the relationship among culture, gender, and gender roles is multidirectional, as gender is embedded in cultural values and beliefs, and gender and gender roles shape the evolution of culture over time" (p. 260). Although a thorough review of culturally determined gender role norms is beyond the scope of this study, I briefly discuss relevant literature on gender role norms in different cultures. In addition, it is important to point out that not all individuals share the same values of their culture. As Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, and Roy (2013) indicate: "factors as diverse as age, gender, education, income level, personal experiences, and others influence your view of the world" (p. 175). Hence, it is central to take into account a variety of factors that influence individuals' values and norms, while at the same time acknowledging group characteristics that may be explained by culture (Walsh, 2012).

There are vast differences across cultures with regards to family relationships, power distribution, and expected family roles (Archuleta & Teasley, 2013; DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014). Some cultures may emphasize hierarchical roles and may be male-dominated, such as Eastern and Asian cultures, including China, Korea, and Japan (Hofstede, 2001; Samovar et al., 2013; Triandis, 1995). Indeed, gender differences within families in Asian cultures that are shaped by the Confucian philosophy go back thousands of years and still prevail today (Samovar et al., 2013). Other cultures, such as Scandinavian cultures, including Finland and Sweden, emphasize more egalitarian and democratic roles (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). Hence, differences in socialization processes across cultures can lead to different gender role expectations and attitudes concerning household and child-rearing roles.

As with most family processes, expectations or attitudes about family roles are not static, but change over time and are influenced by a variety of factors such as demographic indicators including immigrant generation status and level of acculturation (Phinney & Flores, 2002; Valentine & Mosley, 2000). For example, previous research on immigrant families has found that different expectations regarding gender roles and traditional family values among second generation children and their first generation immigrant parents lead to tensions within families, especially for girls (Dion & Dion, 1996, 2004). Gender differences with regards to acculturation and gender roles have also been found, revealing that women tend to acculturate faster to "mainstream" American culture compared to men, and as a result, identify less with traditional family roles (Dion & Dion, 1993, 2001; Falicov, 1996). Thus, another possible explanation for the differences in family role expectations and norms among participating families could be the interaction between individual's country of origin, length of residence, level of acculturation, and ethnic identity (Falicov, 1996; Goff & Carolan, 2013; Higgins, Zheng, Liu, & Sun, 2002).

Indeed, it seems that some immigrant mothers in this study were more supportive of Western female gender ideals rather than the traditional female gender ideals in Asian or Latino cultures, for example. The changing nature of gender role expectations was illustrated by one mother. Isabella, who is from Central America and has lived in many different countries before immigrating to Canada in 2009, noticed the differences in gender role expectations in her home country compared to those of her husband, David. Specifically, she conveyed appreciation for dividing family roles and tasks between her and her husband based on need rather than based on gender norms or stereotypical gender expectations. When talking about the time after her daughter Ana Sofia came home following a long hospital stay, Isabella explained:

> "David's work was really flexible and just allowed him to come to all of the
> doctor's appointments, and he's very hands on, and so I think that was really,

really helpful and that we split everything and so there, what I really appreciated was there was no gender divide between duties, if I was getting up to pump, David would wake up, and just keep me company, if he was to go to work and he needed some time to just relax, like I would take care of all of the stuff here, like it was, it wasn't this is a man's job, this is a woman's job, it was very, very even, which you would have seen in [my home country] so I guess that's one difference which I really appreciate, that David is very progressive that way."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

It appears that Isabella regarded the more hierarchical family relationships present in her country of origin as negative compared to the more egalitarian division of household and childcare her Canadian husband is supporting. Hence, it is likely that the immigration experiences and acculturation might have changed her perspectives and expectations regarding gender roles.

In sum, findings pertaining to family roles in intercultural families suggest that participating families emphasized the importance of sharing roles among all family members. According to participants' accounts, an array of interacting factors and influences shape individuals' family role expectations, including family-of-origin, work-family interface, and cultural norms.

CHAPTER 8: FAMILY RITUALS

In this chapter I focus on participants' descriptions about their family rituals. In this context, a closer look at the similarities and differences between family routines and rituals is helpful, especially considering that researchers have commonly used the terms interchangeably. Both family routines and rituals have the potential to provide essential roles in families, represent an intersection between individual characteristics and family-level factors, involve multiple family members, be transmitted across generations, be unique to each family, and be integral to and inseparable from a family's cultural and ecological context (Fiese et al., 2002; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). However, family routines and rituals are also distinct in many ways. Family routines are characterized by their repetitive nature, continuity, and instrumental communication conveying "this is what needs to be done" (Fiese et al., 2002, p. 382). Examples of family routines are children's bedtime routines, doing chores, watching TV, and meals. Compared to family rituals, family routines do not carry symbolic meaning. In contrast, family rituals convey "this is who we are" (Fiese et al., 2002, p. 382). Hence, family rituals hold symbolic meaning, generate memories of the affective experience, and create a sense of group membership (Fiese et al., 2002, 2006; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007). Examples of family rituals are special celebrations and holidays such as birthdays, family reunions, Christmas, New Years, as well as family meals. In sum, while routines and rituals hold distinct characteristics, they are interconnected at the same time, and this can be demonstrated using the example of family mealtime, which incorporates characteristics of both (Fiese et al., 2002; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007).

The passing of cultural, religious, or spiritual traditions and customs from one generation onto to the next is an essential role of families (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2014) and a "key fact about human culture" (Greenfield, 1994, p. 2). However, this task may be more complex in mixed families than in monocultural families (Cheng & Powell, 2007).

Partners in mixed families are more likely than partners in monocultural families to have different cultural or religious customs and traditions that incorporate different values and beliefs, which can potentially contribute to elevated stress and tension (Foeman & Nance, 1999; Fu, Tora, & Kendall, 2001).

In order to explore families' rituals I asked each participant about his/her spiritual and religious backgrounds and what role these played in family life as well as what rituals family members incorporate in their family life. Overall, participants highlighted that practicing family rituals was seen as a positive factor in families' lives. Spouses appeared to enjoy participating in each other's rituals and were actively engaged in involving and teaching their children. While most family rituals were introduced by the mothers, fathers' incorporation of their cultural backgrounds was more subtle and unconscious.

A topic that was underlying families' enjoyment of each other's rituals was that of being part of an intercultural family. Both fathers and mothers stated that being part of an intercultural family was enjoyable and constituted a characteristic that they specifically liked about their family, a finding that is consistent with previous research on intercultural families (Crippen, 2011). Participants explained:

> "I think that the variability in cultures, and that's just me as a Canadian and Mai as Asian, but I think that is me as, you know, a multicultural person, and Mai as a multicultural person now, and the girls as multicultural people as well. I think that part of the family made us work very well because we see what other people do and we're able to take things that work well I think, from whatever culture that is and leave the things that don't work well from other cultures."
>
> Jean, father

> "I definitely like that it's intercultural, that makes me really happy. It's always fun, I really enjoy Isabella's extended family, I really enjoy visiting with them, it excites me that my daughter will have those two spaces to move back and forth between, it's always, you know, it's always interesting. We always have really great conversations, and I really appreciate that. I like that our family is, I like that we're kind of, you know, while we may have cultural differences, I really like that we, our social values, I guess, usually align quite well."
>
> David, father

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For most participants, rituals included those that were celebrated on special occasions rather than in everyday family life. This point was made explicit by one mother, who responded to a question about rituals by stating:

> "In everyday life? Trying to think, I think it's, there aren't any that we really integrate other than eating together, we always did that. But traditions, there's none that go into everyday life, that I would be able to do with Ana Sofia at this point, because she's still so small. We have things around holidays that we would do but not in everyday life."
>
> <div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

However, some participants also provided examples of daily rituals. Hence, I divide the discussion of family rituals into two subsections featuring the topics of (1) rituals in everyday life, and (2) rituals on special occasions.

Rituals in Everyday Life

Daily rituals included greetings, blessing the food, blessing the cook, meals, and praying, and were predominantly shaped by mothers' cultures of origin. One mother in particular talked about the daily ritual of greeting each other and how she was striving to teach her son about this important cultural ritual:

> "When the weather is nice we wait for him in the door, and I say in [my language] "Oh dad is home, dad is home" [Laughingly], so he gets all excited because he knows that those words, I don't know if he understands but he associates that I say that when John is coming, so John grabs Nathan and kiss us when he comes home."
>
> <div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

A little further on in our conversation, Valentina explained:

> "And I text message him, like how is your day, are you having a good day. If he runs like late I always send a message, did you make it to work on time and, you know, and every day when he comes back, like I want Nathan to have that, I want to train Nathan to run to the door for him, daddy is home, and it's like, now he cannot walk but I envision, you know, like when John opens the door, Nathan will be like, oh dad is home and run to give him a hug, [Laughingly], because that's very in our culture."
>
> <div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

While some rituals are harder to incorporate in families' lives because of living away from their home country and culture, others have more "transportability", especially the

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practice of cultural or religious rituals such prayer (Walsh, 2012, p. 308). Religion, as a socially constructed institution, can shape family beliefs and practices (McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012). Religion or spirituality were of importance in some participants' lives and were shaped by individuals' cultures in different ways. Culture and religion are shaped by one another, that is, "religion has been a powerful force that shapes culture and reinforces certain cultural norms" (McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012, p. 261).

Engaging in prayer or attending church on a regular basis provided parents with opportunities to pass their religious values onto their children. For example, one family highlighted their weekly ritual of going to church together and while both parents talked about the importance of attending church, it was less so the religion and more so the opportunity to spend time together that was highlighted:

> "Every Sunday at seven we go to church and then I think that's a very important aspect, remember that we said that in our relationship, we always went to mass on Sundays. It was very rare that we didn't go. I can count three times […] and those are the only Sundays I think that we skipped mass, you know, to be together. But now that Nathan is with us, we go the three of us and it's exciting just to see Nathan how he looks at us, how we sit, you know, Roman Catholic Church, and he, you know, makes noises so I have to take him out, or John takes him out and then he's like crawling on the church and he sings with us."
>
> Valentina, mother

> "Like Easter, we do a lot of, go to church, usually two or three times on a Good Friday and Easter Sunday, sometimes Holy Thursday. So, I'd say church is kind of one tradition, I think that she kind of stopped going to church there for a while, and I always went to church and then she came back. I don't think it's my tradition that she adopted, but kind of brought her back into."
>
> John, father

The above quotes reveal that these family rituals were an important part of family life. Going to church was an ongoing, consistent ritual that allowed family members to spend time together and conveyed a sense of belonging. Another mother also referred to her faith as helping her in everyday life by providing her with hope. Isabella explained:

> "I also probably have to say, like my faith, because if things aren't working well, like in my head it's like, well they will eventually, [Laughingly], so that just gives me hope."
>
> <div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

Another daily ritual that the majority of participants talked about included family meals. While I have already discussed family meals in chapter six as part of the topic of shared family time, I decided to discuss the topic of shared family meals in the current chapter as well. Indeed, consistent with the literature, families talked about family mealtimes as both a family routine and a family ritual (Fiese et al., 2002; Kong et al., 2013). Dinnertime can be considered a ritual when it holds symbolic meaning to families, including the integration of specific dishes or saying a grace. Indeed, according to Fiese et al. (2002): "Any routine has the potential to become a ritual once it moves from an instrumental to a symbolic act" (p. 383).

Participating families in my study were at the developmental stage in which they and their preschool children embarked on the task of creating family rituals in their day-to-day lives, one of which included mealtimes. Establishing family rituals can be challenging, and needs to take into account children's developmental demands (Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, & Schwagler, 1993). It is interesting to note that the age of the children did not hinder families from engaging in meaningful family mealtimes. In fact, the three participating families with children under two years of age talked about making conscious efforts to involve their children in mealtime routines, although infants were not able to share the same food and required assistance with feeding. Valentina, a mother of an eight month old son explained:

> "Now that Nathan is eating solids he sits with us in the chair, and when we are eating, we give him something, so he realizes that that's dinner time, trying to incorporate that into his emotion."
>
> <div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Based on participants' accounts of their everyday lives, sharing meals as a family was not only a necessary everyday routine, but moreover carried symbolic importance to nearly

all families. This is consistent with earlier research (Fiese et al., 2006), which recognized that

family mealtimes are "replete with symbolism, ranging from the types of blessings said,

foods served, and even how seats are assigned" (p. 68). Scholars contend that family

mealtimes are a collective ritual transmitted over generations that encourage a shared family

identity, reinforce shared values, signify togetherness, and strengthen family relationships

(Fiese et al., 2006; Larson et al., 2006).

Families also prepared a variety of traditional dishes for their family. Meal

preparation, specifically, involved the mixing of foods from both spouses' culture of origin,

incorporating "mainstream" North American foods from the father's side and "ethnic" foods

and dishes from the mother's side. Participants explained:

> "Integrating her into that cultural community and food is a part of it. I know Isabella cooks some foods and I cook some food from her country of origin […] We enjoy having them when we do and we acknowledge that they're cultural."
>
> David, father

Participants in two families further described several different rituals around meal

times that they adopted from the mother's culture of origin:

> "The Asians, they say after they're done eating [Asian saying], and before you start eating, and so, things like that, like there's words and stuff like that, and it's like a thank you to the person who cooked. Those types of things, I think, are important. We don't let them leave the table unless they say, say those things."
>
> Jean, father

> "One of the things I introduced in our family is blessing the food before we eat. John said this is something that he didn't do it, even though he was Catholic, and this is not very common in North America, so, you know, he really embraces it, so now we take turns, so we have a, if I cook, he has to do make the prayer, if he cooks, I make the prayer. And with Nathan, you know, we all hold hands, so we hold Nathan's hands and, and each other's hands, so, you know, when he grows up, Nathan will have the opportunity to do prayer."
>
> Valentina, mother

It seems that participants' family-of-origin and cultural norms may have shaped

individuals' understanding and practice of shared family meals. Both fathers who are

Canadian born as well as mothers who are newcomers and from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds referred to the importance of family meals. Participants recalled that sharing meals was an activity they experienced as a child in their own families and considered it as an important tradition that they would like to pass onto to their children. Two parents explained:

> "For me, you know, like mealtimes, it was very important in my, so in North America, they have this, you know, soccer mums, where, you know, the kids eat in the car, or different members will eat at different times, and I think that, this is something that I want to push and I push in our family, I say to John, let's go and sit down, all of us, you know, trying to have the family at meal time, because like, I see that opportunity to talk. Nathan doesn't talk much but, I think that he will, you know, so he can grow on learning manners and then, I remember in my family, we talk about, you know, philosophy and science and art, so, you know, I learn about these Picasso, or Renoir, or, by talking to my siblings and my mom, so, no TV during dinner times is very important, right."
>
> Valentina, mother

> "The norms, well I think, you know, it was sort of normalized, like I actually my family always ate dinner together, that was a pretty big norm, I remember that. Less so as I got older, simply because my mom worked shift work and she was usually gone in the evening. So then it would be just my dad and I, and we'd still, for a while we eat together and then it, [Laughingly], as I became a teenager and got older I kind of was doing my own thing and he'd either had some food there and grab it and go or whatever I wouldn't be around, so then eating meals together is probably a norm that I would say I wanted to carry into this family tradition."
>
> David, father

The majority of participants who actively promoted shared family mealtimes talked about having engaged in family meals throughout their childhood and their desire to continue this ritual in their own families. Hence, it seems that participants who ate together with their families as a child were more likely to carry on this ritual as an adult and to incorporate family meals in their own families.

Rituals on Special Occasions

Mothers provided many examples of the rituals they brought into their family life, which often were part of special occasions or holidays, such as the Spring Festival, the Moon Cake Festival, Christmas, and New Years, amongst others. All mothers highlighted the importance and enjoyment of teaching rituals around special holidays to their children:

> "We have like every month almost some kind of cultural event. So try to introduce to kids those traditions, but often it's, I just forget, it's not as, nothing else happens, around us."
>
> <div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

Isabella also described the holiday rituals that she brought into her family:

> "Christmas is a big thing in our family and so we'll have a little thing where you have the little figures and the little star and sheep. We'll set it together as a family and then, presents we open on the 25th in the morning and so we do breakfast while we're eating and opening presents and then New Years there is a lot of traditions, [Laughing], which include wearing yellow, eating grapes and making wishes for each grape at each stroke at midnight. At midnight also running out the door with a suitcase and throwing a glass of water out the threshold of the door, [Laughingly], wearing money in your right shoe, so it's mostly around New Years. And then a few other ones that will be fun to do once Ana Sofia gets older."
>
> <div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

A little further on in our conversation, Isabella explained that the rituals around Christmas and especially New Years were passed onto to her from her mother's side, and that introducing those to her friends and family was an enjoyable experience:

> "I'm trying to think. I think it's from my mom and so it would from, it had to be from the [culture], where we do all of these things. It's mostly the New Year's ones, and I've actually done them with some friends here as well and sort of brought it here and it's always been a lot of fun, and now we'll get to do it with Ana Sofia which will be really great."
>
> <div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

Another mother also provided examples of the holidays that she introduced to the family. As well, she talked about those that her husband introduced into their family:

> "And the important holiday the New Year, we together have a meal. And Daniel bring the Western holiday for our family, like Thanksgiving, Christmas is big."
>
> <div align="right">Chen, mother</div>

Family rituals were important aspects of mothers' cultural identity and it was important for mothers to continue their family-of-origin rituals across generations. Based on the above quotes from three mothers, it appears that the age of children influenced families' ability to practice some rituals, the majority of children in this study being infants with only one child being of preschool age. Parents explained that their children were too young to be

able to actively participate in some rituals but that parents spent time teaching children about their rituals from a very young age onwards so that they understood the meaning behind the rituals once they were able to participate in meaningful ways.

Influential Factors

While there were apparent differences as well as similarities across participating families regarding what rituals they incorporated in their family life based on each parent's cultural background and cultural identity, all families incorporated family rituals from both parents. Integrating family rituals from both spouses appeared to contribute to the family's building of a cohesive family unit. This finding is consistent with earlier research on family rituals, highlighting that family rituals are symbolic and memorable, and can contribute to family members' sense of belonging (Fiese et al., 2002; Possick, 2008; Spagnola & Fiese, 2007).

By contrast to mothers' accounts of family rituals, fathers seemed to struggle more in answering my question about rituals. First, fathers required more time than mothers to answer this question, indicating that fathers may not have a straightforward answer, or that they had not thought about their family rituals previously. Second, most fathers seemed to downplay the cultural rituals they brought into the family, labeling those rituals as "mainstream", rather than considering them as "cultural". Overall, fathers referred to their struggle to name what Canadian culture entails, and identify cultural rituals within a multicultural Canada. The following quotes demonstrate fathers' key struggles:

> "I don't know, what are some traditions? That's a good question. I think in my family life, we didn't have, the tragedy of assuming that Canadians maybe don't have culture which is highly problematic but we never really talked a lot about traditions that we had, I notice, I know I adopted a lot of Isabella's traditions […] So, I've adopted some of the traditions that Isabella has brought over, or brought into our family. But I'm trying to think. I mean we had traditions, like we get together on sort of Judeo or Christian holidays and we've done that a little bit. I think that's probably the biggest thing, we don't really have any religious traditions or, trying to think, that's about it. Probably the pretty standard everybody, extended family gets together on holidays."

"Growing up we didn't really have much of a tradition or, see that's the fun part culture, as far as culture goes, my family mostly just celebrated holidays."

Daniel, father

"Christmas of course, you know, but even then, we don't, like when I'm working [Laughingly], we don't have like a big Christmas thing, you know, like it's just depends where we are. Does it feel like Christmas, if it does then, you know, it's Christmas, if it doesn't, it doesn't, you know. I know on most of our traditions I think are, are more, you know, girls day in [Asian country] and, and those type of things, that are almost more [Asian] in that sense. I mean Christmas is, and when we move back Christmas will be, it's gonna be a big thing cause it's gonna feel like Christmas. […] I wonder it would almost be a better question for Mai cause she would probably recognize it more than I would because for me it's just, whereas I mean, you know, birthdays, what do we celebrate, we celebrate birthdays, I mean Christmas, Easter, not really at all, Easter egg hunts, you know, like Ester egg hunts we, we do, and we'll continue doing."

Jean, father

It seemed that women were more actively engaged in developing and continuing family rituals in their families. One explanation for this pattern of gender differences is based on earlier research that has shown that women are more likely than men to maintain family rituals (Leach & Braithwaite, 1996). However, another plausible explanation may be concerned with the fathers' cultural background. Fathers might have struggled to provide examples of rituals not because they were male but because they were Canadian. All mothers seemed to have a stronger sense of cultural identity and maybe pride in their cultural heritage compared to fathers in this study. This was made explicit by one father:

"I think Isabella finds strength in her cultural heritage, and speaking her language and connecting with her family and her mom and knowing some of the experiences and stories of that history and that heritage, that gives her a lot of strength and makes me really happy and I enjoy those aspects of her, and, and of our life. Having lived in [wife's country of origin], you know, I've very fun memories of that space, so anything [cultural] I'm, I enjoy participating in. There's little family traditions at New Years and Christmas that she does that are always fun and have the cultural aspects to them, and celebrating, you know, in [wife's country of origin] they have a particular mother's day, so that's fun to celebrate in addition to the North American one. We don't go to church or anything, but be open if Isabella felt that that was important."

David, father

Previous research on culture, cultural norms, and cultural competence in family therapy and practice with families from diverse backgrounds has recognized that cultural values from the "dominant" or "mainstream" culture are often taken-for-granted and seen as "normal" compared to those from "minority" cultures, which are understood to be "ethnic" (McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012). According to McGoldrick and Ashton (2012), "culture still tends to be thought of as something that non-Americans and people of color possess" (p. 250).

None of the participants talked about experiencing challenges with regards to incorporating different rituals from each parent, and the bringing together of different rituals did not seem to elicit any family conflict. Some participants talked about negotiating rituals between each other, however, and again, this did not seem to contribute to any relationship stress.

> "She has very strong views on like Christmas and Halloween and that's something totally different that I never really thought of that perspective before like, where if you tell a child you can't go on Halloween cause you, all year you tell them not to talk to strangers and then on Halloween you say, go talk to strangers, it's kind of a conflicting message. But I understand, and it makes sense. And then the Santa Claus thing where she doesn't wanna lie to Nathan saying that there is Santa Claus or to use Santa Claus as a manipulation tool, like, 'oh if you better behave or Santa is not gonna bring', so. She said she doesn't wanna lie to Nathan, so just tell him the truth."

Overall, all five mothers in this study were born and raised in their countries of origin and immigrated to Canada as adults and all five mothers related to their cultural backgrounds in positive ways and reported positive regard for many aspects and values of their culture of origin. In contrast, fathers seemed to have difficulty expressing what Canadian culture is and what cultural rituals they bring into their family life. It appears that to these fathers, the more important task may be for their children to learn about their mother's immigrant culture, including language, norms, and values. Focusing on Canadian culture was less salient and may be seen as a given because Canada is where their children were growing up and so

adopting Canadian culture was seen as a natural process that did not need any effort on the

parents' side. This was explicitly addressed by David:

> "Jees, yeah, [Laughing], I, you know, so let me say this, a lot of how we thought about our culture in our family is how we're going to encourage Ana Sofia to understand her Latin American identity, and Isabella's [cultural] identity, because of that real dominance of whatever "Canadian" and I'm making air quotes here, "Canadian" culture is. So, again, I think she's going to absorb just because it's in the air a lot of the norms and values and traditions and understandings of what folks do in Edmonton, who are relatively mainstream, upper-middle income people, that we kind of just do because we live here, so I don't worry too much about a lot of that stuff. What I really wanna focus on, I'm pretty sure Isabella does as well is ensuring, you know, that that language is strong, that she's well connected with the understanding of what it means to be Latina, and what it means to have her mom be an immigrant and that history, that family, those connections, those values, that she has opportunities to explore those, because a lot of what I'm experiencing, and bring into the cultural space might not be as, it might just be subtlety kind of always there and she'll just pick it up kind of naturally and I think we gonna have to be a little bit more aware of how Isabella's identity."
>
> David, father

In sum, findings indicate that families enjoyed being part of an intercultural family

and enjoyed participating in each other's family-of-origin rituals, shaped by cultural norms.

In intercultural families, family members bring unique rituals to the family and families need

to make decisions about which rituals they will celebrate and hence incorporate into their

family life. While mothers appeared to be more explicit about cultural rituals, fathers also

incorporated rituals, but did not always recognize those as cultural. Embracing different

rituals appeared to encourage the integration of both partners' cultural backgrounds and

contributed to creating a shared sense of family identity.

CHAPTER 9: COMMON GOALS AND VALUES

In this chapter I discuss the topic of common goals and values; an aspect of effective family functioning that was emphasized by all participants in their accounts of their everyday family lives and in response to a question about what helps their family to work well. Previous research on mixed families has mainly focused on cultural differences that influence couple's functioning, marital quality, and marital stability (Forry et al., 2007; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Yet, the more recent literature on mixed couples has shown that focusing on similarities, rather than stressing differences is a coping strategy that mixed couples use to overcome cultural differences (Bustamante et al., 2011; Inman et al., 2011; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). Similarities among partners in intercultural families can include values and beliefs, religion, socioeconomic circumstances, and so forth.

Overall, participants highlighted internal factors over external ones that help their family to work well, including individual characteristics, and sharing similar values and goals. In response to a question about what Valentina likes about her family, she explained that she and her husband were able to work as a team because they shared similar goals:

> "What I like about our family is that I'm married to John, like I wouldn't change him for the world. He has, you know, his defects and then I have my defects but I like is the way that he is in our family, so he is a very reliable person, so I feel that we work as a team. So, financially, we have goals together. As a family, we have goals together."
>
> Valentina, mother

Similarly, a father highlighted that sharing similar goals as a family and working as a team is an aspect of his family life that he really appreciated. Mathew explained:

> "It's nice to be part of a family, you feel like you're part of a team when you're, and you're working together for the same kinds of goals which is the betterment of your family and the enrichment of your kids, not through money but through values, through education, those kinds of things. I think that we're striving for the same kinds of things. I guess those are some of the things I like about my family."
>
> Mathew, father

Participants in my study primarily emphasized the importance of similarities in values as a fundamental building block for relationships to grow, develop, and strengthen. That is, if common values are lacking between partners, it is difficult to come together as a family, regardless of cultural backgrounds. This was made explicit by one father:

> "Well, I think our values is the, our value system is the one thing that helps us the most. I think that's what drives us, going back to some of the other questions, I think values is the one common trait that you need to have in a relationship to make it work. You can't have totally different values. You could have a few minor differences, but if your core values are not the same you're gonna run into problems, so, whether it's being, like a religious family and stuff like that, and just certain values that bind us together. I think that's something that helps us a lot in terms of raising Nathan and just dealing as a family as issues come up."
>
> John, father

> "The interest in travelling and knowing more and we both really value education and reading and knowledge and so, all of those things that we share in common I think is, gives us that really strong foundation for what we're differ."
>
> Isabella, mother

Open-Mindedness

One value that was mentioned and shared by all participants was that of open-mindedness. Participants highlighted the importance of being open-minded to their partner's different cultural background, religion, and generally to people. It appears that open-mindedness was a way that participants approached situations in their family lives and in life in general. Participants provided many examples, a few of which I highlight below:

> "It's the respect of multiculturalism, is extremely, extremely important and maybe that's because we've just lived that for the last thirteen years and so wherever you are you need to understand, you need to respect it. You don't need to fully get it, you know, but you still need to respect it. You don't need to exactly understand why they're doing this or why they're doing that, you know, but you need to try to understand, and you need to respect, you know and so that's gonna be very important and, as kind of kids who are and have been raised in that and working abroad it's the same thing, you know, not just in a country we, we're visiting but also with the people we work with. You walk into my workplace and there's, you know, ten, fifteen languages being spoken, and so I almost don't know any different anymore, like then, that's kind of the reality and so, I kind of want the same for them, you know, like I want them to travel, I want them to see the world, I want them to see that

people are people, you know, regardless of where they're from, so is that based on my culture, it's based on I guess who you are and what we lived in the last ten, fifteen years, but, which I guess is not cultural."

<div align="right">Jean, father</div>

"And I think that that's, we're very open-minded in a sense that we don't judge people for the religion, their sexual orientation, their preference, you know, and cultures, you know. For us, both of us, you know, the more cultural diverse the better. And I think that that's a strength in our family, being open-minded and, you know, it makes us, people like to be around us, as a family because we're fun [Laughingly]. So they come to visit us, or they invite us over and, you know, and yeah, this is different they're not that bad, right, [Laughingly]. And, you know, Nathan is kind of a nice fellow. He has the best of both of us. I think that people like him, too."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Another mother highlighted that the respect for other places and cultures was important in her relationship, and helped her and her husband to have a strong base for their relationship. Isabella explained:

"I think David really values my culture and having that the world is just a little bit bigger than where you come from."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

Participants further highlighted that they would like their children to be open-minded, and they facilitated such open-mindedness by teaching them about different religions and cultures, and sharing their passion to travel and experience different places and cultures. Two mothers who practiced Catholicism emphasized that they did not want to impose their own religious values onto their children but be supportive of what their children would like to explore in the future:

"I think that both John and I are very tolerant, and when he grows up he will be entitled, because he has a free will, but not until he grows up, right, but, [Laughingly]. And we will tell him, you know, to tie his shoes, and to eat, but, you know, when he is around thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, he starts exploring like he thinks that he wants to do other religions or not have any religions at all, we will respect that. But, we are hoping that at least he still comes with us just because this is a family thing for us. My dad is an atheist now. He was protestant, but every time I used to go to visit him to [another country], he will come to mass just to be with me."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

"I think what I want her to know is that there are many different faiths that people have and so I would hope that she, if she doesn't want to pray when she gets older then that's okay. If she just wants to instead of a prayer at the end of the night say what she's grateful for at the end of the day. If she decides she wants to pursue another religion, I would fully support her in that, and I think David is of the same wavelength, and so we can introduce that Catholicism which is important for me but when she's old enough to make a decision she can decide whatever she wants and even while introducing that piece, also letting her know and providing her information or introducing her to different practices that exist, different temples or mosques and different beliefs."

Isabella, mother

Research on healthy family functioning and family strengths (Walsh, 2003, 2006) has shown that shared family values and beliefs constitute important resources for families to adapt to changing circumstances and overcome challenges and crises. Previous research on mixed couples and families has also shown that being open-minded might be a value that partners in mixed families bring into their families, and that it differentiates intercultural families from mono-cultural families (Crippen, 2011; Silva et al., 2012). Values are passed down from the family-of-origin and are linked to cultural values that shape individuals' behaviors and norms (Locke, Myers, & Herr, 2001). Open-mindedness in intercultural relationships has also been shown to present "transformative opportunities" for partners as well as children (Crippen, 2011).

CHAPTER 10: PROVIDING AND RECEIVING SUPPORT

In this chapter, I describe the important role social support played in participating families' lives. Social support has been defined as "the perception or experience that one is loved and cared for by others, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations" (Taylor, 2007, p. 145). While I adopt this abstract definition of social support, for the purpose of this chapter I recognize that the multi-faceted concept of social support has been studied extensively across several disciplines in the academic literature, and has produced numerous yet ambiguous conceptualizations, definitions, and measurements tools (Hupcey, 1998a, 1998b; Williams, Barclay, & Schmied, 2004). This lack of a clear definition has resulted in the concept of social support remaining "fuzzy and almost any type of social interaction has been considered social support" (Hupcey, 1998a, p. 1231). To add to this complexity, the concept, use, and effect of social support varies across different cultures and socioeconomic statuses. However, there is less research available that has explored these differences (Almeida et al., 2009; Kim et al., 2008). For example, research is ambiguous about whether it is the actual receipt of support that is of importance and contributes to positive mental and health outcomes, or perceived social support (Almeida et al., 2009). Such differences in the meaning and understanding of social support raises questions regarding the relevance of definitions and measurements developed based on Western perspectives to different ethnic or cultural groups (Kim et al., 2008). As Kim et al. (2008) point out, "people from different cultural backgrounds may utilize and be affected by support from close others differently even if they possess equally supportive social networks" (p. 518).

While I cannot provide a thorough discussion of the concept of social support here, I briefly outline some common characteristics of social support as discussed in the literature. Definitions of social support often refer to the type or nature of support provided

(informational, instrumental, and emotional); recognition of the need for support; perception of potentially available support; actual support; the structure of the social support network (number of relationships within social support network, frequency of contact and interconnectedness of social support network); the effectiveness, outcomes, or benefits of support provision; and characteristics of recipient and provider (Hupcey, 1998a; Kim et al., 2008; Taylor, 2007; Williams et al., 2004).

As mentioned above, a family's social support may come from several sources apart from family, including friends, neighbors, work colleagues, schools, daycare providers, members of church communities, and recreation or community organizations (Taylor, 2007). Previous research on mixed families has shown that mixed couples often lack support from their own extended families as well as friends and the community. This lack of social support in turn can increase couples' levels of stress as a result of lacking crucial emotional and practical support in addition to dealing with rejection and negative responses from friends, family, and community members (Bustamante et al., 2011; Killian, 2002, 2012; Luke & Carrington, 2000; Root, 2001).

A lot of participants in my study talked about providing support to each other and other family members, an aspect of family life many appreciated the most. Also mentioned by many participants was support from extended family and friends. Last, some participants talked about utilizing government or community services as an important source of support. Hence, I divide the discussion of social support into four subsections featuring the topics of (1) providing support to each other, (2) receiving support from extended family and friends, (3) receiving support from community organizations and government, and (4) influential factors.

Providing Support to Each Other

One important role of all families is that of extending emotional, social, and practical support to members and this has been recognized in the McMaster Model as well as the Circumplex Model (Epstein et al., 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003). The majority of participants in my study highlighted the importance of providing support to each other. Participants described their partners as supportive and caring and considered their spouse as the most important person with whom they talk about topics that mattered to them. Support included emotional support as well as instrumental support, for example helping each other with household and childcare tasks. Participants provided many examples of receiving support and care from their spouse as well as providing support:

> "I would say, overall, if you look at our relationship as a whole, definitely that's a big part of it. I personally feel we're much stronger, I'm much stronger with Isabella and it really benefits my self-actualization and all those things. Yeah, and now Ana Sofia, too, so it's amazing. So, for now we feel really, really supported."
>
> David, father

> "Like every time if I don't know what I have, what's happening, he's like, I mean, he's like a person I can always count on, find answers, no matter if I complain, or I just want to get some advice, he's always good. And he's carrying the family a lot, of course now he's busy, [Laughingly], has less time to spend with us but its life."
>
> Jin, mother

Parents also brought up many different examples of how they supported and nurtured their children. Infants and pre-school children are reliant on their families for basic care, including food, clothing, and shelter, and emotional support, including affection, encouragement, and understanding of children's feelings and needs (Segrin & Flora, 2011). The following examples illustrate how both fathers and mothers attended to their children's basic needs, such as providing a healthy diet, ensuring their children's physical and emotional comforts, and providing an environment that is supportive of children's' developmental needs and capacities:

"For Tom we all do tons of things for him. I mean we entertain him, we make him food, we clean him, we bath him, we read to him, we help him fall to sleep, we console him when he's upset, that's what we do a lot."

Mathew, father

"I really wanna ensure that she feels very safe and that she can grow and nurture and explore, really experience joy and play and so that's creating an environment for that […] It's really spending a lot of time with her so I really, both of us really dedicate a lot of time to Ana Sofia and ensuring that she's comfortable and happy."

David, father

Receiving Support from Extended Family and Friends

In addition to providing support to each other, participants also highlighted the support they received from friends, extended family, or significant others. Previous research has shown that intercultural families might be geographically separated from their extended kin and friendship networks due to migration and hence might not have a large social support network in their new home country (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Silva et al., 2012; Troy, 2006). However, the majority of participants in my study stated that they kept close relationships with their extended family and friends who either lived in another Canadian province, in their countries of origin, or a third country. It seems that physical distance did not present a barrier for participants to continue their close relationships with their families, even when families did not live close by. Many participants, but mostly mothers, talked about how often daily phone calls, video chats, or text messages served as a way to stay connected to their own families. The following are participants' descriptions of the active involvement of their own parents and extended families in everyday family life, despite long-distance relationships:

"Even though my mom lives in another country, because we text and we talk really frequently, I feel like she is actively involved, because I tell her: 'Oh I'm really tired' and she'll be like: 'Well, are you eating enough', [Laughingly], like 'What are you eating?' And, she'll, I send her pictures of Ana Sofia and she'll be like, 'Wow, Ana Sofia like needs new shoes', [Laughing]. And so she's very much involved in our lives. And we have a few close friends that we try to keep in the loop of things and see as frequently as

we can. I would say that those are people I would consider to be actively involved in our lives."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

"My parents and my sister are actively involved. I mean, my parents, maximum my dad can go is one day without seeing Tom, so we're on FaceTime sort of without stop. And my sister maybe once a week we FaceTime with her kind of thing, but we chat maybe once to twice a week; but my parents, every, every day. They're like, it's like they're here but not here kind of thing, so, I would say they're actively involved."

<div align="right">Mathew, father</div>

While the majority of participants talked about the active involvement of their own parents and extended family in their everyday family life, this was mainly reduced to emotional and informational support such as the provision of encouragement, advice, or suggestions. The provision of tangible instrumental support such as childcare in everyday family life was often limited or nonexistent due to the large physical distance between most parents and their families of origin. Indeed, only three fathers lived close to their own parents and extended families in Edmonton and only one family household consisted of three generations, including the maternal grandmother. Despite the geographical distance between many of the participants and their own parents, some participants mentioned that they received tangible support, for example financial assistance. One couple, Isabella and David, in particular, stressed the importance of receiving financial resources and how this helped their family in everyday life:

"Well, Isabella's mom has been very supportive financially, both of our families have actually helping us to purchase a house so those kind of things are really important. And it's given us a lot of opportunities that maybe, if we didn't have that extended family supporting us particularly financially and in Isabella's parents' case, just, you know, her close relationship with them, it would have been a lot harder and we would have, you know, we wouldn't have a house in this lovely neighborhood and all of those kind of things that improve your quality of life and make you healthier and happier."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

In another family, a grandmother was available to provide childcare during the day as well as sometimes in the evenings or on the weekends, and this provided the couple comfort

of knowing that their son was well cared for. Further, it allowed the couple to spend more time together and alleviated some of the related stresses of being a dual-earner family. The grandparents in another family were also involved occasionally and again, this allowed parents to get needed breaks and opportunities to spend time as a couple. Mathew explained:

> "Like things that enable our lives to be easier is her mom being here to know that we have, you know, quality care for our son. I don't know that it's cheaper than having a day care having her mom here. I think it's, you know, like, when you put everything together in the end it'll come out nearly awash, but I know that we have one-on-one care with someone who cares for him and lets me be at ease throughout the day I see the sort of, like we don't have to get up and take him somewhere and that kind of stuff and I think it saves us, you know, an hour a day which saves us a lot of time in a week which gives us a chance to, you know, in the evening if we have that extra hour, like, you know, go and doing this and that, we wouldn't have way less time to spending time together so that's really great."
>
> Mathew, father

By contrast, some participants also revealed that they did not necessarily aspire to living too close to their parents, but this was only brought up by mothers:

> "My family is close but not as close as Jean's family. So, we're okay being away, cause Jean, my parents, my, I moved out from the house for university with 18 for four years, within different, you know, in the same country but different house. My sister, she moved out at the same time. So that we are living apart long enough that don't need them all the time, each other. We talk, but when I go back to Asia and having my mom all the time is good and helps, but often gets annoyed. And now, so even my mom was here for three weeks this summer, was really nice and good for my kids but kind of annoying sometimes, it's family, right. But it could be, would be nice that, if my mom wants to live, my dad as well, but, like my dad is not involved in my life so much, you know, [Laughingly], if they make a decision to live in Canada, I would be happy."
>
> Mai, mother

> "With my family, I don't know, I wish that we'll be closer, like Calgary, so we go and visit them once a month. But, you know, John knows I wouldn't like to have my family all the time here because they are very intense."
>
> Valentina, mother

Later on Valentina goes on to explain some more why she does not want to live too close to her family, stating:

> "The fact that we also live here in Canada puts an ocean between our family and my family, that's important because like I told you, I didn't agree with the

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dynamics of my family […] So, living in Canada, the external environment, protects us from all that, you know."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

As expected, the majority of participants stated that not having their own or their spouse's extended family close by created some challenges. In particular, one of the biggest challenges was not having extended family to provide childcare. In response to a question about what participants liked least about their family and something they would change about their family if they could, many participants reported that they wished to have more time. In particular, many participants talked about lacking tangible support from extended family to provide childcare that would allow parents to spend more time as a couple or individually. For example, for Jean and Mai who did not have either of their extended families to support them during the last 12 years living and working abroad, this was a particularly challenging time:

> "What else makes it not work well? I think that living away from, let's say Mai's parents or when we were living away from my parents, that is hard because I look at, you know, like brother and sister-in-law who, I mean, my parents, like, [Laughingly], they've got one of the kids on an almost daily basis. Maybe not daily, but, you know like, certainly several, three, four, five times a week they're taking one of the kids, drive them to school, whatever it might be, or babysitting them all, or whatever else like that and, and, you know, we've never had that, [Laughingly], you know. Like I mean, there's no, there's no one to leave the kids with, you know like, I mean, and so that has been, well, I mean it's normal for us and so I guess it's been hard but it's just been normal in our lives. I think that, you know, like the first time Mai and I were able to go on a date together after the kids, it's like two years or something, you know, like I mean there wasn't a night where we didn't have the girls for like, or even longer, you know, and even then, like it's once in a, once in nine months or something, you know, [Laughingly].

<div align="right">Jean, father</div>

Another couple, David and Isabella, also described the challenges they faced due to large physical distance. Isabella emphasized that it was challenging to live apart from her own family particularly in terms of seeing each other on a frequent basis and being able to rely on her family for childcare, for example:

"That's pretty tough because I do like spending time with family. […] But my mom tries to visit as much as possible, and I, we try to go see her so we spent five weeks visiting her, and that was really great but yes, if they were closer, lived here, it would be more, like I said it was back home where we just go like every weekend or every other weekend or they come over or babysit or whatever."

Isabella, mother

David described how the geographical distance to his parents-in-law created a difficult family dynamic:

"I wish her parents were closer. That's something, does that makes sense? Okay, that's more of a down to earth kind of thing. You know that's, so it creates a difficult dynamic when my parents are here, and I could see them whenever I want and they would probably happily come here and be here all the time, especially now that Ana Sofia is here, right. But you have to balance that because it's tough for Isabella because she doesn't get to see her parents, maybe three times a year, right, and it's a very, for a limited amount of time and so there's all those challenges of space and distance which are much less than they would have been twenty years ago or even ten years ago but are still there. So that's, you know, I'd somehow like to change that dynamic."

David, father

Another couple, Valentina and John, also reported that lacking practical support from extended family due to the large physical distance was challenging. However, it appears that both spouses had slightly different arguments. On the one hand, Valentina seemed to emphasize the importance of social closeness and contact to her spouse's family, which was difficult to accomplish when living far away from each other:

"I wish his sister was involved [Laughing]. Like I wish, you know, his family was closer, like, we talk about moving close to John's home province, you know, just to be, because, it will be nice, like I grew up in a very tied Latino family, so my grandmother lived three blocks away, like three hundred meters. She was at home every day, right, which, you know, my mom didn't appreciate, [Laughing], but, you know, like I wish we will have, you know, families where we go to his family and visit. I really like his family."

Valentina, mother

On the other hand, John revealed that one of the key impacts of lacking practical social support from extended family was that it limited his and Valentina's opportunities to spend time as a couple and as individuals. Lacking support from extended family to provide

childcare while he worked full-time increased his family's sense of feeling overwhelmed.

John explained:

> "It's hard when you're two thousand miles away from one family and probably like four thousand away from the other, so you can't just jump in the car and go and visit type of thing […] That definitely hurts to have a big distance there and not have that support system; like it's totally different to have it on Skype versus somebody walking through the door to carry the baby, or take the baby for an afternoon, so that support system I think is, it does causes strain on the relationship just cause you don't have anybody really help you out, whether it's just to talk to or to take Nathan for a day or, it's one thing to have a babysitter but it's much easier, I know when I went, we went to my home city, it made a big difference, just when we go out for dinner and not have to worry, or he's not there, crying at the table, so, it's made a huge difference to go there […] It would be nice to have a little bit more free time to do things on your own, but, and I think that causes some grief at times, cause we just get so overwhelmed and you just wanna be able to go for a walk and go out for dinner or coffee with friends and that's just not easy to do anymore, like maybe down the road it will be but I think that's the most difficult thing, it's just the lack of personal time, whether it's just for us two, like Valentina and I, or just individually. We don't have a big support system in Edmonton, so that's where we're, that's why it's really difficult for us."
>
> John, father

Asking John and Jin how they were coping with the limited support system in

Edmonton, they explained further:

> "I think it tests your patience. I think from time to time because you want, you want somebody to take him for a couple of hours or an hour, and probably get hasty with each other and just cause it's so overwhelming at times."
>
> John, father

> "I want to move back to Mathew's home city, [Laughingly], because we're lonely here. All the relatives and class mates and friends are there. And it's hard to, you know, we're in the thirties age, it's hard, how you can get a very close friend. They all have families, and the friends, they already make things, their kids, right. So, I just want, if we go back, I think we can have more social things to do, and we enjoy more. And for my mom, Mathew's home city has a bigger ethnic community, it is easier for her to live there, that's what I change, [Laughingly]."
>
> Jin, mother

Similarly, Mathew, whose family lives in his home city stated that he wished to be

closer to his own family, especially because it was difficult for his parents to build a close

relationship with his son, Tom:

> "Sometimes, I would like them, my parents, to have more connection with Tom. Like, when we went to visit it took the whole two weeks for him to warm up to my dad basically, because my dad was over excited and scared the crap out of him with his like energy. I like Tom to feel that his grandparents were close enough. For right now it hasn't been so much of a problem but I think as time goes on it'll be more and more difficult."
>
> <div align="right">Mathew, father</div>

The process of immigrating to a new culture can be challenging and it often means the loss of important family and friendship networks in the country of origin. All participants, but particularly mothers in this study, revealed the importance of other sources of support, especially support from friends. It appears that some mothers were able to make social connections through their partner's existing family and friendship networks in Edmonton. Friends were often able to make up for the lack of tangible support from extended families by providing important emotional support and guidance, socializing opportunities, and occasionally childcare support. Friends often were parents of young children themselves and hence shared similar experiences to those of the participating families in this study. Having support from friends alleviated some stress of being first time parents while living away from extended family members. Friends were able to often take on crucial roles of extended family members and were able to provide emotional as well as practical support.

In response to a question if Isabella and her husband tend to have friends together or separately, Isabella explained that she found a lot of friends through her husband after immigrating to Edmonton. Isabella further mentioned some negative experiences with some previous friends of her husband with regards to racial discrimination, although I did not explore this further with her. Overall, Isabella emphasized that she and her husband and their friends shared similar interests and values which seemed important to her:

> "Friends together, for sure. I think, I made friends cause when I came here I didn't know anyone but David and so I made a lot of friends through him and his work. And because David and I share a passion for the work that we do, in terms of equity and justice and social justice and all of those pieces, friends that also share that which is really, really great. Some of the friends that he introduced me to when I first got here, I don't, we don't spend too much time

with anyone, cause they had, some of them were a little racist, which I've found problematic, but now we have a really good group that we both spend time with so they'll ask us well which one of you can go, of the two of you can go out tonight, because they'll take either or both preferably."

<div align="right">Isabella, mother</div>

Another mother emphasized the important support she received from her sister-in-law. Sharing the experiences of motherhood, being of similar age, and having similar interests were important factors that contributed to a positive support. According to Mai, her sister-in-law provided vital emotional and informational support. As a newcomer to Edmonton, Mai's knowledge about the city's resources also increased by having connections to her husband's friends. Mai explained:

"[Friend "D"] is very much big help for me, physically, mentally, you know, she knows city and she has more, you know, kids earlier on, she knows how to raise kids, not always, but we talk a lot about those things and then, also similar age that we can talk different things and fashions and, you know, be anything, it's fun."

<div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

In response to a question about what it means to you if your family works well, David explained that having supportive family and friends is important at times when there might be challenges within the couple or nuclear family:

"If we need it, that we can call on other family members or friends, that each of us individually has those groups to go to, if there's a challenge at home that we have, we have to kind of bounce those ideas of off, I think, if you have those supports, or if I have those supports, and if Isabella has those supports, that's gonna benefit the outcomes."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

Another mother provided many examples of how her friendship network helped her family to function effectively by providing emotional as well as instrumental support, such as the provision of clothes and childcare. Valentina explained:

"It's very important to have somebody else, like, especially my friends, they have kids […] So, I think that, well, I have to say this is very important. One of my friends, her two kids are much older than Nathan so we got all the toys, all the stroller, car seats, clothing. We didn't buy any clothes for Nathan. We have clothing for until he's three and John's niece also gave us clothing that we brought from John's home city. And then [my friend] says, you know, for

example two things. She invited me to a program in the library I wasn't aware of, and the other thing I always wanted to go swimming to the recreation centre with Nathan but I was shy, I didn't want to go on my own. And it was fantastic because in the summer I always went with her and it was very important for me because I could connect with my friend and I had somebody to talk to. And also, you know, I saw how she did everything with the child, you know, in the swimming pool, so those are assets that makes our family better, you know, having this friends that they do have kids, so ones are, you know, much older so we get a lot of stuff from them and they give us a lot of advice, make sure you do this, make sure you. Some advice, you know, we don't agree, but some advice is fantastic."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Receiving Community and Government Support

Acknowledging the limited tangible support participating families received from their own extended families due to often large geographical distances following immigration to Canada or interprovincial migration between them and their parents, many families described how community and government support services facilitated their ability to meet their families' emotional, social, and physical needs. Previous research has shown that mothers who are immigrants receive less social support compared to second or third generation mothers (Su & Hynie, 2011). The experience of immigration itself is often a stressful life event that increases the need for support. At the same time, however, it leads to long-distance relationships with family, friends, and others, which put more pressure on the nuclear family to provide support for each other (Levitt, Lane, & Levitt, 2005). However, and this is in contrast with previous research findings, all participating mothers appeared to be able to build support networks in Edmonton and locate various support sources, which appeared to be a strength among mothers in this study. This was observed by many of the fathers, one of whom explained:

"I think, Mai's ability to source help in a general sense of, whether its services or whatever, support services I guess is probably a good way describing it, wherever she goes, I think helped a lot because it gives the girls places to go and things to do."

<div align="right">Jean, father</div>

All fathers are from Canada; three were born and raised in Edmonton. The other two fathers came from a province in Central Canada and moved to Edmonton because of employment opportunities. Hence, they also did not have their extended family as a support network. One father specifically noted that his wife Jin was better able to connect the family to community programs that also facilitated Jin's opportunities to meet new people and make new friends:

> "Programs and services that kind of stuff, it's sounds like yes, like Jin managed to connect into some sort of like cultural services that were good, and in fact even through that we went to a, like a mixed sort of culture celebration day maybe a couple of months ago. It was interesting. It was nice they had like some games for kids and stuff like that, and then they had some like, you know, prize draws and like the library time and that kind of stuff, it was nice. Just something to do for the kids, kind of thing, that was good. I see how it was great for Jin, like she was, when she entered into these different sort of mommy groups through the cultural society, and then made sort of some like groups who were friends through that I thought that it went, like was really great, and I saw it made her time at home and maternity like so much fuller, I think that was great. And it's working now cause her mom can go and have someone to talk to and not feel 100 percent isolated all the time. […] I'm not as connected into anything like that I had some interest to maybe look into this and that but I haven't felt the time."
>
> Mathew, father

One mother explained how living in Canada enabled her and her family to utilize a variety of community and governmental resources that offered valuable support for new parents. Being a new parent can be a challenging time for all parents (Fiese et al., 1993; Ohashi & Asano, 2012). For many of the immigrant mothers in this study, the lack of instrumental and informational support from extended family to draw upon following childbirth augmented feelings of exhaustion and stress. However, for some mothers, support through government or community organizations provided some replacement for natural supports:

> "I think that externally, the fact that we live in Canada. So, coming from [country] and having lived in different countries, I can appreciate that we couldn't have the lifestyle or the peace of mind that we have here, that we didn't if we would lived in another country. Like, when I was, you know, pregnant or when we have Nathan, I had a bunch of support systems given by

the government, employment insurance for a year, that's huge; being able to receive payments so I can stay with our child. Or, you know, have the community nurse come and teaching me how to breastfeed, you know. Remember I grew up, you know, in South America and we always have somebody, a friend, a mom, an uncle or an aunt, not an uncle but an aunt telling you how to breastfeed. And here I didn't have anybody."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

Other participants talked about using various resources in the city of Edmonton that were considered helpful for their children as well as parents themselves:

"To work well, like the programs for the immigrant, I think there's few those programs within the city but I haven't done it at all, I don't think. But, like a library event, like those events, art events, like those things I try to seek those things and then try to get outside and then you meet people and even like yesterday I went to Family Centre, and I went there at a free pray drop in, free play time and I went there and I met other Asian mothers and stuff so that I try to use those facilities and opportunities."

<div align="right">Mai, mother</div>

For one family, in particular, the health care system was a great support in overcoming the challenges related to their daughter being born premature:

"You know, we, [sigh], the health care system has been a huge support to us. And it was a pretty good experience for us throughout, you know, we had the usual unpleasantries when someone is sick in the family, but for the most part, that was a phenomenal contribution to giving us our family dynamic that we have now, [Laughingly], by making sure that Ana Sofia was healthy and okay. And probably, you know, the benefits that we have through our work is really important. They could be better, the Canadian government in terms of if, you know, having maternity leave was really important and an option for extending care, though, I wouldn't say that, [Laughingly], that was good. It was just good that we had that, it was important. Those kinds of things are really valuable so, you know, universal health care, cause if we were in Isabella's country of origin, if we were in [another country], if we were anywhere else in the world, I don't think Ana Sofia's outcomes would have been the same and that would have had a huge impact on, so I think making sure that that's in line is really important."

<div align="right">David, father</div>

While participating families emphasized the importance and availability of community and social programs and described the ways in which such resources helped their families to work well, there was only limited focus on external sources of support in participants' descriptions. There are three possible explanations of why participants did not

utilize many external support sources. First, all families received valuable support from friends and family and hence did not require much further support from community resources. Second, participating families may not have recognized the role of the services and supports in their lives, and therefore did not mention them during the interviews. Third, all participants are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and hence may not have required support from social or community organizations. The latter was specifically brought up by one father who explained:

> "But as far as social agencies that have helped us because, you know, we're fairly, in terms of our income, in terms of our education those kind of things, we haven't had to rely too much on, fortunately, on those sort of things."
>
> David, father

Influential Factors

Similar to other aspects of family functioning, practices and expectations around providing and receiving social support and the closeness to others are based in individuals' cultures, as recognized by some participants. In intercultural relationships, individuals from different cultural backgrounds may have different understandings of the roles and types of social support (Kim et al., 2008). As I have shown in previous sections, all intercultural families in this study highlighted the importance of providing support and nurturance to each other and this was often associated with the nuclear family made up of the couple and their children. As well, most couples talked about receiving valuable support from their own families, extended relatives, and friends. However, some participants also revealed variations in their understanding of support from extended family and friends and what role such support played in their families' lives. That is, for some participants, support was not limited to the couple unit but broadened to extended family and friends. Such differences were evident across partners in all couples and expressed to varying degrees. While four out of the five participating families lived in nuclear family households, reflecting Western cultural norms, it appears that all mothers highlighted the importance of close-knit relationships with

their extended families and friends, thereby maintaining "the values and meanings of collectivistic families in terms of their cohesion, visiting patterns, interdependence or interpersonal reliance and controls" (Walsh, 2012, p. 310). This was made explicit by one mother:

> "I think he's probably closer in, from my perspective, to his friends than his actual family. Because he's one hundred percent himself with certain friends whereas he's a different person with his family […] And so I guess that's the difference that I see is that I feel I can be myself with my family and with certain friends that I would consider family whereas he's more himself with friends and feels more obligated, I guess is the word to spend time with his family rather than wanting to, and that's where I think the differences are."
>
> Isabella, mother

Another mother recalled that in her country of origin there was always someone who would offer support or advice and the importance of having friends around, which represented a cultural difference between her and her Canadian husband. In her descriptions, Valentina revealed that her understanding and expectations of social support include a close-knit network of extended family and friends. Valentina seemed to emphasize the importance of extended family in her culture of origin:

> "Remember I grew up in [another country] and we always have somebody. A friend, a mom, an uncle or an aunt, not an uncle but an aunt telling you how to breastfeed, and here I didn't have anybody […] From my culture we are very social, so in my culture we don't have a credit history. And we don't have a credit rating. When you want to rent an apartment, you have to get somebody that you know and trusts you, and they will put their house and sign as a co-signer. So if you screw them over, they lose their house, so you don't go and ask this to anybody. You ask for the friends and it's a very strong friendship. So, in my culture, you know friendship and family is huge, like we're close to our family and we're close to our friends, so, I have my three best friends, they having my best friend since 12 years old, so we have like 29 years of friendship. And they live all around the world, and we see each other, we visit each other, and we talk to each other and Facebook, Skype, calling on the phone, some of them they came for my wedding, so, I think that that's the main thing that I value from my culture."
>
> Valentina, mother

Later in the interview when Valentina responded to my question about what she liked least about her family, she affirmed that it was her husband's lack of friendships. While Valentina

first linked this to her husband's culture that is very private, she then stated that her

husband's own family appeared to have been quite social. However, John was not and this

further limited their social support network and male role models for their son Nathan.

Valentina explained:

> "The lack of friendship, you know, like for example, what I don't like about
> our family is that John doesn't have friends, right. He's very private, and he
> grew up in a culture that they were very private, so, I think that his daddy's
> friend will come like the whole time, and his mum used to go to the aunt's
> house, but he doesn't have that. Like, like, he didn't perpetuate it, like, so, you
> know, I would like to have, you know, to have John's friends, I would like
> him to have a friends, his friends will come and watch TV with him and watch
> sports. Of course, you know, it will be bad for me because he will not help me
> as much with Nathan, but I think it will make our life, you know, we will have
> more support system. Nathan will have older people to watch for. So, yeah,
> that's one of the things that I would, I wish we can, we could change in our
> family, to have more friends coming over and then, you know, because I grew
> up in this culture, I love entertaining."

<div align="right">Valentina, mother</div>

The above quote suggests that the differences between Valentina's understanding of social

support and social interaction and that of her husband might be a result of various factors,

such family-of-origin norms, cultural norms, and/or personality. The relationship between

these three interacting factors is made clear by Hooker (2003):

> Personality consists of the traits that are unique to an individual human being. It is
>
> partly genetic and partly learned. Because much of personality is acquired, it is
>
> strongly influenced by culture. Yet a wide range of personalities can develop within a
>
> given culture. (p. 60)

Family members' cultures appeared to be important in how parents viewed the role of

their family in offering support. Family closeness and togetherness appeared to be linked to

participant's cultural backgrounds. All mothers as well as one father who is second

generation appeared to have an advantage of coming from a family-of-origin and culture-of-

origin which provide support unconditionally and extend this support to new family members

as well:

"Those are the kinds of things, hearing from my sister that things are going well, I'm a big brother, I wanna make sure that she's doing okay, and look after her, that kind of stuff I feel is hard to do when her so much, you know, further away now, that kind of stuff. And seeing that Jin and my sister get along very, very well. My sister thought she might come up to see her for Christmas and Jin was very, very happy with that idea and I thought that was really nice. So, I feel that Jin, like seeing how Jin has integrated into my side of the family I like very much. I don't feel I'm integrated as well into her side of the family, and I think, and I feel it's partially language barrier but partially very different sort of cultural, sort of, I don't know, just cultures I guess, where it's, it would be unheard of for my dad not to bring someone into the family, you know, fully feeling that way kind of thing."

Mathew, father

In response to a question about what Isabella values most in her culture, she explained:

"I think the priority that is placed in family. I think that's probably what I value the most that, that togetherness and that it's just, it's just normal. It's normal for you to get along with your mother, and it's normal for you to live at home until your mid twenties or whatever, it's normal to talk to your mum on the phone and want to spend time with your mother or your father or your grandparents. Um, that come Mother's Day, you're not just celebrating your mother but you're celebrating your grandmother and your aunts and all of the women. I think that's what I value the most […] From, I don't know what, I guess it's just family is I guess the key component, I would consider in [country], and it's your strength, it's your core, it's your people and so, you don't really separate that. You just invite everybody in to that already, and so if you're young and you have friends over, well, of course you'd have them over with your family, and it's just become the more the merrier".

Isabella, mother

Later on in the conversation, Isabella explained:

"Probably even linked to that is that for David, I think he has a hard time in that I would still go to my mom whereas to me it seems perfectly natural to still go to your mom, and so that practice of you count on your family for everything and that support, whereas I think he doesn't see it the same way and so for me it's really helpful, I don't know if it is for him as much."

Isabella, mother

One recent review article on social support among Asians, Asian Americans, and European Americans (Kim et al., 2008) draws attention to cultural differences and cultural specificity in how individuals use social support. The authors highlight that social support essentially represents an individual's understanding and norms about relationships. Therefore, social support has to be considered "within the context of culturally specific

patterns of social relationships. People from different cultural backgrounds may utilize and be affected by support from close others differently even if they possess equally supportive social networks" (Kim et al., 2008, p. 518). These differences can be related to how people view the self and others in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. For example, in individualistic cultures, individuals are seen as more independent. In comparison, collectivistic cultures regard individuals more likely as interdependent. Such cultural difference can determine whether and how individuals ask for support, and what type of social support is regarded as helpful (Kim et al., 2008; Taylor, 2007).

The literature on cultural differences in support seeking behaviors between Asians (including individuals from Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian and Filipino origins), Asian Americans, and European Americans has shown differences in the frequency of seeking social support and the type of social support considered helpful, with individuals from collectivistic cultures seeking and receiving less explicit social support, that is support that requires the disclosure of the issue or stressor, compared to individuals from individualistic cultures (Kim et al., 2008). These cultural differences remained when taking into account differences in support seeking behaviors between male and female participants (Kim et al., 2008). Hence, while all people from all cultures benefit from seeking and receiving social support, there are differences in how people accomplish this task. My study did not allow examining these nuances but, overall, it seemed that social support played a more important role for mothers who were all from collectivistic cultures. Mothers seemed to be more actively involved in building a support network compared to the fathers in my study.

It is interesting to note that while research on mixed families has focused on the role of social support in general, and in particular found that many mixed families lack support from extended families, friends, and the community due to negative associations with the culturally different partner, none of these studies have taken into account the cultural base of

social support and the potential for cultural differences in the role and use of support among individuals in intercultural relationships (Taylor et al., 2004).

In sum, participants highlighted that having a strong support network positively influenced families' functioning. Overall, none of the couples seemed to lack support from friends or community support services. While participants expressed that lacking tangible support from extended family was challenging, families appeared resourceful and described various ways in mitigating negative consequences associated with lacking practical support from extended families, for example by connecting to friends and local community support sources. Besides, all families appeared to be fully supported by their own families through emotional or financial support and kept regular and frequent contact. In addition, some participants appeared to have different understandings of the role extended family plays in providing support and this may be a result of numerous factors, such as family-of-origin influences, cultural norms, or personality.

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I present a summary of the findings and discuss how my study contributes to research and practice in the field of intercultural families. I also discuss study limitations and future directions for research and practice and end my thesis with final conclusions. The purpose of this study was to examine the topic of family functioning among a population that is quite common in Canada, namely intercultural families, using a focused ethnographic approach. The literature review indicated a need in current research to focus on family functioning of intercultural families, a neglected area of study. Hence, to begin to address current research gaps, I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten participants from five intercultural families with young children with particular attention to the influences of individual factors, the respective partners' cultural backgrounds, and social and economic conditions on family functioning.

This study contributes to existing research and begins to fill gaps in current literature in several ways. First, my findings concerning family functioning of intercultural families are noteworthy and contribute to the understanding of intercultural families with preschool children. My findings highlight the following: First, families conveyed that effective communication is essential for effective family functioning, in particular with regards to expression of emotion, problem solving, decision making, and nurturing. Second, participants described spending time together as a family as a process that facilitates building a shared sense of family identity and enables family members to enjoy each other's company. Third, families stressed that sharing roles among all family members is important to their functioning, allowing each member to fulfill daily tasks and needs of the family unit. Fourth, families also revealed that they maintained rituals from each partner's cultural background, a characteristic of intercultural families all participants particularly liked. Maintaining family rituals also strengthened a shared sense of family identity. Fifth, parents highlighted the

importance of sharing common goals and values, an aspect of their families that helped them to effectively function over time. Sixth and lastly, families reported to feel supported by their immediate family, extended family and friends, as well as community and government services. Although parents who came from different Canadian provinces or different countries reported to miss the tangible support from and time together with their extended families, family members stayed in touch on a regular basis and provided important emotional support.

These findings show that there are many similarities of family functioning patterns among the intercultural families in my study and existing models of family functioning, such as the McMaster Model of Family Functioning and the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Epstein et al., 2003; Olson & Gorall, 2003). Similarities included open and clear communication that involves appropriate emotional expressiveness, decision making processes that encourage the involvement and participation of all family members, the flexible division of family roles that are shared among family members in balanced ways, family members' desire to spend time with each other, and family members' provision of support and care for each other. Hence, as expected, it appears that conceptualization of effective family functioning by mixed families are similar to those of mixed families.

Second, my findings also revealed two important dimensions that were of great importance for families in my study to function well, but that are not included in current models of family functioning: Having common values and goals as well as receiving emotional, social and practical support from extended family, friends and the community at large. Although having common values and goals may be of importance in all families (Welbourne, 2012), it was perhaps of greater importance for participants in this study because of coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. In fact, shared common values and goals were described by participants as a major contributing factor that superseded other differences,

such as differences in family-of-origin or cultural norms, gender norms, or socioeconomic status. Participants unanimously reported that sharing common values and having similar goals as a couple and as a family contributed to their sense of closeness and seemed to contribute to families' ability to integrate their differences. One such value highlighted by all participants is open-mindedness. Mothers in particular talked about appreciating their partners' open-mindedness which was not necessarily a value shared in their cultures of origin. While I cannot conclude whether individuals who are open-minded in the first place are more likely to form an intercultural family, or individuals who enter an intercultural relationship develop open-mindedness along the way, it seemed to be an important value for families in my study to negotiate differences that exist in all of human interaction. Models of family functioning were derived at a time where mixed families were less common than today and therefore are likely to lack relevancy in some regards, such as cultural processes. Thus, the dimension of common goals and values may add an important aspect of family functioning of mixed families.

Negotiating differences in beliefs, norms, values, and rituals is certainly not a task that is unique to intercultural families; rather an undertaking of all families (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2013; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). However, I have shown in the literature review that intercultural families may have more difficulty because of an external environment that is not supportive of intercultural families. In intercultural families, members have to negotiate different normative cultural assumptions about family life, based on each person's cultural socialization (Ting-Toomey & Cheung, 2012).

There is an extensive body of literature on social support and the associated benefits of receiving support as an individual or family. The topic of social support also received some attention in the literature on mixed families, showing that mixed families often lack vital support from their families and communities. This is contrary to families in my study

who revealed that they have mostly positive relationships with their extended families and communities and value receiving and providing support. However, social support has not been integrated in current family functioning model as a separate dimension of family functioning and my findings suggest the need to incorporate social support as an integral part of family functioning.

Third, my findings also provide insight into the interplay between various influential factors on family functioning, including some individual characteristics, cultural influences, and social and economic conditions. Considering various internal and external interacting factors and conditions that influence family functioning of intercultural families is consistent with a human ecological perspective that suggests that individuals are part of and interact with their surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I provided a holistic view of family functioning of intercultural families with young children by integrating the perspectives of both parents and by focusing on various individual, cultural, and social and economic influential factors of family functioning as highlighted by participants in their accounts of their everyday family lives. Overall, participants predominantly talked about internal family processes rather than external influences.

I highlighted the complexity of culture in relation to all aspects of family functioning. Individuals in intercultural families adapt to new cultures, because "culture is responsive to change" (Richards & Morse, p. 53). According to Samovar et al. (2013), "because people are more than their culture, delineating national characteristics or typical cultural patterns is a risky endeavor due to the heterogeneity of almost all societies" (p. 175). While I drew specific attention to how cultural beliefs, values, and norms shape all aspects of family functioning based on participants' accounts, participants in this study also highlighted a variety of other factors, such as gender, personality, immigration, and mainstream cultural

attitudes and beliefs that contribute to differences between partners in intercultural families. Some participants emphasized that differences in some aspects of family functioning were due to cultural differences whereas other participants were more tentative in coming to such a conclusion.

In families where individuals from different cultural backgrounds come together, there will inevitably be differences based on individuals' beliefs, values, norms, and expectations which are shaped by many factors, such as cultural background, heritage and identity, unique personalities, gender, and geographic location (Crippen & Brew, 2013; McGoldrick & Ashton, 2012; Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). Consistent with previous research on mixed families, I found that cultural differences exist in intercultural families. However, and this finding is in contrast to the majority of current literature, cultural differences did not innately result in negative experiences or conflict among partners nor did differences negatively affect families' functioning. Rather, intercultural families in this study revealed that they liked being part of an intercultural family, a key finding consistent with research conducted by Crippen (2011). Specifically, fathers in this study revealed that they liked their wives' approach to family whereas mothers in this study showed appreciation for their husband's open-mindedness, respect for their culture, and unconditional support. Couples in this study clearly negotiated differences in various aspects of family functioning, but did not perceive their differences to be negative.

In sum, the current study expands upon the existing research on mixed families, which has primarily focused on the couple functioning and on culture as a factor that negatively influences couple's functioning. Therefore, my study makes important contributions to current literature on intercultural families by examining family functioning of intercultural families, a neglected area of study. My study has shown that being part of an intercultural family can be beneficial to family functioning. Furthermore, I paid attention to

how various influential factors inform families' understanding of effective family functioning and demonstrated similarities as well as important differences between family functioning processes in intercultural families and established models of family functioning. Importantly, it is helpful to remember that "no one family study or set of measures can examine all aspects of family life or all perspectives" (Walsh, 2012, p. 504). Situating intercultural families in the context of their culture of origin, family of origin, immigration experiences, level of acculturation, personality, and socioeconomic status facilitates a more accurate understanding of family functioning among this diverse population.

Limitations and Future Research

The findings, which are generally in line with findings from previous studies, are important for their detailed descriptions of families' everyday family life experiences. In particular, the findings show similarities as well as some important differences compared to established models of family functioning. However, some caution needs to be used with regards to the interpretation of the findings. First, the sample of five families was small and future qualitative research would benefit from including a larger group of participants. Even though I aimed to recruit participants from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, all participating families were highly educated and of middle to high socioeconomic status. Furthermore, all fathers were Canadian born and all mothers were foreign born and recent immigrants to Canada. Again, as a result, the findings may not relate to different family configurations, including immigrant fathers and Canadian born mothers. In addition, participants resided in Edmonton, Canada, which may be different from other cities with regard to factors, such as availability of resources or immigrant demographics. Therefore, the findings of this study are suggestive rather than conclusive and should be interpreted with these limitations in mind.

Another limitation in my study is that of selection bias. For example, selection bias takes place if the participants fit a narrow demographic range (Merriam, 2014). In my study, families from higher socioeconomic status who seem to be well functioning are overrepresented. In turn, socioeconomic status is linked to many aspects of family functioning (Marks, Chun Bun, & McHale, 2009). For example, lower socioeconomic status is linked to more gendered division of family roles and childcare tasks.

In addition, the range of experiences of individuals within intercultural families who may come from diverse racialized groups is diverse and can be shaped by a range of factors including immigration generation and status, gender, age, and socioeconomic status, making it difficult to make any broad generalizations. Similarly, it is unwise to make generalizations about individuals from racialized groups because of the diversity of experiences, beliefs, and practices within any group (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). However, it is helpful to consider what are the cultural values and norms of individuals in intercultural families who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and how these influences are perceived by individuals themselves, along with many other influential factors that shape family functioning processes to varying degrees.

Researchers conducting future research in the field of intercultural families should consider including intercultural families from diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds as well as different socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, it seems important to include same-sex intercultural families, reflecting current demographics in many countries and societies. Knowledge about family functioning of intercultural families would also benefit from longitudinal research that could establish knowledge and better understanding of family processes that are important for effective functioning over time and throughout different developmental life cycles, especially with regards to previous research findings that show

that marriages among mixed families are more likely to dissolve compared to mono-cultural marriages (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009).

Implications for Practice

My study is one of few that have examined family functioning in intercultural families with young children living in Canada. Based on my findings, it is important to note that overall participants described their family life as well functioning and identified being part of an intercultural family as a strength. Some underlying themes from participants' accounts that appeared to be different from previous research on family functioning included participants' emphasis on sharing common values, such as being open-minded, and integrating both partner's rituals into their family life which was perceived as a strength. These aspects have not been integrated in current assessment models or tools and reveal current limitations with regard to practice with mixed families.

While my findings present important contributions to the body of literature on mixed families and the research literature concerning family functioning, it is likely that participants' accounts in the present study provide a small picture into the multiple experiences of all intercultural families. Hence, it is too early to offer reflections on implications for practice or policy. What I am able to offer are some preliminary suggestions about how models of family functioning that were developed in North America might be applicable to mixed families. In particular, participants' accounts of effective communication, family roles, the value of spending time as a family are mostly consistent with previous family functioning models. Thus, these dimensions of family functioning as reflected in current models seem relevant for mixed families and of universal importance. However, the findings of my study have emphasized the complexity of interacting factors that influence family functioning in mixed families. Because of this complexity, learning more about the

influential factors and how they are related to family functioning in intercultural families may help in developing holistic interventions and programs.

Current models and approaches of family functioning are based on Westernized values and beliefs. However, in Western society, we tend to view culture as an entity that is separate from ourselves, and this was also demonstrated by some Canadian participants in this study and is further ingrained in family functioning models that include cultural norms at the macro level, the highest level, in most ecological models and portrayed as indirectly influencing the individual (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). However, despite its integration, models often only make reference to cultural influences in a single sentence. Indeed, my study that was framed by a human ecological approach suggests that culture directly influences the person including that person's values, personality, and way of life, and therefore needs to be better integrated as integral to the person level rather than added to the highest level. It appears that ecological thinking is frequently used for current approaches and practice models; however, existing models overlook cultural influences and ultimately reflect dominant cultural expectations.

Conclusions

This study explored family functioning of intercultural families with young children in Canada. Overall, the participating families in this study who were all well-educated and from middle to high income socioeconomic statues demonstrated much strength in their functioning and despite coming from different cultural backgrounds reported many similarities with regards to factors and conditions that helped their families to work well. In particular, communication was an important process and when used effectively, could facilitate effectiveness in all other aspects of family functioning. Furthermore, participants were open to discuss the complexity of culture and all other factors that can influence their everyday functioning, demonstrating that one cannot use culture as the explanation for

differences in functioning while at the same time culture shapes all aspects of family functioning. Focusing on the limitations in current research and practice models highlighted above provides opportunities to expand our understanding about how intercultural families find strengths in their diversity and move beyond stereotypes, cultural norms and societal expectations.

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APPENDICES

Are you in an Intercultural Relationship?

Do you have children under the Age of Six?

We want to talk with you and your spouse/partner about the day-to-day life of your family.

To take part in this research study, we invite:
- Intercultural families raising children who are under 6 years of age
- Families in which both partners are willing to participate
- Individuals over 18 years of age

Interviews will last for about two hours, and will take place at a time and location of your convenience.

If you or someone you know might want to be in the study please call:

Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	I Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca	Intercultural Family Life Carina 780-492-6502 goehing@ualberta.ca

Appendix B: Information Sheet & Consent Form

Study Title:
Everyday Family Life of Intercultural Families with Young Children

Purpose of this study:
To learn about the day-to-day lives of intercultural families who have young children at home.

Researcher:	**Supervisor:**
Carina Goehing,	Dr. Deanna Williamson
Graduate Student (MSc.)	Associate Professor
Department of Human Ecology	Department of Human Ecology
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2N1	Edmonton, AB T6G 2N1

How is this study being done?
I will do two interviews with you and your family. In the first meeting, I would like to meet with your whole family, including your child(ren). I would like to create a family tree together with you and your family to learn about who is part of your family. In the second meeting, I want to talk with you and your spouse/partner separately. Each meeting will take about 60 minutes. I will audio-record the second meeting.

Meeting 1:
I will work with you, your spouse/partner and your children to create a family tree. A family tree shows who is in your family, the relationships between family members, as well as information about you. This information will help me to understand your family better. You will get to keep the family tree that we created together.

Meeting 2:
I will meet with you by yourself. I will ask you questions about the everyday life of your family, including these topics:
- The activities that family members do together and do for each other.
- How your family deals with challenges that you face.
- Your family's traits or qualities that you like best, and that you like least.
- Circumstances and other things that help your family work well.
- Circumstances and other things that make it hard for your family to work well.

What are the benefits of being part in this study?
I want to learn about how your family life is shaped by you and your partner's background. What you tell me will help me learn more about intercultural families' day-to-day lives. This will help researchers to understand what works well and not so well in intercultural families with young children. The study may also be of use to people who plan programs for families of diverse cultural origins with young children.
To thank you for being in our study, your family will get a $20 gift card for the first meeting. Also, you and your spouse/partner will each receive a $20 gift card for the individual interview.

What are the risks of taking part in this study?

I do not think there are any risks from being in this study. But, you might feel uncomfortable or upset about some of the things you tell me. If you feel upset in an interview, I will suggest places to ask for help. Also, if you are not comfortable answering a question during an interview, you may choose not to answer it. Or, you may choose to ask for the tape recorder to be turned off.

What if I change my mind about being part in this study?

Taking part is voluntary. Even if you agree to be in this study, you can change your mind and stop taking part. You do not have to give reasons for stopping. Just tell me that you want to stop the interview. If you decide after the interview that you do not want me to use your information, you can call me – up to one week after the interview. I will not use your information unless you agree.

How will my privacy and the privacy of my family be kept?

The information that you give me in this study will be kept private. I will keep your name and what you say or do private. Only my supervisors and I will have access to the information you give me. You will not be named in any reports or talks about this study. We will keep all the information you give us in a locked cupboard. We will also keep all information on a secure PC network at the University of Alberta.

The interviews will be audio-recorded. I will type out the interviews. I will not share information that you give me in the individual interview with other family members. As well, on study materials, I will use a code instead of your name. In reports or talks about the study, I may use your actual words. I will not use your name or the names of your family members.

I will keep all information private except when professional codes of ethics or the law requires us to report. For example, I must report suspected child abuse or neglect, harm to yourself, and harm to others. I will tell you if this situation occurs.

I would also like your consent to contact you in the future. I would like to find out if you want to take part in other studies like this one.

How will the information from the study be used?

I will keep the information from the study for at least five years once the study has been finished. I will use the information from this study to write reports. I will also want to publish in journals and present in talks and at meetings.

Any questions or concerns about this study?

A research ethics panel at the UofA has accepted the plan for this study.
For questions about the study, you can phone:
Carina Goehing at 780-492-6502, or
Dr. Deanna Williamson at 780-492-5770
UofA Research Ethics staff at 780-492-2615.

Consent Form

Title of Project:
Everyday Family Life of Intercultural Families with Young Children

Part I: Researchers
a) Carina Goehing, Master Student, Department of Human Ecology (780-492-6502)
b) Deanna Williamson, Associate Professor, Department of Human Ecology (780-492-5770)

Part II: Consent

Please answer the following questions by checking "yes" or "no"	**Yes**	**No**
Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	☐	☐
Have you read and received a copy of the Information Sheet?	☐	☐
Do you understand the benefits and risks of taking part in this research study?	☐	☐
Have you had a chance to ask questions and discuss this study?	☐	☐
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason and without any penalty?	☐	☐
Do you understand what the researchers will do to ensure privacy of the information you give?	☐	☐
Do you understand who will have access to the information you give?	☐	☐

This study was explained to me by _____

I agree to take part in this study: YES   ☐   NO   ☐

Signature of Research Participant _____

(Printed Name) _____

Date _____

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Signature of Investigator or Designee_____ Date _____

The Information Sheet must be attached to this Consent Form and a copy given to the research participant.

Report of the Study Findings:

Would you like to receive a report of the study findings? YES ☐   NO ☐

If yes, would you like (a) <u>a paper copy </u>or (b) <u>an electronic copy</u> of the report? (Please, circle one).

(a) For a paper copy of the report, please provide your mailing address below:

Apt. # _____ Street Address: _____

City/Town: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

(b) For an electronic copy of the report, please provide your e-mail address here

_____

Before we begin, I want to assure you again that what you tell me in the interview will be kept confidential and will not be shared in any way.

- **Start the genogram by explaining its purpose and process:**
    o To ask the family questions about their background that are important for gaining a picture of the family and their situation
    o I will write down important dates of key events (i.e. beginning of relationship, birth of children etc.)
    o Write down important information about the family members (start with general information first (i.e. questions about family structure) and then move into questions about family members (i.e. employment, education, nature of relationships)
    o Ask the family if they notice any patterns, similarities or differences among the family members?
    o Include the family and children in the process as much as you can.

- **Internal Structure**
    o Family Composition
        ▪ Can you tell me who is in your family? Does anyone else live with you?
- **External Structure**
    o Extended Family/Friends
        ▪ Does your extended family live close to you? Are they a source of support?
        ▪ Where do your parents live? How often do you have contact with them?
    o What about others in your life: Work colleagues, Childcare, School, Church, Recreation, Friends of the family, Friends of children
- **Context**
    o Ethnicity and Race
        ▪ What are family member's cultural origins? Do you have a social network from the same ethnic/cultural group?
    o Spirituality and/or Religion
        ▪ Are you involved in a mosque, temple, synagogue, church?
        ▪ What does your religion/spirituality mean to you? (Source of support?)
    o Support Network
        ▪ What community services is your family involved with?
        ▪ How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?

At the end of the meeting: I will allow families to look at the genogram and confirm if the information is correct. (Is there anything they would like to add?)

Affirming Consent: Now that you know what you have talked with me about, are you willing to have the information you provided to me used for the study? Your personal data will be kept confidential and only I will have access to your data. I will return the original genogram to you at the end of the study.

Everyday Family Life of Intercultural Families with Young Children

Before we begin, I want to assure you again that what you tell me in this meeting will be kept confidential and will not be shared in any way. We will start the interview with a general question to help me understand day-to-day life of your family. Then, we will talk about more specific aspects of your family's everyday life. And, we'll end with some questions about families in general.

1. **Introduction:**
   Please tell me about a "usual – or typical day" for you and your family.
   Probes:
   What happens during the day? Who does what? What are your routines? How does a typical day during the week compare with a typical day during the weekend?

2. **Who is Family?**
   From what you told me in the first meeting, your family consist of you, ….
   How would you describe your relationship with your parents, siblings, and other family members?
   Probes:
   Where do they live?
   The ways in which these family members are actively involved in the everyday life of the family (e.g., phone or in-person contact to provide support, advice etc.,? in-person contact to provide childcare?)

3. **Everyday Family Life**
   a) **In the day-to-day life of your family, what do family members do together?**
      Probes:
      Who (which family members) usually does these activities/things together?
      How often do family members do these activities/things together?
      What are some of the traditions and norms from your culture of origin that enrich and nourish your daily life? (Which holidays do you celebrate? What traditions and foods does your family enjoy on these holidays?
   b) **In the day-to-day life of your family, what do family members do for each other?**
      Probes:
      Who (which family members) usually do these things for which family members?
      How often do family members do these things for other members?
      Have you or will you teach these traditions and norms to your children? Other people? Why? Why not?

4. **What do you like about your family? What makes this the thing you like?**
   Probes:
   Qualities, traits, characteristics, or the way family members interact or do things with and/or for each other? What does it mean to you if your family works well?
   What gives you joy? Hope? Energy? Pride? Faith?
   What role does personal beliefs and spirituality play in your life? How do you express it?
   What do you value most in your culture?

5. **What do you like least about your family -- and that you would change if you could? What makes this the thing you like least?**
   Probes*:*
   Attributes/traits/characteristics – or the way that family members interact or do things with and/or for each other? How do you feel about this?
   What are the do's and don'ts in interactions/behaviors with your family members?

6. **I'm interested in learning about things that have an effect on how well your family works – or have an effect on your family's everyday life.**
   a. **What helps your family work well? How does it help your family in your day-to-day life?**
      Probes:
      Internal family processes (What language/s is/are spoken at home? roles; decision making processes…), family status/characteristics (composition, income), and external factors (paid work, policies, services, programs).
      How can your children integrate the strength of your culture of origin when they also are involved in contemporary Canadian culture?
      What, if anything, do you want your children to know about your culture of origin? Your values, norms, etc?

   b. **Now tell me what makes it difficult for your family to work well? How does it/that affect your family's day-to-day life?**
      Probes:
      Internal family processes (communication patterns, styles; roles; decision making processes…), family status/characteristics (composition, income), and external factors (paid work, policies, services, programs).
      How do you cope with (…the specific behavior, interpersonal conflict, etc.) in your family?

7. **Before we finish the interview:**
   How did you feel about having this conversation?
   Is there anything about your family's everyday life that we have not talked about and that you would like to tell me before we finish this interview?

8. **Affirming Consent:** Now that you know what you have talked with me about, are you willing to have the interview be used for the study?