

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

INTERCULTURAL MARRIAGES IN NORWAY: NORWEGIAN-
UKRAINIAN CASE

MASTER THESIS:
30-MOPG/MATH

BY
YULIYA PASHCHUK

STAVANGER
MAY 2012

ABSTRACT

In today's globalized world, it has become very simple to meet people from all kinds of cultural backgrounds – and get married. Of course, intercultural marriage is not always as easy as it seems. Although love is proverbially blind, initially disregarding any cultural differences which may cause issues, those who are in an intercultural marriage know that these kinds of relationships are particularly challenging. Language barriers, religious and political differences can cause severe conflicts for couples in an intercultural marriage. But even seemingly trivial points of discussion, such as how to celebrate certain holidays or one's eating habits, may result in arguments.

Intercultural couples may possess differing communication styles. Dealing with conflict also differs across cultural lines. Non verbal cues and assumptions of one partner may not make any sense to the other. The longer the two individuals have existed in the shared culture, the less likely this is to pose a problem. If one or both partners within the marriage are relatively new to the dominant culture, the likelihood for conflict to unfold on these bases increases.

Individuals from a high context culture are not verbally explicit in their communication behaviors. These cultures typically consist of eastern world countries where collectivism and relational harmony underlie communication behavior. By contrast, individuals from a low context culture use direct and obvious communication styles to convey information.

Every marriage needs copious doses of love, patience, tolerance, maturity, humor, respect and compromise. Youthful romance and infatuation must convert into more meaningful companionship as a couple grows older. A strong commitment to overcome all challenges that come with intercultural marriage is fundamental to make such relationships thrive.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	1
Significance and Purpose of the Study	3
Literature Review	5
Intercultural Communication.....	6
Intercultural communication competence.....	7
Conflict in marriage	10
Intercultural conflict.....	11
Conflict communication in intercultural marriages	12
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY	18
METHODOLOGY	18
Introduction	18
Research Design	19
Participants.....	19
Interview Procedure.....	20
Data Analysis.....	22
Summary.....	22
CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS	23
Background information.....	23
Language fluency	23
High-context and low-context communication	25
Family.....	27
Food.....	28
Communication Competencies.....	29
Knowledge	29
Skills	30
Conflict.....	32

Constructive conflict	33
Destructive conflict.....	35
Benefits of Intercultural Marriages.....	36
Summary.....	37
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION	38
Introduction	38
Intercultural Communication.....	38
Conflict Communication	44
Limitations of the Study	50
Further Research.....	51
Conclusions	51
LIST OF REFERENCES	53
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form	58
Appendix B: Interview Guide	59

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Newly-created social links between people across national borders due to international migration and tourism are some of the most notable features of globalization. One of the consequences of easier access to other countries and increased intercultural communication is the increased incidence of intercultural marriages. Intercultural marriage, known also as cross-cultural marriage, are becoming commonplace nowadays. Sometimes intercultural marriages are also known as international marriages, that's when you meet someone from a different country with a different culture and then decide to live together. Doing an intercultural marriage is not easy, many obstacles are along the way. Intercultural relationships have been defined and named in very various terms throughout the literature, most often as intercultural (Dugan Romano in "Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls"), interethnic (Øyvind Dahl in "Bridges of Understanding: Perspectives on Intercultural Communication"), dual-culture (Hans Gullestrup in "Cultural Analysis: Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding"), mixed-marriages (Daniel Hauser in "Marriage and Christian Life: A Theology of Christian Marriage"), and interracial relationships (Eilef J. Gard in "The Intercultural Perspective in A Multicultural World").

As globalization continues to bring individuals from different cultures into meaningful contact, intercultural marriages will continue to increase. This trend holds tremendous promise for marriages that can transform differences into assets rather than succumb to them as liabilities. Norway is one of those countries where marriages with blended cultures become more popular every day.

The growing number of intercultural marriages prompts a number of questions: how is family unit defined, how are gender relations organized, how do family members communicate and interact across the border. The interesting point is that cross-border marriages link kin groups of different national origins to a new social unit and create affiliations and obligations across different national states. Partners living in "mixed marriages" have to develop new strategies to cope with the dispersed family network

and to organize interaction with family members (affinal and consanguinal) within and beyond the borders.

To explore the social experience of intercultural marriages and the formation of transnational families, the research will focus on the experiences of Norwegian-Ukrainian couples, especially on the narratives of Ukrainian women married to Norwegians and living in Norway. The research looks at the opportunities and constraints faced by both partners living in mixed marriages in a gender specific way. The study based on ethnographic fieldwork in the Ukrainian Diaspora in Oslo and on life stories collected among Ukrainian women and Norwegian men in Norway.

This qualitative study investigated the phenomenon of intercultural marriages, particularly the unique internal and external elements that impact communication and conflict within intercultural marriages of varying lengths and the intercultural communication competencies utilized by spouses in intercultural marriages. The research focused on three questions: *(1) Which internal and external factors impact the effectiveness of communication between spouses in intercultural marriages the most? (2) Which communication competencies do spouses in intercultural marriages develop in order to address cross-cultural differences? (3) How do spouses in intercultural marriages experience and deal with conflict within their intercultural marriages?* Data was obtained employing semi-structured interviews. Extensive interviews were conducted with 10 individuals who are married to and living with a spouse who is culturally different. Couples were composed of one Ukrainian spouse and one Norwegian spouse.

Most people who have ever been married would probably agree that all marriages include conflict. As two individuals merge their lives into one, problems erupt. Both parties carry their unique experiences, personalities, and cultures with them into the union. The existing similarities and differences can be exciting and attractive but may also create tension and even fierce contention.

In today's society, the face of intimate relationships is changing. Deep bonds between persons of diverse cultures are becoming more common and intercultural marriages are on the rise (Waldman and Rubalcava, 2005; Frame, 2004). For this study, the researcher defines intercultural marriages as marriages composed of two culturally diverse individuals who independently possess distinct national cultures that impacts their individual worldviews, values, and personal philosophies. For the purpose of this study, culture is defined as inclusive of common ethnic, linguistic, racial, and historical

backgrounds (Kim 2008, 360). Interpersonal conflict is defined as a situation wherein the two individuals are interdependent; they possess opposing objectives which have the power to negatively impact the relationship if not resolved. It is essential that the differences be settled as quickly as possible (Cahn and Abigail 2007). Conflict has negative connotations in many contexts. However conflict can produce positive results.

In intercultural marriages, the partnership possesses its own unique dynamics and challenges. Spouses in intercultural marriages may be recognized by their distinctly different physical characteristics and may utilize diverse languages. Research has further exposed the complexity of intercultural marriages as the spouses in such marriages are each equipped with a different set of rules; different values, habits, and viewpoints, different ways of relating to one another, and different ways of resolving their differences.

Effective communication in intercultural marriages does not just happen and these marriages are also uniquely exposed to conflict. While conflict within intimate intercultural relationships may be due to personality differences or situational factors (Garcia 2006) intercultural conflict occurs as well because the individuals hold diverse values and objectives, and utilize distinctly different conflict and communication styles (Oetzel, Dhar, and Kirschbaum 2007). Couples are often unaware of the impact culture has on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Spouses often feel that their own beliefs about their mates' actions are objective and accurate (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005). These distinctive characteristics of intercultural marriages seem to advocate a warning to refrain from marrying outside one's own culture.

Nevertheless, intercultural marriages are becoming increasingly common. Why do persons embrace such a potentially complicated, conflict-filled relationship? Why are individuals entering into intimate relationships and becoming vulnerable with others who appear to be exceptionally dissimilar?

1.2 Significance and Purpose of the Study

A study of communication processes within intercultural marriages will benefit many individuals, particularly couples who are engaged in such relationships. When persons learn about others who encounter similar obstacles or circumstances, they can re-evaluate their own situation with a more accurate lens. Typically, this altered viewpoint produces growth in the individual who is seeking answers and often influences this person's significant other. A study of this kind also contributes to the field of

counseling. The mental health field is continually expanding and seeking additional insight and knowledge about human behavior.

Humans are complex creatures, therefore, frequent observations and scholarly studies are necessary for improved comprehension. Pre-marital, marital, and family counselors profit from a study of intercultural marriages as all societies are based on marriages and familial relationships. These relationships determine the health of a society. This type of study augments the current research in intercultural communication, including how friendships and other relationships develop and are maintained between persons with different distinct cultures. Globalization is influencing all areas of life, and recent trends demonstrate that increased numbers of intercultural marriages are occurring (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005). Intercultural communication scholars are aware of this widely expanding field and acknowledge the gap that sometimes exists in this area.

Each person is different and each marriage is different. When two different cultures meet each other, there may be significant challenges both partners will have to face. International marriages may face significant challenges since couples were born and raised in different countries where they may eat different foods, speak different languages, and have significant differences in cultural values.

The purpose of this study is to explore the unique internal and external elements that impact communication and conflict within intercultural marriages of varying lengths and the intercultural communication competencies utilized by spouses in intercultural marriages; to produce some knowledge how Norwegian-Ukrainian marriage works in Norway with its all difficulties of cross-cultural life including such aspects as religion, personality, settlement, childrearing, languages and habits of each partner.

Extensive interviews were conducted with 10 individuals who are married to and living with a spouse who is culturally different. For this study, constructive conflict is generally defined as the managing of conflict in such a way that both parties find fulfillment in the resolution and can continue to derive marital satisfaction from the relationship even though compromise and differences exist. Destructive conflict occurs when differences exacerbate the marriage relationship by magnifying the root issue thus enveloping other marital dynamics. Negativity pervades the marital union and prevents a mutually fulfilling resolution.

In the following chapter, a review of literature is presented. Literature about intercultural communication competencies, third culture building, conflict communication in marriages and intercultural conflict is presented to assist the reader in understanding the unique dynamics of constructive conflicts within intercultural marriages.

Scholars generally agree that the paucity of research in intimate intercultural relationships provoke the necessity of additional research in this area (Cools 2006; Garcia 2006; P-W. Lee 2006). Results of previous studies also tend to disagree about the difficulty of establishing and maintaining strong, healthy intercultural marriages (Gaines and Agnew 2003; Frame 2004; Garcia 2006; Foeman and Nance 1999). The dynamic of intercultural marriages and the limited amount of empirical research to date dictate the need for a study about conflict communication in intercultural marriages.

1.3 Literature Review

Romano noted that research on intercultural relationships was in its infancy. Cools highlighted the lack of extensive research in the actual communication in intercultural relationships. Garcia completed a study with married African-Spanish couples and asserted the need for such a study as intercultural relationships and their accompanying, unique dynamics are multiplying in today's society. Romano stressed that intercultural marriages and intercultural friendships are widespread. He also asserted that this particular area of relationships is often neglected. The scholars mentioned above overwhelmingly agree that research in the area of intercultural marriages is unmistakably required at this time.

Quite obviously, further study of communication within intercultural marriages is needed. In analyzing intercultural marriages, the area of conflict emerges as a central theme. Conflict evolves in interpersonal relationships and more specifically in marriages, partially due to the intimacy of these types of relationships. Therefore, intercultural marriages may be successful but the amount of reporting on these successes may be almost nonexistent (Gaines and Agnew 2004). Conflicts in intimate, intercultural relationships do occur, but Garcia proposed that conflicts may be the result of personality differences or situational factors and are not exclusively the byproduct of cultural differences. However, most individuals believe that intercultural marriages contain more stress, are more dysfunctional, and have a greater likelihood of ending in divorce (Frame 2003).

Communication and conflict in intercultural marriages are both fascinating and complex. Therefore, a broad review of literature from different fields of study is required to grasp this multifaceted phenomenon. The ever expanding field of intercultural communication is highlighted, specifically noting theories and research on intercultural communication competence and third culture building. Such concepts as adaptation and acculturation are explored. Then, research on conflict communication is defined and studies of conflict within marriages are presented, followed by research on intercultural conflict. The literature review culminates in a discussion about conflict and communication in intercultural marriages.

1.4 Intercultural Communication

Communication is defined as a process of sharing and creating meaning between individuals (Dahl 2004). It is a tool used by all humans regardless of the culture from which they come and is crucial to the survival of humans. Communication is effective to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it. This message may appear simplistic until introducing concepts such as gender and cultural differences including languages, nuances, expectations, and traditions. As individuals from various cultures interact and speak with one another, differences and similarities surface. Dissimilarities may include philosophies, worldviews, and values.

In the early 1950s, Hall and his colleagues at the U.S. Foreign Service Institute presented a framework by which to study intercultural communication (Jiang 2006). By the early 1980s, scholars such as William Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim were formulating intercultural communication theories. The field of intercultural communication continues to broaden and develop various theories for this intriguing phenomenon. Jiang asserted that due to the increase of communication involving individuals with diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, the field of intercultural communication is always expanding. Scholars such as Kim have theorized about the process of adaptation and acculturation for individuals residing in a different culture. Casmir put forth the concept of third-culture building. Undoubtedly, intercultural communication competence is essential for effective communication to occur between individuals of diverse cultures.

1.4.1 Intercultural communication competence

Scholars such as Chen and Kim have provided valuable insight into intercultural communication competence. Chen espoused the belief that communication competence involves both effectiveness and appropriateness in interactions. Historically, three approaches to the field of intercultural communication effectiveness manifest themselves. One approach focuses on the sojourner's personality, world view, and cultural awareness (Chen 1989, 118). Another line of research concentrates on the participant's interactions. The final approach combines both concepts as it views both the characteristics and behaviors of the individual. The appropriateness aspect relates to the person's competence in the verbal context, relational context, and the environmental context.

Chen also proposed four areas to study which he suggested encompasses the themes of effectiveness and appropriateness: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness. The personal attribute component entails people's ability to understand themselves and demonstrate optimistic interactions. This involves such concepts as self-awareness and self-disclosure. Undoubtedly, self-awareness significantly impacts interactions with those of other cultures. According to Chen, self-disclosure is one of the main factors impacting interpersonal relationships.

The element of communication skills deals with verbal and nonverbal communication. This aspect includes such things as linguistic skills, flexibility, and social skills, and demands the ability to be perceptive, responsive, and empathetic in interactions. Undoubtedly, the presence or lack of these dynamics influences intercultural communication competence.

A person's capacity to function in a foreign environment reveals information about psychological adjustment. In new situations, stress and frustration surface, perhaps due to the confusion of the newness and forced alterations in order to be successful there. The last dimension is related to culture awareness. In this area, individuals demonstrate how knowledgeable they are about the other culture's values, customs, norms, and systems. This expertise quite naturally can augment the process of intercultural communication competence.

Kim asserted that the development of one's identity is both complex and continuous. She described the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic in her integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation and promoted her belief that through prolonged and

cumulative intercultural communication experiences, individuals around the world can, and do, undergo a gradual process of intercultural evolution (Kim 2008, 359). The result of this process is a greater self-other orientation due to exposure to these experiences. Kim identified this as individuation and universalization.

In Kim's theory of acculturation and deculturation, the focus is on individuals who leave their home environment and relocate to a totally different place for a significant period of time. However, Kim recognized that as the world is changing, individuals may not have to move from their own country to experience acculturation. Acculturation attempts to cover the main themes of intercultural communication and new learning which occurs in the context of a different culture. This may include but is not limited to the learning of different cultural practices as well as a new language. While this occurs, the individual begins to think differently as the new culture promotes different processing.

Another part of acculturation involves developing new cultural aesthetic and emotional sensibilities, from a new way of appreciating beauty, fun, joy, as well as despair, anger, and the like. Just because an individual is in a new culture, they may or may not utilize acculturation learning. Acculturation happens as the person decides whether to let it occur. This may be based on the person's predispositions, pre-existing needs and interests.

As the individual begins learning new things, a letting go of some of the previous culture's elements happens. This is labeled deculturation as individuals begin to react to situations in a new manner. The loss of old responses may be temporary or situation specific. As acculturation and deculturation occur, changes may be evident because they are physical manifestations. However, alterations may also occur internally. For example, transformations in music, food, and clothing are noticeable to the casual observer. However the more complex changes may be less apparent as they stem from social role-related behaviors or core values.

As the tension between acculturation and deculturation continues, stress arises. This naturally occurs as individuals are dealing with the call to change and the struggle to give up the old. It is an internal conflict which sometimes is evidenced by uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety. Stress can produce positive changes in persons as they learn to grow and adapt. The process of stress followed by adaptation is sustained as individuals attempt to re-establish a sense of normalcy in their lives. They move from

integration and disintegration, progression and regression, and novelty and confirmation.

As the individual continues to reside in a foreign culture, the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic persists but with minimal challenges and alterations. Indeed, an intercultural identity materializes an open-ended, adaptive, and transformative self-other orientation. This identity produces persons who clearly understand who they are while also focusing on others and their needs, thoughts, and feelings.

When persons relocate to a new environment, they must adapt and re-negotiate meaning. Adaptation to a new culture occurs as individuals are trying to live and meet their physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. Casmir put forth a third-culture building model in order to explain more accurately the adaptation of persons in new cultural environments. Arguing that many theories of intercultural communication views cultures as static, he points out its difference from other models in that the observer and observed are not separated. This perspective is embraced as great value is placed on the individuals who are experiencing new sights, thoughts, and reactions. The phases in this model include contact, need, interaction, dependence to third culture interdependence. Some descriptors of this model include concepts such as co-operative, communication, community building process. The concept of adapting and negotiating values and goals through communication found in this model are beneficial to understand in light of the interactions and communication which naturally occurs in intercultural marriages.

Understanding the concepts of intercultural communication competence, cultural adaptation and third culture building is critical in a study of intercultural marriages. However, conflict communication is another building block in the process of understanding this phenomenon. Conflict must be defined for this particular study. Cahn and Abigail defined interpersonal conflict as:

A problematic situation with the following four unique characteristics: the conflicting parties are interdependent; perceive that they seek incompatible goals or outcomes or they favor incompatible means to the same ends; the perceived incompatibility has the potential to adversely affect the relationship if not addressed; there is a sense of urgency about the need to resolve the difference (Cahn and Abigail 2007, 290-291).

Breaking this definition down into the four characteristics gives a more comprehensive explanation of the conflict that occurs in spousal communication. This study will utilize this definition in its discussion of conflict within intercultural marriages.

1.4.2 Conflict in marriage

Marriage involves a union of two individuals who are embarking on the sometimes arduous, novel endeavor of becoming one. Thus, conflict emerges. The differences in opinions, beliefs, and actions may begin surfacing at an increased rate even during the honeymoon or the weeks after returning home. Newlyweds must individually and jointly construct a solution for significant differences as these conflicts possess the power to jeopardize the permanence and marital satisfaction within this union. In intimate relationships, conflict is an ordinary part, and does not have to drive spouse apart. The sources or reasons for conflict are diverse. Conflict develops partially due to individuals' expectations that their partners will fulfill their emotional, social, and material needs throughout their married life. Since men and women are both similar and dissimilar, the differences inherent in gender may be a huge potential for conflict and contempt.

In a marriage, individuals are intimate with one another and thus become vulnerable. Therefore, a spouse's words, actions, beliefs carry greater weight with his or her partner. A spouse has the capability to provoke increased feelings or passion from his or her spouse. At times, the vulnerability and closeness within this relationship create a potential for increased conflict.

All marriages involve a fusion of two distinct lives with a history, a personality, values, and expectations. It is the active creation of a new culture that has never existed before (Gottman, Driver, and Tabares 2002, 387). However, the conflict communication that may ensue based on this fusion may be constructive and productive. When married couples were able to manage conflict along with various marital roles, they were able to arrive at marital satisfaction through shared values. Marital satisfaction develops due to love, loyalty, and shared values. For married couples to arrive at marital satisfaction through love, communication and expression of affection is critical. Scholar John Gottman claims that happy, stable marriages that possess an overall positive affect are better equipped to engage in conflict constructively. A marriage built on a foundation of

friendship and positive experiences can be significant for a couple's success during conflict.

1.4.3 Intercultural conflict

Kim noted some of the most passionate domestic and international conflicts headlining the daily media involve differing identities, particularly along tribal, racial, and religious lines (Kim 2008, 360). Intercultural conflict thrives at all levels of a global society. Intercultural conflict communication is complex and occurs due to numerous causes. Intercultural conflict erupts because individuals hold diverse values and objectives, and utilize distinctly different processes or face orientations. Face represents an individual's claimed sense of positive image in the context of social interaction.

Facework refers to the communicative strategies one uses to enact self-face and to uphold, support, or challenge another person's face (Kim 2008, 398). In the field of intercultural conflict, scholar puts forth various concepts to assist in a more thorough understanding. In attempting to understand intercultural conflict, Kim's face-negotiation theory has merit. Kim's face negotiation theory is based on the following assumptions:

1. People in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations;
2. The concept of face becomes especially problematic in uncertainty situations (such as embarrassment and conflict situations) when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question;
3. The variability dimension of individualism-collectivism, in conjunction with other individual, relational (e.g. ingroup-outgroup), and situational variables, influence the use of various facework and conflict strategies in intergroup and interpersonal encounters.

The majority of collectivistic cultures utilize high-context communication, whereas individualistic cultures rely on low-context communication. Hall defined high-context communication as transactions which feature preprogrammed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message (Hall 1981, 101).

In contrast, low-context communication is the reverse. Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context (both internal and external).

Dugan Romano verbalized another challenge for couples from two distinct cultures. Such couples represent their own culture within their marriage. However, because of their intercultural marriage, they are not a true part of either their culture or their spouses' culture. These obstacles must be overcome through living above this paradox or accepting such uncertainty. Because of the complexity of cultural diversity in intimate relationships, these authors strongly suggest the implementation of diverse theories in researching this multifaceted field.

1.4.4 Conflict communication in intercultural marriages

Conflict occurs in all intimate relationships, and intercultural marriages are no exception. Individuals manage conflict with positive or negative outcomes. People's behaviors and communication styles are heavily influenced by values stemming from their culture and ethnicity. Culture also shapes one cognitively and emotionally. Dahl stressed that intercultural spouses must modify their interactions accordingly. Romano analyzed the development of close friendships between persons of different cultures. He found that cultural differences in friendships were not viewed negatively. Rather the participants' similarities became the focus. Relationships deepened through some type of turning point, guaranteeing the continual growth and commitment to one another. In the last stage, the view of cultural violations altered drastically as individuals then viewed these breaches within the framework of an intimate, committed relationship.

Petkova and Lehtonen related that couples from diverse cultures move through normal stages of building intimate relationships. In addition to the normal challenges of developing intimate relationships, individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds progress through their own unique stages of racial awareness, coping, identity, emergence, and maintenance. This process is complex and specific to each couple. Intercultural couples have the unique challenge of describing their feelings and thoughts to their spouse who has a distinctly different background. Due to the intimacy of their relationship, partners hold strong feelings of affection for their spouses which can complicate their interactions and communication.

Another reason for conflict in intercultural marriages is articulated by the intersubjectivity theory (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005). This theory states that

individuals interpret experiences based on their personal interactions and subjective interpretations. Couples are often unaware of the impact culture has on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Culture influences individuals in such a way that persons believe that their own particular culture is correct and operates in the best manner. Likewise, spouses feel that their own beliefs about their mates' actions are objective and accurate (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005). Both perceptions can lead to intense conflict and difficulty in resolving conflicts constructively.

Researchers must also note the contribution of individualism and collectivism. Individualism and collectivism are significant factors in one's cultural make-up and therefore impact intimate relationships. Researchers have identified additional areas that can be potentially troublesome in intercultural marriages. Cools' study found eight significant areas wherein intercultural marriages have particular challenges: language, communication, adapting spouse, friends, raising children, gender roles, visibility, and traditions. Gender roles and visibility were mentioned most frequently. Frame's study found similar results in the areas of gender, language, and raising children. Values, money, sexuality, religion, and social class were also potential areas of increased conflict within intercultural marriages. Romano suggested that raising children can be more difficult for intercultural couples. There are numerous issues that come into play within intercultural marriages. These issues can easily be misunderstood and lead to misunderstandings and intense conflict. Differences between spouses, if viewed negatively and not addressed, produce a negative impact on the relationship (Romano 2008).

For couples in intercultural marriages, challenges to reach workable solutions may arise due to the couples' inability to fully grasp an understanding of the conflict as well as put into concise words what they desire to communicate. Within these unique dyads, distinctive and complex issues may evolve. Values are intangible yet are communicated and evidenced in quite tangible ways. Value is a derivative of the Latin word "valere" which means to be of worth (Frame 2004, 221). Because intercultural couples have been raised in diverse environments, value systems may be quite opposite, promoting potential disagreement and conflict. Values shape belief systems and worldviews which determine thoughts and behaviors.

Frame claims that values are culturally derived, so cultural difference brings with it value differences that shape and impact intercultural marital relationships (Frame 2004, 221). A wide spectrum of values exists between high-context and low-context

cultures. Frame noted the spectrum of cultural values. For example, the cultural values of control, equality, competition, future, and doing are on the left side. On the other side are values such as fate, hierarchy, cooperation, past, and being. By examining these dichotomies, the reader can begin to understand some reasons for conflict in communication in intercultural marriages. If one spouse values an element on the left and the other spouse values an element on the right, conflict will ensue (Frame 2004). Neither individual within the marriage may be wrong from their perspective as the values that they hold, that developed from their birth, in a sense defines who they are as a person. Because values are held dear to one's identity, when those values are questioned or communicated as being wrong or weak, the individual who holds those values will more than likely feel threatened. Their very identity is being questioned and perhaps a deviation from these values ushers in inner tension and turmoil and even some insecurity. With these tumultuous feelings, defensive mechanisms strike the individual who is doing the questioning. Defensive mechanisms tend to be laced with anger, confusion, sarcasm, or deathly silence, thus impeding effective communication.

Internal and external factors influence intercultural marriages and can contribute to increased conflict. Within the marriage unit, spouses of different cultures benefit from knowing about their partner's culture. Understanding and knowledge can prevent some conflict. Individuals in committed relationships benefit from having knowledge about one another. If needed, they can modify their interactions to avoid or manage conflict constructively.

Petkova and Lehtonen conducted a study of married couples and discovered that respect, forgiveness, romance, support, and sensitivity are key components to a loving marriage. They also identified seven of the most important characteristics for marital satisfaction: lifetime commitment, loyalty to spouse, strong moral values, desire to be a good parent, religious/spiritual commitment, and the presence of forgiveness. Again, this researchers put forward the possibility of these elements being present and beneficial for intercultural marriages.

Mackey, Diemer, and O'Brien cited the importance of not just listening to one another but also understanding one another's needs and how they are met in the relationship. It is also imperative to identify the roles and expectations in an effort to have a better understanding of the individual, be more empathetic, and exhibit greater respect. In this way, spouses can increase their respect for one another while also building on their mate's strengths.

Spouses need to understand their own conflict management style (Mackey et al. 2000). Persons who have a strong cultural identity are more likely to employ integrating, compromising, and emotionally expressive conflict styles. They are less likely to utilize neglecting conflict styles. They noted that possessing a strong identity can contribute to a successful close intercultural relationship. Cools pointed out, however, that the development of an intercultural identity is complex. One study found that couples who possessed a common vision and purpose avoided much marital conflict.

Romano emphatically maintained that conflicts in intimate, intercultural relationships are not due solely to cultural differences, but may also be the result of personality differences or particular aspects of a situation. Empathy, patience, flexibility, and openness can be factors in a successful close intercultural relationship. This researcher proposes that intercultural marriages may be as mutually satisfying as intracultural marriages. Intercultural marriages encounter obstacles to building and maintaining healthy, intimate relationships. At times, societal pressures may embrace feelings of aversion to intercultural relationships. Because of these pressures and the potential barriers in intercultural relationships, communication is vital. As dyads form a relational identity, third parties play a vital role. Approval of an intimate relationship by friends assists in marital satisfaction while disapproval of a relationship by parents promotes marital dissatisfaction.

Communication is a significant factor in intercultural marriages. Øyhus noted that one's ability to effectively communicate is a significant addition to the development of a positive relationship with one from another culture. Communication includes one's competence in nonverbal behaviors, self-disclosure, and other key elements in intercultural communication competence (Øyhus 2004). In his study he maintained that interpersonal communication is a stronger influence than environmental factors in intercultural relationships. When spouses communicate openly, loving relationships will be fostered.

Cools carried out a study involving close intercultural friendships and found that language did pose a problem in communicating but not in the development of the relationship. However, this obstacle spurred some individuals on to communicate more in order to understand one another. Interestingly enough, some intimate dyads developed their own type of language. Language and communication can be hindrances for some members of intercultural relationships (Cools 2006). Conflict in intercultural

marriages will arise just as in intracultural marriages. This researcher suggests that positive outcomes and marital satisfaction may be produced through these challenges.

Without a doubt, religion can negatively impact one's relationship if spouses hold diverse beliefs (Lambert and Dollahite 2006). However, the aforementioned researchers found strengths in couples who were religious. Religion typically fosters selflessness and the idea of unconditional love amongst spouses. During conflict, the use of scriptural teachings, religious attendance, and couple prayer assisted in successful conflict resolution. Religious institutions promote a commitment to relationship permanence and a willingness to forgive. These two components assist dramatically during the reconciliation phase. Overall, religious beliefs assist in problem prevention, conflict resolution, and relational reconciliation (Lambert and Dollahite 2006).

Intercultural couples have the ability to possess strengths. An intercultural couple who withstands and overcomes negative outside pressure forms strong ties (Foeman and Nance 1999). They also create their own sense of identity and own a unique viewpoint evolved from their very existence as an entity. Third culture building plays a factor in some intercultural marriages (Casmir 1993). At times, individuals in the marriage unit may form a new, unique hybrid culture, a third culture. By forming a third culture, one partner's culture does not govern over the other and the existence of a third culture can eliminate one's tendency to be ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism refers to a belief system of individuals wherein they feel their culture is superior to other cultural groups. Over time, individuals' level of third culture expands as they invest in the marriage.

Frame mentioned the possibility of couples reframing their differences by celebrating them and incorporating some of their spouses' cultural aspects into the marriage to add excitement. By taking this approach, couples can potentially carve out a new way of relating that honors the both/and of their relationship (Frame 2004, 226). She also suggested couples making an identity of their own, a third reality and establishing new rituals as a couple. Intercultural marriages have specific challenges due to their very essence, but success in their own right can be accomplished.

This literature review presented theories and research on intercultural communication, specifically intercultural communication competence, cultural adaptation, and third culture building. Next, the field of conflict communication was explored, specifically conflict in marriage, intercultural conflict, and conflict communication in intercultural marriages. Conflict occurs in all intimate relationships.

Typically, conflict has negative connotations, but conflict and differences can generate positive results. This researcher reviewed literature that highlights the unique facets of an intercultural marriage. Each intercultural dyad has its own particular dynamics which define and illustrate the characteristics of its marriage. The present literature along with the need for additional research caused this researcher to delve into the study of communication and conflict in intercultural marriages, having concluded that extensive interviews with individuals in intercultural marriages would be highly beneficial to learn more about this field of communication.

In Analysis chapter researcher followed Chen's and Kim's theories, which encircle effectiveness and appropriateness and acculturation with deculturation in intercultural marriages. It causes find out which internal and external factors impact the effectiveness of communication between spouses in intercultural marriages the most; which communication competencies do spouses in intercultural marriages develop in order to address cross-cultural differences; how do spouses in intercultural marriages experience and deal with conflict within their intercultural marriages.

Communication is defined as a process of sharing and creating meaning between individuals. Communication is effective to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it. (Gudykunst and Nishida 2001, 60). It is a tool used by all humans regardless of the culture from which they come and is crucial to the survival of humans (Casmir 1978). In this study, the communication within intercultural marriages and its effectiveness were investigated. Results demonstrated how vital communication is to the health and survival of each dyad. Spouses revealed that intercultural communication competence is of great consequence to their union. Results uncovered such competencies as knowledge and skills. Knowledge acquired included self-awareness, open-mindedness, and language fluency. Skills included being mindful, supporting one's face, showing respect, and self-disclosing.

Chapter Two

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The review of the literature demonstrates the need for additional research of conflict and communication in intercultural relationships. As intercultural marriages are increasing in numbers (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005; Frame 2004), the need for research is imperative as little empirical research exists in this field (Cools 2006). In addition, opposing viewpoints exist regarding the difficulty of establishment and maintenance of satisfying, successful intercultural marriages (Gaines and Agnew 2003; Frame 2004; Garcia 2006; Foeman and Nance 1999).

This phenomenological study attempts to contribute to previous studies by bringing greater clarity in understanding the complex factors influencing individuals in intercultural marriages. Using in-depth interviews, this study explored the unique internal and external elements present and dynamics manifested in diverse ways through communication and conflict. Intercultural communication and conflict are complex due to the diverse aspects of this phenomenon. Three primary research questions are addressed in this study:

- Which internal and external factors impact the effectiveness of communication between spouses in intercultural marriages the most?
- Which communication competencies do spouses in intercultural marriages develop in order to address cross-cultural differences?
- How do spouses in intercultural marriages experience and deal with conflict within their intercultural marriages?

Based on Romano's definition, interpersonal conflict is defined for this study as a situation wherein the two individuals are interdependent; they possess opposing objectives which have the power to negatively impact the relationship if not resolved; it is essential that the differences be settled as quickly as possible. Constructive conflict is the managing of conflict in such a way that both parties find fulfillment in the resolution and can continue to derive marital satisfaction from the relationship even though

compromise and differences exist. Destructive conflict occurs when differences exacerbate the marriage relationship by magnifying the root issue thus enveloping other marital dynamics. Negativity pervades the marital union and prevents a mutually fulfilling resolution.

2.2 Research Design

Qualitative research allows phenomena to be studied and analyzed in detail (Silverman 2006). Qualitative research is defined as a descriptive form of research, a way to collect information that should provide answers to the research questions. Qualitative research method seeks to describe and analyze the culture and behavior patterns of humans and their groups. The goal of qualitative researchers is to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action asserted the benefit of employing qualitative methods when studying intercultural relationships, as a qualitative study allows individuals to communicate their particular experience effectively. By sharing their thoughts and stories, persons in an intercultural relationship divulge the personal and cultural elements evident in their specific, intercultural relationship.

Qualitative methods are also beneficial to complement existing studies in an emerging field, as they assist in providing a detailed picture of the phenomena involved in the topic of study. Many factors impact the communication in intercultural marriages and a qualitative approach is needed to provide a holistic view (Cools 2006). In-depth interviews were employed to investigate how spouses in an intercultural dyad co-create meaning as well as how these couples handle and resolve conflict. Intercultural marriages are described through the eyes of intercultural spouses as it is their lived experience.

2.3 Participants

Intercultural couples were sampled for this study since they have experienced the phenomenon of intercultural marriages, and therefore, are rich sources of information an experience. The data for this study was collected from the individual interviews with each partner of Norwegian-Ukrainian marriage. Selected method of investigation assists in bonding the researcher and informants and it also gives the researcher additional perspective on what goes on in that particular cross-cultural family. The main data collection method was supplemented by written resources such as notes from previous

studies on similar topics, theories that relate to the study, field conversations and field diary.

Five married couples that live in Norway was interviewed. Couple #1 lives in Oslo, is married for 7 years, has one kid, the age of husband and wife is 38 and 35; Norwegian spouse was married before. Couple #2 lives in Strømmen now, is married for 5 years, has 2 kids, the age of husband is 35 and his wife – 36; it's a first marriage for Norwegian spouse and third for Ukrainian. Her second husband was Norwegian also, which helped to avoid language barrier with third. Couple #3 lives in Bjørkelangen, is married together about 6 years, have been married before. Norwegian spouse in this couple has been married twice and his second wife was from Ukraine; has 2 kids. He had a chance to live in Ukraine for 2 years. His Ukrainian spouse was married once back to Ukraine; has 1 daughter. The age of husband is 65 and wife – 47. Couple #4 lives in Fjellhamar, is married about 10 years, they live with their 2 kids, but from previous marriages. Norwegian spouse was married before twice and Ukrainian once. He is 55 and she is 49. And the last Couple #5 lives in Strømmen, is married for 6 years, no kids, the age of husband and wife is 51 and 42. They have been married before once, have 3 kids from another marriages, but they don't live with them.

The selection of participants is based on their cultural identity, which is an important element to the research. As far as researcher is Ukrainian, studies in Norway as an international student, it helped her to find useful and helpful connections in Norwegian community. Through Ukrainian Diaspora in Oslo, researcher found two of research participants that helped to find the rest.

Each couple was contacted individually to request their participation and scheduled interview time. A consent agreement was signed by all participants before the interviews commenced. This form ensures that researcher is able to use data collected from all participants. The aim of the research is to represent a broad and diverse picture of multicultural marriages, its interactions and experiences.

2.4 Interview Procedure

Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the sample, this researcher obtained permission from Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD) prior to conducting interviews. This researcher explained to participants the purpose of this study and obtained signed consent forms from participants which detailed how participants could withdraw from the study at any time. This researcher conducted in-person interviews at local cafes and

in participants' homes. Locations were based on the participants' preference as interviews are more suitable in a natural setting. Environment impacts how much or how little one communicates both verbally and nonverbally. In an attempt to diminish any external, negative variables, the interviewer endeavored to locate suitable settings for the interviews.

This interviewer sought to gain understanding about the dynamics of intercultural marriage and believes this is better achieved through individual interviews. Confidentiality between interviewer and each spouse was maintained. As each spouse was interviewed individually, the confidentiality of the interview session was upheld regardless of any overlapping themes or concepts that may have been expressed by the first spouse who was interviewed. Responses were not divulged by the interviewer between married spouses. According to various scholars, when spouses are interviewed separately, there is a greater probability that the majority of individuals will be more candid in their answers (Seymour and Eardley 1995; Lambert and Dollahite 2006). This type of interviewing was also employed to prevent conflict from occurring due to the nature of the interview.

This interviewer used open-ended questions and a semi-structured interview process utilizing the same guide throughout every interview. The interview commenced by employing background questions that were non-threatening such as stories of how the couple met, explanation of their particular cultural background, and identification of countries of residence. Beginning with these fundamental questions provided the interviewer the opportunity to develop rapport with the interviewee as he or she divulged significant yet conflict free information. Then, the interview progressed to questions about previous intercultural interactions, similarities and differences, communication, integration of the two cultures in their marriage, and conflicts within the marriage. Within the process of interviewing, this researcher noticed that at times there was a need to ask additional questions or vary the questions in order to obtain more accurate, comprehensive information.

Throughout the interview process, this researcher utilized active listening skills and verbal prompts to encourage the interviewee. There were used 3 languages: Ukrainian, Russian and English. The researcher noted particular nonverbal communication patterns as well as verbal techniques employed by the interviewee. During face-to-face interviews, the researcher wrote some notes depending on the reaction of the interviewees to the researcher's note taking.

2.5 Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the interviewees. The interviews were transcribed for analysis. First, transcriptions and interview notations were read for a comprehensive overview. Then, they were re-read and marked for common themes as well as unique viewpoints from diverse spouses. Portions which seemed significant at this point were highlighted. While compiling data, this researcher began the process of analysis, looking for themes evident amongst intercultural couples. Emerging themes and recurring patterns from the interviews were noted as well as how they were interrelated. Brief notes were written on the margins of the transcriptions. After the completion of all the interviews, data was again reviewed and analyzed to achieve a comprehensive view of the information in its entirety.

After careful analysis, major themes were divided into subthemes. The researcher then gathered significant quotes and specific examples from spouses which corresponded with the specific themes. Some significant excerpts from the interviews were extracted and utilized for analysis and illustration of the various findings. The prevalent themes were grouped together in an attempt to answer the research questions guiding the study. However, when other themes seemingly unrelated to the research questions emerged, the researcher noted their significance to this study and the field of intercultural communication.

The collected data was rich in detail and examples as ten spouses who were in intercultural marriages were interviewed. Because of the amount of data that was collected, the researcher read the transcripts and notes multiple times. The researcher was benefitted as she was also the interviewer, thus able to observe nonverbal patterns, environmental settings, and utilize reflective analysis.

2.6 Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand what happens particular with Norwegian-Ukrainian marriages in Norway, when people from different cultures meet and decide to build a new family together; the impact it has on the individuals through religion, personality, childrearing, settlement, languages and habits. Communication and language can assist or impede the success of intercultural marriages (Cools 2006). A qualitative method was employed. Ten participants who are in intercultural marriages were interviewed. Factors and themes emerged through data collection and analysis. Light was shed on an expanding way of life for many individuals in Norway.

Chapter Three

ANALYSIS

3.1. Background information

The data utilized in this study was gathered by conducting interviews with spouses in intercultural marriages. Five intercultural couples participated in semi-structured interviews. The interview transcripts were analyzed in reference to the three research questions guiding this phenomenological study. In this chapter, the findings are presented.

Most interviewees had some intercultural interaction prior to meeting their spouses. Several mentioned being raised in a culturally diverse environment, while many dated outside of their culture prior to dating their spouse. A few of the spouses lacked a culturally diverse environment while growing up and interacted only within their own culture prior to meeting their spouse. This minimal exposure to other cultures seemed to impact those individuals' worldview and consequently marital satisfaction as they appeared to have less intercultural communication competence.

Intercultural marriages are influenced by distinctive dynamics. Such factors are present within the marriage dyad as well as outside the union. In this study, language fluency, high-context and low-context communication, and family materialized as considerable factors as they impacted the effectiveness of communication between spouses.

3.2 Language fluency

Language fluency influences the efficacy of communication within intimate relationships. One side usually has to give in more than the other. There can only be one culture that you're going to live in, and you're going to adapt to one or the other. You have to go in one direction. This sacrifice or giving in has multiple implications, but one compromise regards the use of one spouse's native language. Intercultural married couples who live in Norway typically speak Norwegian in their spousal interactions. A few couples elaborated that they employed a combination of English and Norwegian words at times, but all agreed that the dominant language between one another is Norwegian: "Jeg må ringe først til your mother..Hun fortalte at hun har noen topic å

snakke om..” Or as an another example: ”Sweetie, kan du lage te for oss? Jeg er så trøtt etter my jobb at jeg kan ikke move..”

Two of the Ukrainian moms speak both their own language and Norwegian to their children, thus assisting their bicultural children in becoming bilingual. One Ukrainian mother do not speak her mother tongue to her children. All couples employ Norwegian as their dominant language in their marriage. However, the language fluency of the spouses has fluctuated for many. Four of the five Norwegian husbands discussed their wives’ improved language skill. One of the good examples is what husband from Couple #5 said:

.. Because her vocabulary isn’t so big: she’ll have like maybe one word that she can describe something with, whereas I’ve got maybe six or eight, you know? And that we have at times little misunderstandings over.. She’ll mean to say this and it will come out meaning that. And if you don’t know to really to get find out which is it supposed to be, you might go on thinking that it was the other thing she meant.. And even with me, if I’m explaining something to her, she doesn’t maybe comprehend it in the way that I mean it, until I said it maybe five or six times and tore it apart, and did this with it, and did what with it to make it makes sense.

Some husbands viewed this deficiency positively as it created a unique dynamic in their communication. While dating, this lack of Norwegian proficiency encouraged couples to spend more time together as one spouse taught the language or as they attempted to understand one another using broken English and dictionaries. This element seemed appealing in a new relationship for the spouse who spoke English well.

However, for those struggling to grasp a second language, their need for fluency impacted their self-sufficiency and autonomy. For example, one of the husbands said about his wife, when she came to Norway first: “She didn’t speak well. She didn’t drive for several years. She was not independent. She’s very independent now. She speaks really well and is self-sufficient.”

From his wife’s perspective, her poor Norwegian inhibited her even after special Norwegian course. She exemplified her lack of confidence by describing her interactions when she was at her husband’s workplace:

I was always there, kind of like a little dog, always with the owner, always just following him around. I hated to talk to people and tried not to make eye contact. Now, I'm the one who goes and says "Hi!"

Although all the couples sampled in this study have been married at least five years, some of the Ukrainian spouses and their use of a second language in an intimate relationship remains a negative at times. This dynamic can contribute to or even create a conflict. Although in Couple#2 wife speaks Norwegian fluently because of being married with Norwegian before. Her husband noted: "She doesn't always communicate her thoughts specifically. Sometimes she says something and she gets frustrated because I do not comprehend exactly what she is saying."

Another couple both mentioned in separate interviews that when they are tired, their ability to communicate, to understand one another, and to try to figure out what's being communicated diminishes significantly. Conflict also ensues for another couple due to language issues. Wife (Couple #2) stated:

Sometimes we have problems communicating. He understands what I'm saying, but the way I try to explain it, he doesn't understand. I cannot explain it the way I want to. I speak Norwegian, but some hard words I need to look in a dictionary to understand the meaning.

Undoubtedly, spouses who communicate in their mother tongue seem to have an advantage. Those non-native Norwegian speakers who must employ Norwegian, struggle at times. Findings demonstrated that language is significant to effective communication in intercultural marriages. Perhaps this is true because of the complex relationship between language and culture. Language cannot be separated from culture. Language is crucial to communication as it is the vehicle to developing intimacy and trust in close relationships.

3.3 High-context and low-context communication

Cultures tend to communicate using a high-context or low-context dimension. As the terms imply, some communication relies more on the context to communicate meaning. Typically, Ukrainian culture employs high-context communication. This entails a reliance on one's ability to read nonverbal cues and thoroughly understand the context

and environment to grasp communication accurately. On the other end of the spectrum is low-context communication wherein communication is direct and unambiguous. Specifics are delineated, and little guesswork is utilized. Most individualistic cultures such as Norwegian one tends to use lowcontext communication more regularly.

An important dimension of this study came to light through the participants' continual reference to their spouses' communication. As all dyads were composed of an Ukrainian and Norwegian, one assumes that one spouse used high-context communication whereas the other spouse employed low-context communication. Multiple spouses recognized these differences in communication, although the root of these differences is perhaps less easy to identify and accept.

Norwegian husband (Couple #3) verbalized his frustration with his wife's indirectness. His tone and facial expression reflected his annoyance as he exemplified her indirect communication. He recounted a particular incident wherein he said: "Forget the freaking hint. What do you want? What do you want for dinner, [wife's name]? What do you want for dinner?"

He noted that he wished his wife would express her opinion more:

Sometimes I don't hear her ideas because of the traditional Ukrainian perspective. I've struggled with that. I want us to share everything, but sometimes it's hard for me to get her to do that... We don't argue that much, but I think we would more if she always told me how she felt. I think culture wise, there are times I expect her to understand without me having to be specific in what I'm saying. There is also this expectation of catering to or knowing what I'm saying. You should know my expectations. She'll always say: "You've got to tell me specifically what you want". It's expected that you should have figured this out by now versus her culture. She wants me to tell her specifically what I want, each time, everyday.

No doubt, the manner in which one communicates is crucial. Spouses in intercultural marriages attempt to communicate effectively by potentially employing dissimilar styles. Individuals communicate in intimate relationships and may or may not be aware of the essence of such uncomplimentary modes of communication: high-context and low-context.

3.4 Family

Intercultural marriages are the union of not only two individuals with distinct cultures, but also the merger of mothers, fathers, siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, and other relatives from diverse cultures. Such a coalition has the potential for harmonious gatherings and blossoming relationships as well as tumultuous encounters and hurtful exchanges. The results overwhelmingly converged in one voice as spouses spoke of the significance of family to their marriage. One of Ukrainian wives seemed to speak for many in intercultural marriages when she expressed:

I think the main issue in intercultural marriages isn't so much dealing with the intercultural relationships. It isn't so much between the two spouses as it is when you bring the family into the picture.

For some, this factor emerged as potentially significant when couples were assessing the advantages and disadvantages of dating prior to making this commitment. Others encountered negativity when they first dated.

Both male and female spouses, Ukrainian and Norwegian, shared how family played a pivotal role in marriage. For some, experience has produced wisdom which is now utilized in fostering healthier relationships. Acceptance of a culturally diverse spouse was finally granted for some spouses, while one mother died, still not accepting her culturally different daughter-in-law. Truly, a heartfelt burden for intercultural married couples involves the potential acceptance or rejection by their family for the one they love.

Wife from Couple #5 described how family impacts her marriage:

I think family is where you start running into more of your conflict, on how you deal with each other's family dynamics. You are accustomed to something totally different. I think for two people to work through challenges isn't too bad, if you have love and understanding. But factor in everybody else in family, and it gets a little bit crazy. Those family ties are really strong in most other cultures. Even though it's certainly not my husband's intent for his family to have that pull, it's still there. That influence is still there. It's probably something that you can't avoid, and eventually you're going to have to work through it.

Her husband elaborated on his internal conflict as he is sometimes caught between his Norwegian family and his Ukrainian wife:

She [his wife] just has a difficult time understanding why my folks think the way they think. I just try to juggle that, just try to keep the peace and order. I'm sometimes caught in between. My side of the family tries to be understandable, but they're so comfortable in their culture that sometimes it's hard for them to switch. I have to remind them.

Family and their acceptance of the culturally diverse spouse are critical components to marital satisfaction. This study revealed that family members may gradually acquiesce or may tenaciously refuse to embrace the marital union. Intercultural couples must recognize they are powerless to amend the hearts of their loved ones and may have to be strong enough and confident to step out and have their families follow.

3.5 Food

Food and drink also become a problem in some intercultural marriages. Food and drink does not only consists of what is going to be consumed, it also takes into account how the meal is prepared, what time the meal is served, where the meal is eaten, and how it is eaten. People from different cultures usually prefer different types of foods, even people from the same culture who are from different locations have a problem with food. Eating customs from different cultures can cause problems. In some cultures the time a woman takes to prepare a meal is significant of how much she loves her spouse, and in other cultures the spouse won't care if the wife picked up the meal at the drive through as long as he gets fed. For some cultures mealtime is family time, yet for some others mealtime may just be whatever time the person gets hungry. If the person is used to eat at specific times during the day and making a feast out of every meal, they may find themselves in trouble when the spouse is eating at random times of the day, not in the dinner table, but on the sofa watching TV, or the spouse simply does not eat at home but instead takes it on the go because his busy schedule does not permit him time to sit down and eat with the family. For many eating is a common and non-threatening event of their daily lives, for others, especially intercultural couples, eating can become a form of pitfall in the relationship. As an example, three interviewed couples mentioned that each year they have some difficulties with food preparation on Christmas and Easter:

what kind of meat to cook, how many meals suppose to be served and how many guests should be invited. One Ukrainian spouse shared:

I would never think that list of Christmas meal will cause so many arguments with my husband! I do understand and realize importance to follow Norwegian way of celebrating this holiday, but when it comes to the food I always has to repeat him that he is boss at his work and I'm boss at the kitchen!

Another Ukrainian wife made a comment: "To be honest, what I have experienced is that Norwegians are less religious when it comes to these holidays.. I think we, Ukrainians, are more traditional people, especially with food."

The difference in cultural traditions is clearly seen in intercultural families. Four couples usually celebrate these holidays twice. If Protestants and Catholics celebrate Christmas on 25th December, Orthodox Christmas comes on 7th January.

The Christmas Eve meal is called the Holy Supper. The cook of this meal must prepare well in advance because there are 12 courses, which represent the 12 apostles of the Last Supper. Weeks prior to Christmas Eve through the morning of Christmas Day, Ukrainians maintain a strict fast. They do not consume animal or dairy products to commemorate Mary's lack of food as she traveled to Bethlehem.

Only 3 interviewed couples usually have 12 dishes on the table, while another 2 found a compromise with their spouse to serve 4-5 meals.

3.6 Communication Competencies

The second research question guiding this study was: Which communication competencies do spouses in intercultural marriages develop in order to address cross-cultural differences? The findings of this study stress the significance of intercultural communication competence within intercultural marriages. Communication competencies have compelling implications for both conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. In this sample, spouses' knowledge and skills surfaced as essential factors contributing to intercultural communication competence the most within these dyads.

3.6.1 Knowledge

Knowledge is essential for successful intercultural unions as evidenced by an acquisition of information and understanding that is revealed through communication

and interactions. Acquisition of knowledge refers to the basic information that is needed to be interculturally competent. The results indicated that self-awareness, open-mindedness, and language fluency were necessary. The observable self-awareness was illuminated through spouses' words and portrayal of their everyday lives. Most spouses were able to delineate the existing differences and similarities between themselves and their spouses as well as identify their effects. They exhibited the ability to specify how some challenges were linked to the different cultures. Most of the Ukrainian spouses recognized distinctions between themselves and their spouses regarding verbal and nonverbal communication. This self-awareness assisted them in becoming competent in intercultural communication.

Spouses of both gender described themselves and their spouses as open-minded. This disposition seems to be essential for handling cultural differences in intimate relationships. One of the male interviewees husband expressed his openness to change as needed for his marriage:

The bottom line is to reach out in a cross-cultural marriage. That's what my wife is used to and what she knows. I also see the positive way of doing that too. If it's something that is good for me and my marriage, why not try it? Is it easy? No, not for me, but it's helpful for the marriage.

Flexibility also seemed to correlate with certain personalities and was clearly present in spouses who had much exposure to intercultural interaction prior to meeting their spouses. Experiences such as friendships, dating relationships, and particularly personal encounters with narrow-mindedness because of race seemed to endow persons with heightened open-mindedness. Knowledge of language is also vital to effective communication in marriages. Spouses spoke about how fluency impacted their marriages previously as well as currently. Those spouses who have difficulty articulating thoughts and opinions after several years of marriage continue to struggle with effective communication. For example, wife from Couple #4 expressed: "Being able to speak Norwegian has opened another whole world."

3.6.2 Skills

Skills essential for intercultural communication competence include such dynamics as being mindful and sensitive of cultural differences, supporting one's face, showing

respect, and self-disclosing. Behaviors replete with these characteristics were evident in the interactions of many couples. Interactions in dyads reflected mindfulness. Spouses discuss personal needs and wants, so that their partner can be mindful. As spouses communicate effectively, they can identify what is most important to each of them respectively. Once their partner realizes this, they can make allowances and helpful adjustments. Numerous individuals shared how they communicated often, and together made decisions trying to be aware and sensitive to one another's position. It is illuminated the need for spouses to be mindful of their responsibility for causing conflicts.

Some Norwegian spouses shared how they integrated Ukrainian customs in their household because of its significance to their husband or wife. As an example, husband (Couple #2) suggested that when problems erupt, individuals should identify the problem and say: "We have a problem; however, it's not because the culture made me do it. It's because I personally would not become understanding of my spouse and make it work."

Respect is evidenced in intercultural marriages. All participants value their own culture, and a few expressed regret that they had somewhat lost their culture over the years. The integration of culture whether through food, holiday celebrations, language, or philosophies communicates respect. Spouse from Couple #1 wisely said: "Culture defines who you are."

Therefore, when spouses willingly choose to incorporate their spouses' culture, they communicate their acceptance and love for their spouse.

Respect, especially during conflict, is critical. Ukrainian wife (Couple #4) commented:

We work really hard when discussing not to blame the culture. It's one thing to contribute it to the culture, but to blame or cut down and say something negative is something you have to work at not doing.

This concept was mentioned by other couples as they focused on root issues as opposed to casting blame on the irrespective cultures. Typically, respect fosters love and strengthens bonds between spouses. As husbands and wives are mindful within their marriages and show supporting face, they communicate respect to their spouses. Husband from Couple #1 stated that it is not necessary to verbalize and explained that

this was reflected in both his business and personal life. However, he also noted that he tried to amend this tendency as his wife expressed her need for self-disclosure. He reflected on his communication over the years in comparison with now and acknowledged the change was due to his wife's need: "I think I have improved. If I look back at what I used to be and what I am now, I've improved over the years. I express more."

The last skill observed in participants' marriages was self-disclosure or their willingness to divulge personal feelings and information. Individuals spoke about how learning this skill was challenging, especially for the Ukrainian spouse. Ukrainians seemed to lack the need to verbalize. Instead, they wanted their spouse to pick up on needs and desires expressed non-verbally.

3.7 Conflict

The third research question stated: How do spouses in intercultural marriages experience and deal with conflict within their intercultural marriages? This study demonstrates that intercultural marriages like all intracultural marriages include conflict. Because marriages entail intimate relationships and frequent interactions, the likelihood of conflict mushrooms. The spouses in this study described how the conflict process had evolved over time, and findings also illuminated the diversity of these processes. Although new issues surface and some differences remain complex and unresolved, the majority currently manage their conflict constructively.

Constructive conflict is the managing of conflict in such a way that both parties find fulfillment in the resolution and can continue to derive marital satisfaction from the relationship even though compromise and differences exist. Destructive conflict occurs when differences exacerbate the marriage relationship by magnifying the root issue thus enveloping other marital dynamics. Negativity pervades the marital union and prevents a mutually fulfilling resolution. Two couples differed from the others in that one couple is still engaged in figuring out how to manage cultural differences and the other couple has assented to destructive conflict. Findings also suggest that constructive and destructive conflict may be directly linked to individuals' level of intercultural communication competence.

3.7.1 Constructive conflict

Results suggest that a change in perspective, honest and open communication, and a foundation of love are critical for constructive conflict. A recurring theme in this study involved spouses' current approach to conflict compared to their initial approach when newly married. The majority of the participants expressed their growth as individuals when comparing their current perspective with the past. Undeniably, this adjustment influenced thoughts, behavior, and interaction, thus impacting the quality of their marriage.

Perspectives changed for numerous reasons. Some stated that they became more comfortable in their new role as a husband or wife which stimulated new viewpoints. Daily interactions became normal, and couples acquired useful knowledge about themselves and their spouses. Couple #3 recognized that even if wife wanted to engage her husband in an argument, he would refuse to engage. This realization diffused the emotions at that particular time while also allowing them to communicate their perspectives later when both were calm. Now, that husband maintains that they typically manage conflict by addressing it directly and working through it, and not becoming disconnected due to differences or intense emotions.

The act of engaging in conflict allowed wise spouses to recognize which issues were significant and those that were trivial. Couple #4 admits that they have softened more and realized that their own viewpoint is not necessarily right. They have made allowances for differences. Marriage has smoothed out the rough edges. It seems this modification that enhances the marital relationship as well as the individual happens when both persons accept the culturally diverse spouse, even with their unique differences. Spouses' perspectives changed through encountering conflict and having to face differences head on. These differences provoked individual thought as well as meaningful conversations with their spouses to determine the root of these problems. Meaningful thought and learning was also reiterated by Ukrainian wife (Couple #5) who admits that she has become more savvy in the art of communication: "Years of marriage and flexibility have nurtured wisdom in appreciating the importance of timing and the manner in which one communicates." These factors are of great magnitude to married couples who represent both highcontext and low-context dimensions of communication.

Both male and female participants asserted the necessity of open communication, although defined differently by spouses. As early as the dating process,

patterns of handling conflict develop. One couple became aware of their cultural difference regarding openness while dating. Ukrainian wife (Couple #2) relayed that in her husband's Norwegian upbringing: "They don't communicate feelings. They just let it go."

This was in direct contrast to her cultural background. She immediately addressed communication patterns that needed readjustment such as her husband's tendency to avoid conflict and shut down. In their two separate interviews, both spouses remarked how this factor had altered and aided their marriage. Husband commented that this change was not easy for him, but he was willing to change for the benefit of his marriage.

Openness was also crucial for Couple #1. Time has played a role in their lives as their way of dealing with differences has evolved. They hash it out and express their opinions without being demeaning and hateful. They both attempt to listen to each other's viewpoint. At times, they walk away if emotions are unrestrained. They achieve resolution by a change in belief or an acceptance to agree to disagree. Although only two couples served as illustrations regarding honesty and openness, they speak for most participants in this study.

A change in perspective and a willingness to be open and honest has roots in a foundation of love. Love was evidenced by beaming faces as spouses recollected first dates and wedding days. Love was observed as interviewees recounted personal sacrifices they chose so that their love flourished. Selfishness and self-centeredness was squashed for the good of the dyad. During the interview, individuals recounted how they met their spouse. For many, their excitement spread across their face and through their lips as they shared their stories. One of the Ukrainian spouses said:

We have had a really special beginning of our relationships. On that time I wasn't very familiar with Internet and all that web stuff. My daughter proposed me to register in icq program just to have in case for communication between us. I didn't pay so much attention to that (smiling). But at the same evening after half an hour of being a member of icq I've got a message! And it was my future husband on that time. It was not typical for me to talk to a stranger, specially with the help of Internet. But at the same time I was really curious what kind of man he was and why he kept writing to me.

They detailed what attracted them to their spouse and the list for many seemed endless. At least five years has elapsed for all married couples in this study but the pleasure of talking about their spouse was palpable. Couples' willingness to put away selfish desires and fulfill their spouses' needs occurred.

For wife (Couple #4) this came in the form of saving face for her husband which equates with respect. She attempts to express her disagreement with her husband when they are not in front of others, thus respecting his face. When they have a difference, she now recognizes that compromise is not what she used to think it was. Her willingness to let go of her own biases and expectations, allowed her to accept differences that initially produced conflict and tension, internally and externally. Overall, the married couples in this study manage conflict constructively.

3.7.2 Destructive conflict

Destructive conflict occurs when differences exacerbate the marriage relationship by magnifying the root issue thus enveloping other marital dynamics. Negativity pervades the marital union and prevents a mutually fulfilling resolution. Destructive conflict was manifested in this study through word choice, inappropriate interactions, and a lack of kindness and understanding. This was exemplified by Ukrainian wife who quietly relayed how her husband would use derogatory terms at times when referencing her culture. She expressed how this hurt her feelings. Characteristic of her culture, she avoided direct confrontation with her husband. When describing their communication, she maintained: "Now, we don't have much communication, and we fight all the time. However, we need the communication to end our fight."

This interviewer inquired about dealing with differences in marriage, and she responded: "We don't talk about them because we would get in a fight." In her husband's interview, he described how he perceived they dealt with differences: "She expresses hers. I express mine. We argue, and then we don't talk for a day." Throughout the interview, he referenced two issues that he had discussed and she continued to ignore. His description of a time when they disagreed and he was right, and a time when they disagreed and she was right seemed to uncover an underlying spirit of competition and need for control.

Another couple's way of handling conflict was also destructive. Words such as "pretty passionate people, maybe our voices get raised, most of the time we battle it out" were used to describe the management of differences very well.

"Whenever we have a disagreement, it generally turns into an argument", – unfortunately for this couple, they both wholeheartedly agree that they are completely different, culturally and personality wise. Thus, one concludes that numerous arguments break out regularly. The wife lamented marrying someone from a different culture, emphatically asserting that she would never encourage her children to make that decision. For this couple, they continue to engage in destructive conflict.

Intercultural communication competence levels appear to be low for both spouses. According to the Ukrainian wife's verbalizations during the interview, she seems to have chosen not to acculturate into Norway. Ineffective communication and an inability to recognize the roots of their conflicts appear to foster misunderstandings and hurt for this dyad. Their differences are immense, and conflict occurs for a multitude of reasons.

3.8 Benefits of Intercultural Marriages

As mentioned previously, intercultural dyads need intercultural communication competencies to better equip them to manage conflict constructively. Their language fluency, style of communication, and family dynamics may magnify the challenges encountered in intimate relationships. So, what drove the participants in this study to engage in such a phenomenon? Why do some intercultural married couples embody marital happiness as they reminisce about their first date and their development as a unified couple? Answers from participants about the best thing about intercultural marriages were different, but one main concept seemed to resound from interview to interview.

Person after person disclosed how their growth as an individual in an intercultural marriage was invaluable. Intercultural marriages fostered a global awareness and acceptance of other cultures as well as a diminished ethnocentrism. Husband (Couple #2) shared that in intercultural marriages one has the ability to pick and choose what is best from each represented culture. This concept was further revealed by another husband (Couple #5), who described his intercultural marriage in this manner:

We have created our own culture together. Every time I look into her eyes, she reminds me of just being so far from who I am. It makes me want to be a better person. Intercultural marriages open you up to a whole new culture, a whole new outlook on life. They say if you learn an instrument or learn another language that boosts your IQ. I feel as a couple we are growing in acceptance, in intelligence, in many different ways as we learn something totally new. It is more than just culturally understanding something.

Couple #3 expressed how their children will positively benefit from the blend of two cultures with their unique backgrounds and heritage. Husband stated:

To not be trapped in one culture and do it that way and have to live that way, I think that is the one blessing. As I understand and learn about a different culture and use the good of that culture and the good of my culture, my wife and I can basically create our own package of culture as we raise our children.

The excitement and thrill of diversity is also appealing to this sample. They raved about the adventure in intercultural relationships. They love the exposure to new ideas, experiences, and foods. Wife sums up her intercultural experience the best when she declared: “I feel like a princess in my dream.”

Intercultural marriages are multi-faceted, but this study suggests that intercultural marriages can be mutually satisfying.

3.9 Summary

Results of this study revealed four major themes with subthemes. Demographic information was presented particularly noting spouses’ intercultural interaction prior to meeting their spouse. Language fluency, high-context versus low-context communication, and family were identified as three major factors impacting communication within intercultural marriages. Communication competencies relating to knowledge and skill were put forward. Components of constructive and destructive conflict that emerged in the interviews were discussed.

Chapter Four

DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The fundamental aim of this phenomenological study was to investigate communication and conflict within intercultural marriages. Ten extensive interviews were conducted with spouses in intercultural marriages, in order to answer research questions. This chapter will present a more exhaustive analysis of the results in reference to cited literature of intercultural communication and conflict communication. Results highlighted the existence of cultural differences and conflict within intercultural marriages. The results also demonstrated that intercultural marriages can thrive in the realm of marital satisfaction. This was evidenced by the words, narratives, and nonverbal communication shared by the participants in this study.

4.2 Intercultural Communication

Communication is defined as a process of sharing and creating meaning between individuals. Communication is effective to the extent that the person interpreting the message attaches a meaning to the message that is relatively similar to what was intended by the person transmitting it (Gudykunst and Nishida 2001, 60). It is a tool used by all humans regardless of the culture from which they come and is crucial to the survival of humans (Casmir 1978). In this study, the communication within intercultural marriages and its effectiveness were investigated. Results demonstrated how vital communication is to the health and survival of each dyad. Spouses revealed that intercultural communication competence is of great consequence to their union. Results uncovered such competencies as knowledge and skills. Knowledge acquired included self-awareness, open-mindedness, and language fluency. Skills included being mindful, supporting one's face, showing respect, and self-disclosing.

These abilities reiterated Chen's assertions that communication competence involves both effectiveness and appropriateness in interactions. Specifically, Chen noted four areas which encompass the themes of effectiveness and appropriateness: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adjustment, and cultural awareness (Chen 1989). In this study, personal attributes such as open-mindedness, mindfulness,

and self-awareness were identified as being of utmost importance. Spouses verbalized the significance of these qualities as well as the process of developing them. They also referenced conflicts that indicated their need to cultivate and possess these traits. Accounts were shared of previous times when minimal utilization of such qualities had negative consequences.

In contrast, some individuals hinted at their ignorance and neglect of these necessary components. Spouses who lacked mindfulness, cultural sensitivity, and flexibility encountered day to day challenges especially in the area of conflict. This absence of self-awareness seemed to foster misunderstanding of a partner's heart and mind. This finding is significant to the study of intercultural marriages as it can be utilized to assist intercultural couples, broaden the field of intercultural communication, and enrich the counseling discipline. As intercultural spouses discover the need for development of certain personal attributes, they can devote time and effort to increasing their flexibility, mindfulness, and self-awareness. Counselors whose clients are composed of intercultural dyads can integrate this new information into counseling sessions. This finding was manifested through comparison of spouse's interviews resulting in dissimilar perceptions, of similar scenarios and different viewpoints of their marriage. Undoubtedly, Chen's notion of the necessity of specific attributes aligns with the results of this study.

Another favorable quality within a dyad involves self-disclosure. According to Chen, self-disclosure is one of the main factors in interpersonal relationships. Spouses confirmed how necessary self-disclosure is to the vitality of their relationship. Numerous Ukrainian females described times when they verbalized to their husbands this glaring need in their marriages; thus, adjustments were made. Some Norwegian males disclosed how this was foreign and somewhat uncomfortable for them, but their attempt to improve in this area benefitted their marriage. A few Norwegian males seemed to recognize that their Ukrainian wives did not naturally disclose highly personal information and communicated their desire to hear more of their spouses' opinion. No Ukrainian wives mentioned a lack of or need for self-disclosure; however, this fact may be due to cultural or personality variables. A conclusion about Ukrainian females regarding self-disclosure is inconclusive, as this concept was not specifically addressed in this study, although this may be an interesting item for future investigation.

Respect for one another is related to personal attributes as this component entails people's ability to understand themselves and demonstrate optimistic interactions.

Different spouses gave examples of how they integrated both cultures into their marriage. This inclusion validated the worth of the culture and the individual by communicating respect and acceptance. Husbands and wives also described conflict and the choices they made during and after conflict. As they established and adhered to guidelines and boundaries especially during arguments and times of tension, respect was conveyed and reinforced as an inherent component within their intimate relationship.

Chen's second element related to communication competence deals with verbal and nonverbal communication. Language fluency in this study surfaced as a major theme as it is multi-faceted. Spouses who struggled with Norwegian had similar challenges in their marriage such as a sense of dependence and a lack of autonomy. Language fluency also impacted conflicts and at times magnified conflicts due to misunderstandings and one spouse's need to exert more effort as he or she communicated in their second language. When an individual is unable to effectively communicate his or her opinions or beliefs, he or she is at a disadvantage. Conversely, those spouses who now speak Norwegian fluently and are bilingual have the opportunity to speak with multiple others and experience more. They can interact with those from their own culture as well as individuals from multiple cultures who speak Norwegian. This skill affords them the chance to develop meaningful relationships and engage in additional activities because of their verbal fluency. They are able to not only establish relationships at a greater depth and breadth, they can also teach their children to be bilingual. Children of three of the five Ukrainian mothers are benefitting at an early age as they converse in two languages.

Chen's third factor revolves around one's ability to function in a foreign environment and their subsequent psychological adjustment. All Ukrainian participants have lived in Norway for at least five years. Living in a foreign environment for multiple years, one typically learns how to adjust healthily and enjoys a new life. Out of the five Ukrainian spouses who participated, only one expressed her marked displeasure of living in a foreign land. This Ukrainian wife is part of a dyad which engages in destructive conflict, thus the aversion she has toward the Norway may be a reaction to or promoter of her conflictive marriage. This is not to say that the aforementioned Ukrainian spouses do not miss certain aspects of their home country or think that Ukraine does some things better than Norway, but it signifies that they have psychologically adjusted to life in the Norway with insignificant amounts of stress and

frustration resulting from living here. The final dimension deals with culture awareness or knowledge about the other culture's values, customs, norms, and systems. Overall, the results suggested that most participants initially had a basic knowledge about their spouse's culture; however, specifics may not have emerged until their relationship developed into an intimate one. Awareness of some aspects arose as they encountered novel situations in their married life. Several spouses had additional experience and subsequent understanding regarding their Norwegian spouse's view of face support after marriage.

After several years of marriage, participants are familiar with their culturally diverse spouse's values, customs, and norms. However, as spouses are raising young children now, issues surrounding parenting are arising. Undoubtedly, some of these challenges or different viewpoints are directly related to culture. In this respect, spouses have the opportunity to continue developing intercultural communication competence as new experiences surface. The issues encompassing raising children did not emerge as substantial for the majority of the interviewees.

Kim asserted that the development of one's identity is both complex and continuous. This was observable in the intercultural couples as they described themselves as well as their intercultural experiences and their specific marriages. Kim promoted the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic in her integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation and recognized how acculturation and deculturation play a role in adaptation. She promoted her belief that through prolonged and cumulative intercultural communication experiences, individuals around the world can, and do, undergo a gradual process of intercultural evolution (Kim 2008, 359). The result of this process is a greater self-other orientation due to exposure to these experiences. This greater self-other orientation was a common theme amongst spouses. Spouses reiterated how their own particular intercultural marriage had fostered personal growth and a diminished sense of ethnocentrism. They not only had the experience of another culture through their spouse's eyes, but they also viewed other cultures with more open minds. They were able to identify the strengths of another culture and augment such assets to their personhood.

The change in previously held beliefs about particular cultures that were represented in this study aligns with Allport's Contact Hypothesis Theory. This theory states that meaningful, sustained, in-depth interactions with one who is culturally different has the potential to alter previously held beliefs about the individual and his or

her represented culture supports the findings in this study. Significant communication must occur between people who feel that they are equal and possess a common purpose. These beliefs promote amendments to earlier, inaccurate perceptions.

In Kim's theory of acculturation and deculturation, the focus is on individuals who leave their home environment and relocate to a totally different place for a significant period of time. However, Kim recognized that as the world is changing, individuals may not have to move from their own country to experience acculturation (Kim 2008). Such is the case in this study. For some spouses, they grew up in a minority household in Norway and became acculturated through their marriage to someone culturally different. Norwegians in this study married with Ukrainians and experienced acculturation as they learned new traditions and philosophies. Undoubtedly, Ukrainians who grew up in Ukraine and moved to Norway because of their Norwegian spouse have had the opportunity for acculturation. As Kim described this process, they have learned different cultural practices as well as a new language. Besides new behaviors and language, the new culture promotes different processing. This was exemplified the study as Ukrainians identified and explained a new way of doing things after they married. Most were able to label what was present due to their own culture and what transpired because of a merger of two cultures.

Another part of acculturation involves developing new-cultural aesthetic and emotional sensibilities, from a new way of appreciating beauty, fun, joy, as well as despair, anger, and the like. However, just because an individual is in a new culture, they may or may not utilize acculturation learning. This was evidenced in this study by one participant who refuses to accept Norwegian culture. Her aversion to this new way of life was verbalized and observable throughout the interview process. Acculturation happens as the person decides whether to let it occur which may be based on the person's predispositions, pre-existing needs and interests (Kim 2008, 363).

As the individual begins learning new things, deculturation, a letting go of some of the previous culture's elements, happens. Deculturation shows up in tangible and intangible ways. Results revealed multiple spouses' transformation in food preferences, clothing, and primary language as well as alterations in behaviors and basic values. In order for spouses to establish healthy communication, some Ukrainian spouses changed the way they communicated, from a reliance on nonverbal communication to the use of primarily verbal communication with their spouse. Norwegian spouses had to embrace their Ukrainian spouses' value of face as this is a core value in Ukrainian society.

Individually, spouses learned specific heartfelt principles of their respective spouse's culture and integrated some of these into their daily lives. Some hinted at previous tension in their marriages, ascribing it to their differences. However, this pressure may have bubbled up due to the tension between acculturation and deculturation. Individuals are contending with required changes and desires for the familiar and comfortable. Kim elaborates: "Stress, indeed, is an expression of the instinctive human desire to restore homeostasis, that is, to hold constant a variety of variables in internal structure to achieve an integrated whole." (Kim 2008, 363).

Stress can produce positive changes in persons as they learn to grow and adapt. The willingness of participants to develop and adjust benefitted them personally and as a couple. Cohesive bonds were strengthened, and marital contentment intensified.

Occasionally, the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic materializes but with fewer difficulties and modifications. For most of the couples in this study, they have forged through the stress and adaptation dimension in their relationship and enjoy the growth they have experienced. However, for those less willing to change and adapt, this process seems to be ever looming. Indeed, an intercultural identity materializes for those who have experienced acculturation and deculturation – an open-ended, adaptive, and transformative self-other orientation (Kim 2008, 364). This identity produces persons who clearly understand who they are while also focusing on others and their needs, thoughts, and feelings. Because intercultural spouses have to define who they are and their unswerving principles, they know who they are. Likewise, the spouses in this study embrace others and their differences with an open heart. Although Kim does not address how certain situations cause greater trials and amendments perhaps due to their innate nature, the results of this study suggest that this may occur. A couple of the spouses mentioned issues such as death of a loved one and the caring for children which surprisingly emitted new courses, and concepts not yet chartered resulting in intense, temporary stress in their marriages.

All marriages involve a fusion of two distinct lives with a history, a personality, values, and expectations. It is the active creation of a new culture that has never existed before. Casmir introduced the concept of culture building defined as a third-culture, or new interactive relationship, which thus evolves, would represent an expression of mutuality, one which can be understood, supported and defended by all who shared in its development. The process that transpires includes natural, or common processes of communicating and relating (Casmir 1999, 108-109).

As couples in this study described their interactions and current philosophies within marriage, the merger of values, behaviors, and norms could be conceptualized as a third culture. Most couples explained how they integrated both cultures within their marriage and referenced which customs or traditions came from which culture. For some, they created their own specific customs. By forming a third culture, one partner's culture does not govern over the other and the existence of a third culture can eliminate one's tendency to be ethnocentric. This idea was discussed by husbands and wives as they articulated the greatest benefit of being in an intercultural marriage.

Spouses indicated that the personal growth which transpired because they were in an intimate, intercultural relationship was significant. They reiterated their expanded world view which resulted in a decrease of ethnocentrism. The creation of something new as one culture interacted intimately with another culture was identified, verbalized, and hailed as being highly advantageous for intercultural spouses. Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of intercultural marriage evolves over time and through shared experiences and communication. Although previous research has not explored intercultural marriage through this theoretical lens, this model seems to articulate and explain the interaction, communication, and evolution which naturally transpire in intercultural marriages.

4.3 Conflict Communication

As mentioned previously, conflict happens in intimate relationships like marriages (Cahn and Abigail 2007). Couples are interdependent and during conflict, they each sought different paths to the same goal. These distinctions could harm the relationship if spouses did not deal with them. The last characteristic involves timing as spouses need to manage their differences in a timely manner as the lack of resolution or accompanying tension may harm their relationship.

A great deal of research exists regarding conflict in intracultural marriages. For example, Dugan Romano found in his study that all of his married participants exhibited some type of conflict within their marriage. The findings of the present study are consistent. All participants referenced or detailed conflict at some point in their relationship, even if they did not utilize terms such as conflict or problems. Initially, some individuals were reluctant to identify differences or the presence of conflict to the interviewer. This may have been due to a lack of rapport with the interviewer or even their culture's negative view of conflict. However, in intimate relationships, conflict is

an ordinary part. Regardless of negative connotations associated with conflict, it does not have to drive spouses apart.

The sources or reasons for conflict are diverse. Tallman and Hsiao maintained that conflict develops partially due to individuals' expectations that their partners will fulfill their emotional, social, and material needs throughout their married life. Allender and Longman reported that since men and women are both similar and dissimilar, the differences inherent in gender may be a huge potential for conflict and contempt (Allender and Longman 2009, 34). Undoubtedly, the findings suggest that causes for conflict are multiple. As mentioned above, problems develop due to expectations as well as gender differences. For those of a different cultural background, they tend to possess expectations reflective of their culture, not necessarily of the culture in which they currently live. In a marriage, individuals are intimate with one another and thus become vulnerable. Therefore, a spouse's words, actions, beliefs carry greater weight with his or her partner. A spouse has the capability to provoke increased feelings or passion from his or her spouse. At times, the vulnerability and closeness within this relationship create a potential for increased conflict.

Conflict has the potential to be constructive and productive. Rosen-Grandon, Myers, and Hattie found that when married couples were able to manage conflict along with various marital roles, they were able to arrive at marital satisfaction through shared values. Marital satisfaction develops based on love, loyalty, and shared values. For married couples to arrive at marital satisfaction through love, communication and expression of affection is critical. Findings of this study support the necessity of love and shared values are to a healthy relationship. As mentioned previously, many spouses' marital satisfaction was observable through their words and nonverbal communication as they talked about meeting their spouse, their wedding day, and attractive traits of their spouse. Love for mates was also recognized as individuals discussed personal sacrifice and compromise. Many put aside their own desires to be right or do things their way in order to show honor and respect for their mate.

Gottman argued that secure and content marriages that possess an overall positive affect are better equipped to engage in conflict constructively. A marriage built on a foundation of friendship and positive experiences can be significant for a couple's success during conflict. Due to the nature of time limitations, this study was unable to uncover specifics about foundations of friendship and their link to successful conflict.

However, results did seem to suggest that the majority of couples were mutually satisfied and engaged in constructive conflict.

Intercultural marriages share characteristics with other intercultural relationship including how conflict is handled. Intercultural conflict communication is complex and occurs due to numerous causes. Intercultural conflict erupts because individuals hold diverse values and objectives, and utilize distinctly different processes or face orientations (Oetzel et al. 2007). The results of this study noted the necessity of respecting face within a dyad of an Ukrainian and Norwegian. Participants from both cultures discussed the value of face in their interactions and communication. Some individuals verbalized the word face when noting its value and imperative presence. For one couple, they reminisced about a conflict that occurred in marriage and situations which involve face. Prior to this conflict, they seemed to have minimal understanding of face's worth. After this conflict and through open and honest communication and love, they were both able to recognize face and its impact in their relationship. They achieved a deeper comprehension about each other's perception of face in their relationship and in their interactions with others. By this realization, they were able to engage in face support and a greater appreciation for their spouse. Although the husband and wife acknowledge that their spouse's viewpoint was totally opposite from the one they held, they respected and loved their mate enough to honor their respective mate's philosophy.

As Ukrainian spouses understand and explain the value of face to their Norwegian spouse, they can have effective communication. Likewise, as Norwegian spouses listen and comprehend face through the eyes of their spouse, they can demonstrate love and respect in a deeper manner. According to Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory, the concept of face becomes especially problematic in uncertainty situations (such as embarrassment and conflict situations) when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question (Oetzel et al. 2000, 399). Perhaps, this sheds light onto the path of conflict for couples in this study who seem to encounter destructive conflict and lack marital satisfaction. For those spouses, derogatory words and intense arguments destroy the face of their partner. This disrespect of face seems to have strong repercussions especially for Ukrainian spouses.

Conflict occurs in all intimate relationships, and intercultural marriages are no exception. People's behaviors and communication styles are heavily influenced by values stemming from their culture and ethnicity. Culture also shapes one cognitively and emotionally. Ting-Toomey stressed that intercultural spouses must modify their

interactions accordingly. These changes were evident in the interviews as spouses told how they have altered since their newlywed phase.

Intersubjectivity theory (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005) suggests that individuals interpret experiences based on their personal interactions and subjective interpretations. Couples are often unaware of the impact culture has on their thoughts, feelings, and actions; conflict and living with one's spouse bring this awareness. Culture influences individuals in such a way that persons believe that their own particular culture is correct and operates in the best manner. Likewise, spouses feel that their own beliefs about their mates' actions are objective and accurate (Waldman and Rubalcava 2005). This notion was confirmed in this study. Recognizing that there are alternate ways to make decisions or address issues can be difficult to accept at times. Many of the interviewees shared that compromise and communication led them to change for the sake of their marriage.

Individualism and collectivism are other significant factors in one's cultural make-up and therefore impact intimate relationships. It was evidenced in this study that individualism and collectivism influence communication and family philosophy. Collectivists tend to utilize highcontext communication replete with nonverbal communication. The Norwegians in this study employed low-context communication which means that they rely on verbal communication and possess fewer skills in interpreting nonverbal cues. As time passed, spouses learned more about one another and communicated their feelings and thoughts more. This gave Norwegian spouses the opportunity to increase their comprehension of high-context communication as they had a richer understanding of the receiver and the setting. While this transpired, Ukrainian spouses attempted to enhance their verbalization skills. In this way, both represented cultures altered their communication to allow for differences, thus demonstrating previously untapped skills. This modification also communicated respect and love, fostering increased positive affect.

Scholars have pinpointed specific areas that seem to be the most challenging in intercultural marriages. Cools' study found eight significant areas wherein intercultural marriages have particular challenges: language, communication, adapting spouse, friends, raising children, gender roles, visibility, and traditions. Frame's study found similar results in the areas of gender, language, and raising children. Values, money, sexuality, religion, and social class were also potential areas of increased conflict within intercultural marriages (Frame 2004). Garcia suggested that raising children can be

more difficult for intercultural couples. The current study correlated with some of Cools' and Frame's findings; only two couples reported additional issues relating to children, perhaps due to children's ages at the time of this study and the sample size. Undoubtedly, adolescence presents complex concerns for both intracultural and intercultural dyads. The interviewed couples noted that language and communication were significant. For couples in intercultural marriages, challenges to reach workable solutions to conflicts may arise due to the couples' inability to fully grasp an understanding of the conflict as well as put into concise words what they desire to communicate (Frame 2004).

Internal and external factors influence intercultural marriages and can contribute to increased conflict. Within the marriage unit, spouses of different cultures benefit from knowing about their partner's culture. Understanding and knowledge can prevent some conflicts. Individuals in committed relationships benefit from having knowledge about one another. If needed, they can modify their interactions to avoid or manage conflict constructively (Ting-Toomey 2000, 75). Spouses described their growth in knowledge about their spouse and their respective culture; those who managed conflict constructively also explained that the way they handled conflict had improved since they were first married. One concludes that the acquisition of knowledge and enhancement of skills not only promotes intercultural communication competence, but also more positive results from conflict.

In this study, spouses discussed the instrumental role effective communication plays in their marriage. Males and females mentioned the importance of communicating and sharing opinions and thoughts with each other. This corresponds to Mackey, Diemer, and O'Brien's study. They cited the importance of not just listening to one another but also understanding one another's needs and how they are met in the relationship. It is also imperative to identify expectations in an effort to have a better understanding of the individual, be more empathetic, and exhibit greater respect. Empathy and respect promote healthy unions. Garcia emphatically maintained that conflicts in intimate, intercultural relationships are not due solely to cultural differences, but may also be the result of personality differences or particular aspects of a situation. As spouses described their own and their spouse's similarities and differences, it was obvious that some combinations of personalities within marriages fostered increased conflict. This concept was reiterated by P-W. Lee's study wherein his participants disclosed that similarities such as personalities, hobbies, or values contributed to the

depth of their relationship. Personality traits such as empathy, patience, flexibility, and openness were seen as a benefit in the persons sampled; this axiom is also put forth by Gareis.

Intercultural marriages encounter obstacles to building and maintaining healthy, intimate relationships. At times, societal pressures may embrace feelings of aversion to intercultural relationships (Foeman and Nance 1999). However, in the representative sample only two spouses remarked that they had experienced negativity in a community setting because of their intercultural dyad. Most of the participants interact in an intercultural enclave or reside in a diversified area of Norway. This dynamic may impact society's reaction to intercultural marriages; however, for Norwegian spouses, the admission of prejudice to the researcher may have been perceived as a loss of face. The significance of face to Ukrainian may have influenced divulgence of this type of information.

Another external dimension involves family's response to marriage to a culturally diverse individual. In this study, multiple persons mentioned familial challenges. This dilemma was shared as individuals discussed their own families' reaction to their spouse as well as their inlaws' reaction to themselves. Rosen-Grandon asserted that disapproval of a relationship by parents promotes marital dissatisfaction. Results in this study suggested that parents' negativity influenced spouses, but to what extent this dynamic affected marital satisfaction is inconclusive. Researchers (P-W. Lee 2006; Oetzel 2007) conclude that third parties such as families and friends are significant factors and have the potential to impact marital conflict.

Conflict in intercultural marriages will arise just as in intracultural marriages. The results of this study suggest that positive outcomes and marital satisfaction may be produced through these challenges. Intercultural couples have the ability to possess strengths that intracultural marriages are unable to achieve. In this study, strengths surfaced that previously were nonexistent in the participants' lives when they were single. Individuals developed intercultural communication competence as well as stronger marital ties through experiences, communication, and interactions with their culturally diverse spouse. Their own unique viewpoint evolved from their very existence as an entity.

4.4 Limitations of the Study

Certain limitations for this study exist. While the researcher attempted to narrow the possible variables that could inhibit distinct findings, certain variables were present that could have potentially altered the data. The researcher narrowed the focus to intercultural marriages composed of one Ukrainian spouse and one Norwegian spouse; however, the researcher's own culture could have possibly influenced interviewees. Ukrainian comfort level of disclosing private information about their intimate relationship with a stranger varies from person to person. Although every effort was made by the researcher to establish rapport with Norwegian interviewees by utilizing background and past experiences, own culture may have influenced the interviewees. Typically, Ukrainians divulge minimal personal information that would seem negative to them or others unless they have a close relationship with the individual. Usually, Ukrainians possess a collectivistic mindset; thus, they would not make known certain types of personal information to someone considered to be in the out-group.

Another variable which may have influenced the data involves perceptions and connotations related to conflict. Individuals desire to make favorable first impressions, presenting positive information and interaction to strangers. Therefore, prior to each interview the researcher attempted to build rapport as she interacted with potential interviewees. Although interviewees disclosed highly personal information with the interviewer after answering nonthreatening questions, the likelihood that all spouses communicated their main beliefs about and experiences relating to conflict and communication within their marriage cannot be guaranteed. The sample size was appropriate for the current study. However, a larger sample size would have produced additional information that could have enhanced a needed field of study. As the sample was achieved through a convenience and snowball sampling technique, the researcher acknowledges that employing another technique would have generated a diverse sample group.

Individual interviews resulted in rich information as each spouse in the dyads had the opportunity to articulate their opinion in a confidential setting. Beliefs and feelings of husbands and wives were represented. If couples would have agreed to contribute more time, the interviewer could have interviewed each couple separately and then together. This procedure could have potentially provided richer results.

4.5 Further Research

This study has shed light onto areas of potential future research. A researcher could replicate this study, altering one variable in an attempt to determine its significance on intercultural marriages. Intercultural couples composed of one Ukrainian and one Norwegian could be interviewed who reside in Ukraine. It would be interesting to examine any differences that may emerge based on where the couple lives as residency and environment are significant factors to one's lifestyle and worldview. One would surmise that language fluency, intercultural communication competency, and family dynamics would produce different results in another country.

The final recommendation for future research involves replicating this study with a different composition. Cultural groups have specific characteristics, and it would be enlightening to examine similarities and differences among culturally diverse dyads. One would hypothesize that a cultural group different than Ukrainians and Norwegians would have both similarities as well as differences. Such a study would also be beneficial for the intercultural communication field.

4.6 Conclusions

The findings of this study have benefitted the field of intercultural communication, participants, and the counseling field. As mentioned previously, research regarding intercultural marriages is lacking. This study confirmed that all types of marriages include conflict. Intercultural spouses have the opportunity to deal with conflict constructively or destructively. Because of the complex phenomenon of intercultural marriages, culturally diverse spouses may have additional challenges as they encounter conflict. These challenges are primarily due to language fluency, high-context versus low-context communication, and family opposition. This study is advantageous to the counseling field especially for people who are in intercultural dyads. Counselors could employ preventive techniques in pre-marital sessions with culturally diverse couples. Individuals relying on low-context communication could be encouraged to hone their investigative skills as they intentionally observe nonverbal communication and educate themselves about their culturally diverse spouses' culture and communicative practices. Those who naturally utilize high-context communication could practice increased self-disclosure and verbalization of their beliefs and feelings. Counselors who assist intercultural couples with their communication and managing of cultural differences could empower such dyads to achieve marital satisfaction.

Communication is vital to the life of the marital union. Effective communication is multifaceted and develops through time and experiences. Spouses agreed that their communication with one another had altered over the years based on their acquired knowledge about themselves as well as their spouse. Having an understanding of the primary language and communication styles of one another is crucial to intercultural marriages. Results shed light on diverse variables which impact marital satisfaction. Spouses' level of intercultural communication competence greatly influences the communication in intimate dyads. Those who have had significant exposure to other cultures in their environment at home, school, or neighborhood seem to have increased communication competence which fosters marital satisfaction. Others represented in this study revealed that a paucity of intercultural communication competence is a catalyst for tension and conflict within intercultural marriages.

Without fundamental knowledge and skills, the merging of two individuals from diverse cultures is precarious. This new finding augments previous research about intercultural marriages. Overwhelmingly, spouses acknowledged the challenges in their marriage as well as how it was personally advantageous. The current study uncovered additional knowledge about how intercultural couples create a new culture. This third culture allows dyads the opportunity to coconstruct a unique culture, composed of the best qualities of two distinct cultures. The phenomenon they produce together is invaluable and inimitable.

Intercultural marriages are exciting phenomena in today's world. The face of intimate relationships is transforming. As individuals choose to marry one who is culturally diverse, they understand that they will encounter new challenges, growing pains, and adventures. Conflict will erupt. Resolution and marital satisfaction can be attained. Regardless of diversity of values, norms, goals, and communication styles, a foundation of love is essential to the development of marital satisfaction in intercultural marriages. This study, among others, suggests it is feasible and provides valuable insight into how individuals from diverse cultures who marry one another with the hope of enduring love can possess marital satisfaction for a lifetime.

List of References

Allender, Dan and Longman, Tremper. 2009. *The intimate mystery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Allport, Gordon. 1979. *The nature of prejudice*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Cahn, Dudley and Abigail, Ruth. 2007. *Managing conflict through communication*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Casimir, Fred L. "A multicultural perspective of human communication." In *Intercultural and international communication*, ed. Fred L. Casimir, 241-257. University Press of America, 1978.

Casimir, Fred L. "Third-culture building: A paradigm shift for international and intercultural communication." In *Communication yearbook 16*, ed. S.A. Deetz, 407-428. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993.

Casimir, Fred L. "Foundations for the study of intercultural communication based on a thirdculture building model." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 23 (1999): 91-116.

Chen, Guo-Ming. "Relationships of the dimensions of intercultural communication competence." *Communication Quarterly* 37 (1989): 118-133.

Cools, Carine. "Relational communication in intercultural couples." *Language and Intercultural Communication* 6 (2006): 262-274.

Dahl, Øyvind. "The dynamics of communication". In *The Intercultural perspective in a multicultural world: 11th NIC-conference*, ed. Eilef Gard and Birte Simonsen, 27-44. Kristiansand: 2004.

Dion, Karen K. and Dion, Kenneth L. "Individualistic and collectivistic perspectives on gender and the cultural context of love and intimacy." *Journal of Social Studies* 49 (1993): 53-69.

Foeman, Anita and Nance, Teresa. "From miscegenation to multiculturalism: Perceptions and stages of interracial relationship development." *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (1999): 540-557.

Frame, Marsha. "The challenges of intercultural marriage: Strategies for pastoral care." *Pastoral Psychology* 52 (2004): 219-232.

Gaines, Stanley and Agnew, Christopher. "Relationship maintenance in intercultural couples: An interdependence analysis." In *Maintaining relationships through communication: relational, contextual, and cultural variations*, ed. Daniel J. Canary and Marianne Dainton, 231-253. Mahwan, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003.

Garcia, Dan. "Mixed marriages and transnational families in the intercultural context: A case study of African-Spanish couples in Catalonia." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32 (2006): 403-433.

Gottman, John. 1999. *The marriage clinic*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gottman, John, Driver, Janice, and Tabares, Amber. "Building the sound marital house: An empirically derived couple therapy." In *Clinical handbook of couple therapy*, ed. Alan S. Gurman and Neil S. Jacobson, 373-399. New York, NY: Guilford, 2002.

Gudykunst, William B. and Nishida, Tsukasa. "Anxiety, uncertainty, and perceived effectiveness of communication across relationships and cultures." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 25 (2001): 55-71.

Hall, Edward. 1981. *Beyond culture*. New York, NY: Anchor Book.

Hauser, Daniel, 2005. *Marriage and Christian life : a theology of Christian marriage*. Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.

Hofstede, Geert. 1984. *Culture's consequences*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Jiang, Xiaoping. "Towards intercultural communication: from micro to macro perspectives." *Intercultural Education* 17 (2006): 407-419.

Kim, Young Y. 1988. *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Kim, Young Y. 2008. "Intercultural personhood: Globalization and a way of being." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 32 (2008): 359-368.

Lambert, Nathaniel and Dollahite, David. "How religiosity helps couples prevent, resolve, and overcome marital conflict." *Family Relations* 55 (2006): 439-449.

Lee, Pang W. "Bridging cultures: Understanding the construction of relational identity in intercultural friendship." *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 35 (2006): 3-22.

Lee, Pang W. "Stages and transitions of relational identity formation in intercultural friendship: Implications for Identity Management Theory." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 1 (2008): 51-69.

Lindlof, Thomas and Taylor, Bryan. 2002. *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mackey, Richard, Diemer, Matthew, and O'Brien, Bernard. "Conflict-management styles of spouses in lasting marriages." *Psychotherapy* 37 (2000): 134-148.

Oetzel, John, Dhar, Soumia, and Kirschbaum, Kris. "Intercultural conflict from a multilevel perspective: Trends, possibilities, and future directions." *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 36 (2007): 183-204.

Petkova, Diana and Lehtonen, Jaakko. "Aspects of Finnish-Bulgarian intercultural communication." In *The Intercultural perspective in a multicultural world: 11th NIC-conference*, ed. Eilef Gard and Birte Simonsen, 179-196. Kristiansand: 2004.

Rahim, Afzalur. "A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict." *Academy of Management Journal* 26 (1983): 368-376.

Romano, Dugan. 2008. *Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls*. Intercultural Press: Boston, London.

Rosen-Grandon, Jane, Myers, Jane, and Hattie, John. "The relationship between marital characteristics, marital interaction processes, and marital satisfaction." *Journal of Counseling and Development* 82 (2004): 58-68.

Seymour, Julie, Dix, Gill, and Eardley, Tony. 1995. *Joint accounts: Methodology and practice in research interviews with couples*. New York, NY: Social Policy Research Unit.

Sias, Patricia, Drzewiecka, Jolanta, Meares, Mary, Bent, Rhiannon, Konomi, Yoko, Ortega, Maria, and White, Colene. "Intercultural friendship development." *Communication Reports* 21 (2008): 1-13.

Silverman, David. 2006. *Interpreting qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smith, Peter, Dugan, Shaun, Peterson, Ark, and Leung, Wok. "Individualism: Collectivism and the handling of disagreement, a 23 country study." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 22 (1998): 351-367.

Ting-Toomey, Stella. "The matrix of updated face negotiation theory." In *Theorizing about intercultural communication*, ed. W.B. Gudykunst, 71-92. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2007.

Ting-Toomey, Stella, Shapiro, Robin, Garcia, Wintilo, Wright, Trina, and Oetzel, John. "Ethnic/cultural identity salience and conflict styles in four US ethnic groups." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 24 (2000): 47-81.

Waldman, Ken and Rubalcava, Luis. "Psychotherapy with intercultural couples: a contemporary psychodynamic approach." *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 59 (2005): 227-245.

Øyhus, Arne O. "Subjects as objects – Development research as intercultural communication." In *The Intercultural perspective in a multicultural world: 11th NIC-conference*, ed. Eilef Gard and Birte Simonsen, 225-241. Kristiansand: 2004.

Appendix A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Request for participation in master research project at Misjonshøgskolen

The aim of my thesis is to understand what happens with Norwegian-Ukrainian marriages in Norway, when people from different cultures meet and decide to build a new family together; the impact it has on the individuals through religion, personality, childrearing, settlement, languages and habits.

I want to interview 5 Norwegian-Ukrainian married couples related to the topic. I will use an audio recorder during the interview. All collected data will be subject to confidentiality, and processed by me only. After finishing the thesis, no later than May 31st 2012, all recorded on tape, written notes, saved interviews on PC etc, will be deleted. You will not be identifiable in the final thesis.

Participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time.

Please contact me, Yuliya Pashchuk, on telephone 95463347 if you want to participate, if you have any questions or if you later decide to withdraw from the study. You can also contact my supervisor Harald Askeland at Misjonshøgskolen on telephone 51516210.

A consent agreement has to be signed by all participants before the interviews commence to ensure that I am able to use data collected from all participants.

Date

Signature

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Could you tell me a story how you have met?
2. Had you ever thought that you would marry someone outside of your culture?
3. What did you know about Norwegian/Ukrainian culture/values before you have got married?
4. What kind of expectations did you have to your international marriage?
5. What challenges have you faced at the beginning of your married life?
6. Do you feel your marriage is that much different from same culture couples you know? How so, or not?
7. How did you feel society/your family viewed your marriage?
8. Have you experienced language barrier?
9. How do you view challenges to your marriage –both individually and as a couple?
10. How do you feel your different cultural backgrounds influence on everyday life?
11. Does religion play a big role in marriage rituals, childrearing/christening, celebration of religious holidays in your family?
12. How does it work for both of you?