UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ETHNIC RELATED CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES OF

COUPLES IN INTER-CULTURAL MARRIAGES IN ELMINA

CYNTHIA ABENA SAPPOR

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CYNTHIA ABENA SAPPOR

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DECLARATIONS

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Cynthia Abena Sappor, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and that it has not been submitted, either in part or whole for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:……………….…………..

Date:….........……………………….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Name of Supervisor: K. O. Soyebo (Prof.)

Signature:……………………………..

Date:….........………………………….

DEDICATION

To my loving husband, Mr. Ebenezer Kwame Amponsah, for his continuous

understanding and support throughout this difficult and challenging moment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

The number of inter-cultural marriages has grown significantly in the past few decades, as have the numbers of inter-cultural couples presenting for marital and family therapy. Current literature on inter-cultural relationships states that they are at a high risk for failure, with higher divorce rates and lower marital satisfaction reported than for same culture marriages. Therefore, the study sought to explore ethnic-related challenges of couples in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina as well as strategies they employ to manage such challenges. Four specific objectives guided this study. Phenomenological research design was chosen as the guiding principle of this research inquiry and twenty couples were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview guide. The data was transcribed and coded using QSRNVIVO 9 software. The findings revealed that couples had common challenges such as disapproval from family and society, language barriers, cultural barriers and parenting. Coping resources used by couples included humour, learning about the other's culture, support from society and family, effective communication, personal preparation, working towards common goals, and religion. These couples were also found to have attitudes of commitment to their marriage and each other, and a belief that they were not that different from their partners. Thus, the study recommended that couples in inter-cultural marriages are to organise their response to cultural differences in a bid to increase dealing with their framing differences, emotional maintenance, positioning in relationship to family, community and societal context. These strategies provide a basis for interventions that may help inter-cultural couples identify what works for them and strengthen their relationships.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study and research questions. It also highlights the significance of the study, delimitations, limitations and definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the Study

Marriage, also called matrimony, is a socially or ritually recognised union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them, between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws (Haviland, Prins, Bunny & Dana, 2011). The definition of marriage varies according to different cultures, but it is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually sexual, are acknowledged. In some cultures, marriage is recommended or considered to be compulsory before pursuing any sexual activity. Broadly, marriage is considered a cultural universal phenomenon.

Individuals may marry for several reasons, including legal, social, libidinal, emotional, financial, spiritual, and religious purposes. Whom they marry may be influenced by socially determined rules of incest, prescriptive marriage rules, parental choice and individual desire. In some areas of the world, arranged marriage, child marriage, polygamy, and sometimes forced marriage, may be practiced as a cultural tradition (Donovan, 2004).

The number of inter-cultural marriages has grown significantly in the past few decades, as have the numbers of inter-cultural couples presenting for marital and family therapy. Renalds (2011) defined inter-cultural marriages as marriage composed of two culturally diverse individuals who independently possess distinct ethnic cultures that impact their individual worldviews, values and personal philosophies.

Inter-cultural marriage, referred also as cross-cultural marriage, is becoming a common place nowadays. Unprecedented globalisation leads to an increasing number of inter-cultural relationships and marriages. Thus, the notion that inter-cultural couples undergo more stressful and dysfunctional relationship due to cultural differences (Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990; Chan & Smith, 1995). Extensive research demystifies the inter-cultural couples' experiences and factors are discovered in influencing the dynamics of inter-cultural relationships, including intersections among social environment, worldviews, gender, race, culture, religious beliefs and financial management (McFadden & Moore, 2001; Romano, 2001; Vontress, Johnson & Epp, 1999).

The face of intimate relationships is changing in today's society, Deep bonds between persons of diverse cultures are becoming more common and inter-cultural marriages are on the rise. In inter-cultural marriages, the partnership possesses its own unique dynamics and challenges. Spouses in inter-cultural marriages may be recognised by their distinctly different physical characteristics and may utilise diverse languages. Research has further exposed the complexity of inter-cultural marriages as the spouses in such marriages are 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 (Cools, 2006).

The existing similarities and differences can be exciting and attractive but may also create tension and even fierce contention. 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 & Rubalcava, 2005). These distinctive characteristics of inter-cultural marriages seem to advocate a warning to refrain from marrying outside one's own culture. Unfortunately, the marriage and family therapy field has lack of literature, research, and validated models for working with inter-cultural couples. Therapists who see these couples have few resources to turn to, and thus are left to come up with their frameworks, and to find the techniques and models for how best to address the issues inter-cultural couples bring into therapy.

The gap in research and information about inter-cultural marriages exists in part because of the quick rise in the last few decades for the need of information. Analysing the inter-cultural marriages, challenges evolve in interpersonal relationships and more specifically in marriages, partially due to the intimacy of relationships (Renalds, 2011). While scholars argue that inter-cultural marriages have increased levels of challenges, others assert that the amount of challenges is equal in inter-cultural and intra-cultural marriages.

The available literature on inter-ethnic couples states that partners in these unions also have more factors to think about in starting and maintaining their relationships than their same-ethnic peers. Inter-ethnic couples face the typical relationship adjustments that all couples face, but they also must often reconcile other challenges that result from their differing ethnic backgrounds, such as: stereotypes held by society about them and their families (Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001; Hegar & Greif, 1994;Brown, 1987), ethnic differences about lifestyle and family decisions (Laird, 2000; Biever, Mobele &

North, 1998; Pearlman, 1996), and their personal experiences with oppression (Killian, 2002; Fernandez, 1996; Oriti, Bibb & Mahboubi, 1996; 1998; Thompson & Jenal, 1994).

In most part of Africa especially Ghana, marriage is not just a union between two individuals but also a union between two families. In the past, inter-cultural marriages were not tolerated in many ethnic groups, however, Cleland (2010) explained that it is easy to say that the younger generation do not necessarily think like their living and dead ancestors though they seek their approval before marriage. She further added that the choice of life partners certainly is one of those things that ideally would want family's approval. The world culture as a whole has shrunk, contributing to the increase in inter-cultural marriages and the need for information about these unions (Donovan, 2004).

Globalisation is influencing all areas of life, and recent trends demonstrate that increased numbers of inter-ethnic marriages are occurring (Waldman & Rubalcava, 2005). Inter-ethnic relationship scholars are aware of this wide expanding field and acknowledge the gap that sometimes exists in this area (Cools, 2006; Garcia, 2006; Lee, 2006; Gareis, 2000).

The research is to gather a basic understanding of how inter-ethnic married couples have viewed their challenges, and utilised or built resources to overcome these challenges in a way that has not destroyed the functionality of the marriage or the level of marital satisfaction for either partner. The researcher, therefore, tends to investigate on ethnic related challenges and coping strategies of couples in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Elmina is a Coastal Community, thus the dominant occupation is fishing. As part of their occupation, the men travel by sea to other coastal places such as Shama; in the Western Region, Cape Coast, Briwa, Saltpond, Komenda and Anomabo, all in the Central Region of Ghana. As such, they tend to get married alongside in search of fish. On the other hand, men from other coastal areas also come to Elmina for similar reasons. Some women living in other coastal communities in Ghana such as Ada and James Town (Greater Accra Region), Keta (Volta Region) and Cape Coast (Central Region) either come and trade or settle in Elmina to continue their fishing trade, thus, marry and establish a family. Other people also settle in Elmina for other economic reasons aside fishing and get married to people of different ethnic origin. These reasons may include working in both formal and informal sectors as well as attending school.

It is evident that changes in the socio-economic atmosphere have led to increase in the number and situations of inter-cultural relationships in the world over, Ghana and in Elmina specifically. Married couples are likely to experience some challenges but it is thought that those in inter-ethnic marriages may have more challenges due to the differences in their cultural backgrounds. This is because culture influence perceptions, judgment and behaviours that may have implications on the marriage. In view of this, the researcher seeks to investigate the ethnic related challenges and the coping strategies of inter-cultural couples in Elmina.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore ethnic-related challenges of couples in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina as well as strategies they employ to manage such challenges.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to;

1. examine ethnic background checks and issues raised by the couples and their relatives prior to marriage;

2. investigate ethnic related challenges observed by couples in their marriage;

3. identify the impact that the observed ethnic challenges have on the couple's marriage life; and

4. identify the coping strategies adopted by the couples to ensure functionality of their marriage.

1.5 Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the ethnic background checks and issues raised by couples and their relatives prior to marriage?

2. What ethnic related challenges do couples of different ethnic backgrounds in Elmina encounter?

3. What impact does the observed ethnic differences have on the couple's marriage lives?

4. What are the coping strategies adopted by the couples to ensure functionality of their marriage?

1.6 Significance of the Study

A study of interpersonal relationship within inter-cultural marriages will benefit many individuals, particularly couples who are engaged in inter-ethnic relationships. When persons learn about others who encounter similar obstacles or circumstances, they can re-evaluate their own situation with a more accurate lens.

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 inter-ethnic marriages as societies are based on marriages and familial relationships. These relationships determine the health of a society. The information gathered in this study will also be a resource to help therapists who are interested in designing treatment programmes specifically geared towards inter-ethnic couples, with their unique situations and needs. This type of study augments current research in inter-cultural communications, including how friendships and other relationships develop and are maintained between persons with different distinct ethnicities. This study is undertaken with the hope that the data will be useful to family life educators and especially Home Economists who teach the marriage concept in Management in Living.

1.7 Delimitation

The study limits itself to couples of different ethnic origins who have been married from five years and above because it is believed that they might have had enough experience in their marriage and can provide in-depth information regarding challenges and coping strategies facing couples in inter-cultural marriage.

1.8 Limitations to the Study

Only the first two elements (A- the stressor event and B- the resources the couples develop and seek out in response to a specific stressor) of the double ABCX model was used to guide this study. Because of this, no assumption could be made about the meaning or perception (the 'C' element) couples in inter-ethnic marriage in Elmina give to the challenges they encounter.

1.9 Definition of terms

Ethnic group: A group that regards itself or is regarded by others as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics that distinguish the group from the surrounding community.

Ethnicity: A shared characteristics such as culture, language, religion, and traditions, which contribute to a person's or group's identity.

Culture: All of the learned behaviours, beliefs, norms, and values that are held by a group of people and passed on from older members to newer members, at least in part to preserve the group.

Inter-cultural marriage: The union between a man and a woman, one of whom is of a different ethnic background or heritage in Ghana.

Challenge / Stress: The situation of being faced with something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person's ability.

Coping strategies: The specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological, that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimise stressful events.

Couple: Two people (a man and a woman) who are married or who have a romantic sexual relationship.

1.10 Organisation of the Study

This research is organised into five chapters. The first chapter focuses on the Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Objectives of the Study, Research Questions, Significance of the Study, Delimitations, Limitations, and Definition of Terms. Chapter two reviews literature relevant to the study. Topics which were reviewed include Inter-cultural Research, Risk Factors of Inter-cultural Relationships, Characteristics of Inter-cultural Relationships, Personal Characteristics of People in Inter-cultural Relationship, Theories of Motivation, Pre-marital counseling, Challenges Facing Inter-cultural Couples, Theories guiding the Study and Coping Strategies couples in inter-cultural marriages adopt to help in the functionality of the marriage. Chapter three describes the methods and procedures used for the study which includes the Study Area, Research Design, Population, Sample and Sampling Technique, Instrument, Validity and reliability of the Instrument, Data Collection and Data analysis Procedures. Chapter four presents the demographics of the participants, followed by the results and discussion of the findings. A summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations as well as areas for further research are presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Overview

Challenges in inter-cultural marriages are fascinating and complex (Renalds, 2011). Therefore, a broad review of literature from different fields of study is required to grasp this multifaceted phenomenon. Literature for this study was therefore reviewed under the following topics:

1. Inter-cultural Research

2. Risk Factors of Inter-cultural Relationships

3. Characteristics of People in Inter-cultural Relationships.

4. Personal Characteristics

5. Pre-marital Counseling

6. Theories of Inter-cultural Marriage

7. Stressors Facing Inter-cultural Couples.

8. Resources/Coping skills.

9. Conceptual Framework.

2.1 Inter-cultural Research

Inter-cultural research is understood as a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural background communicate similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures.

Over the last three decades there has been an unprecedented increase in inter-cultural marriages (Chan & Smith, 1995; Ibrahim & Schroeder, 1990). In fact, the rate of

immigrants to the US is over 1.2 million people per year (Camarota, 2001). Inter-marriage is occurring in more than 50% of American couples and 33 million people live in homes where at least one other adult has a different cultural tradition (McGoldrick & Giordano, 1996). Given demographic projections for the next 50 years, it is likely that inter-cultural marriages will increase substantially during that period (Frame, 2004).

A number of terms describe the various aspects and levels of inter-cultural marriages. Inter-cultural marriage is the overall term. Renalds (2011) and Cools (2006) define inter-cultural marriage simply as the marriage between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. According to them, this encompasses those marriages in which partners have different cultural backgrounds. More precisely, inter-cultural marriage is marriage in which communication between partners whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event.

Like any concept or phenomenon that involves cultural differences, the concepts of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and class inevitably define what constitute an individual's cultural background. Gaines, Buriel, Liu and Rios (1997) used the term "inter-ethnic" and "inter-racial" interchangeably. However, they acknowledge research which has pointed out that racial groups do not constitute ethnic groups per se (Crohn, 1995) but that race is part and parcel of ethnicity (Gaines, 1995b).

Furthermore, Gaines and Ickes (1997) noted that inter-religious and international relationships (seen as examples of inter-ethnic relationships) often involved individuals who are socially categorized as belonging to the same race. Inter-racial marriage occurs when both partners are from different races. The term race pertains to physical

characteristics, such as colour of skin, contour of head, shape of eyes, texture of hair, and the like. These physical differences frequently do influence communication. On the other hand, interracial marriage may not be inter-cultural. For instance, if a third generation Asian American whose family has been thoroughly assimilated into American culture is married to a white American, their marriage would be interracial, but hardly inter-cultural (Samovar & Porter, 1995).

Falicov (1986) used the term "inter-cultural marriage" to be synonymous with the terms "inter-marriage" and "cross-cultural" to "encompass those marriages between partners of diverse ethnicity, religion, social class, race or nationality". She went further to make distinctions between marriages involving these variables based on their demographic frequency. It is pointed out that inter-ethnic marriages are the most common, followed by inter-faith or inter-religious marriages. Inter-racial marriages are least frequent and inter-class marriages are the rarest (Leslie, 1982).

According to Merton (2000) and Smith (1996), inter-cultural marriage is the term used to describe marriages that take place between people who are from different racial or ethnic groups. Breger and Hill (1998) add that inter-cultural marriages are defined as marriages between people who come from two different cultural backgrounds. They noted that a marriage between a woman from China, whose culture emphasises the needs of the family over the needs of the individual, and a man from the United States, whose culture emphasises individual autonomy, would be an example of an inter-cultural marriage. Whereas relationships between people from different ethnic and cultural groups are becoming increasingly common, there are substantial increases in the number of individuals engaging in inter-racial or inter-cultural marriages (Chan & Wethington, 1998). However, even though the number and societal acceptance of

interracial marriages is growing, little has been written about these marriages, the reasons for their increase, or their strengths and liabilities.

Inter-cultural relationships have been defined and named in many and various terms throughout literature, most often as inter-cultural, inter-ethnic, dual-culture, mixed-marriages, and interracial relationships. In this study inter-cultural relationships have been defined as those in which the partners come from two separate cultures or ethnic groups.

2.2 Risk factors of inter-cultural relationships

All of the literature includes themes that inter-cultural relationships are at a higher risk of failure (e.g. McFadden & Moore, 2002; Fu, Tora & Kendall, 2001; Gaines & Liu, 2000). Failure encompasses such adverse outcomes as divorce, low marital satisfaction, and even domestic violence and child abduction if the relationship ends in divorce.

2.2.1 Divorce

A number of articles stated that inter-cultural couples have higher divorce rates than their same culture peers, but few cited actual research studies that proved this statement (e.g. Gaines & Agnew, 2003; Markoff, 1977). A 1990 research study by Sung looked at the out-marriage rates of Chinese Americans in New York City from 1972-1982. Research was gathered from the 1972 and 1982 census, marriage applications in the city, and personal interviews with 50couples in which one spouse was Chinese. Sung cited research done by Schewertfeger (1982), Tseng (1977) in Hawaii, Monahan (1970) in Iowa Barron (1972) in Los Angeles and Lind (1964) all of which found that Chinese who married outside of their race (culture) had higher divorce rates than those that married within. However, Sung's1990 study found no significant differences in divorce

rates of Chinese in New York who married outside of their culture and those who married within.

Sung (1990) stated the cosmopolitan, international atmosphere of New York City, and the changes in social atmosphere as possible factors affecting her findings as opposed to what other studies found, but calls for more research to solidify any of these results. The inconsistency of the literature on whether inter-cultural marriages do or do not have higher rates of divorce lend support for those calling for more research to be done and shared before inter-cultural marriages are automatically labeled as more likely to end in divorce than same culture marriages

2.2.2 Low marital satisfaction

Similar to divorce rates being higher among inter-cultural couples, literature also states that marital satisfaction in inter-cultural couples is lower than that of their same culture peers' marriages, again without research to back these statements.

A study in 2001 by Fu *et al*. in Hawaii compared marital satisfaction, measured by a 20 question scale including questions about marital adjustment, conflict in financial matters, support to one's marriage from community and extended family, discipline of children, mutual support, marital affection, and self-rated general marital happiness. Intra and inter-cultural married couples from a university and the small surrounding community were randomly sampled and sent the questionnaire. The sample consisted of 148 wives and 134 husbands, with 122 of these being matched couples, and 87 of them being inter-cultural couples. Wives in inter-cultural marriages did report lower levels of marital satisfaction than wives in intra-cultural marriages; husbands' satisfaction did not show a difference.

A 1999 study by Gurung and Duong and a separate 1998 study by Shibazaki and Brennan also investigated undergraduate students involved in relationships outside of their ethnic group (culture), through questionnaire surveys. Both of these studies were also done on college campuses with samples relatively equal in size to the Fu *et al*. study (Gurungand Duong had a sample size of 131 couples, with 73 being inter-cultural, and Shibazaki and Brennan had a sample of 100, 44 inter-cultural). Both Gurung and Duong and Shibazaki and Brennan found no differences in relationship satisfaction between respondents in ethnic heterosexual relationships and those in mixed ethnic heterosexual relationships.

As with the statement that divorce rates are higher, studies can be found to support either argument about marital satisfaction among inter-cultural couples: (1) that there is no difference, or (2) that it is lower than same culture couples. Again, the limited research available and the limitations of these studies call for more research to be done before this statement can truly be considered conclusive (Donovan, 2004).

2.2.3 Domestic Violence and Child Abduction

Some literature also cited concerns of higher rates for domestic violence and the risk of child abductions by the non-custodial parent in inter-cultural marriages that end in divorce (Augustin, 1986). Only two articles were found that dealt with these two issues, respectively.

Hegar and Greif (1994) studied parental abductions in the US through and found that of their sample of 371, inter-cultural divorced couples were significantly higher in proportion of than is represented in the general population. Inter-ethnic (defined as partners of different racial or ethnic backgrounds) were 12.7 % of the sample, as

opposed to 8.4% of the general population (Hegar & Greif, 1994). Inter-cultural couples (defined as one foreign born partner) made up 15.9 % of the sample, two and a half times the percentages of the US population born abroad (Hegar & Greif, 1994). They also found that of the abductors who had been violent with their spouse while married, inter-cultural pairings were represented in a higher proportion (66%) than same culture marriages (51%). However, this was not the focus of their research and thus would need to be researched more specifically to find these results conclusive.

Chin (1994) also documented a surge in domestic violence among inter-cultural couples as Chinese inter-marriage has increased. However, Chin's paper was written as a history and background rather than a research study, and was based on media accounts and reports from social service providers rather than researched numbers. In addition, this paper only looked at Chinese immigrants to the US, and not a general population of inter-cultural relationships.

2.3 Characteristics of People in Inter-cultural Relationships

A large portion of the literature available on inter-cultural couples has concentrated on the individual characteristics of these couples, and their motivations for marriage to partners outside of their ethnic and cultural groups (Donovan, 2004). One of the biggest complaints against this type of research has been the focus of outsider's perceptions, rather than the perception of the couples involved (Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998; Gaines & Ickes, 1997). But even outsiders' perspectives can positively affect the views represented about inter-cultural relationships in the literature (Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001).

This study viewed European American's perceptions of inter-cultural couples. A sample of 229 European American undergraduates at a large mid-Western university

were asked for their perceptions about the compatibility of different fictitious couples' descriptions provided. This study found that participants only perceived inter-cultural couples in which one partner was African American to be less compatible than same race couples, and that being in an inter-cultural couple themselves had no effect on participant's views of intra-cultural couples (Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001).

2.4 Personal Characteristics

According to Donovan (2004), literature and research on personal characteristics of those in inter-cultural unions is mixed. Much of the literature suggests that partners in inter-cultural marriages entered such a union to solve their own issues with identity and culture. Atkeson (1970) stated that many of the inter-cultural couples presenting for therapy are "characterized by overwhelming personality disturbance and interpersonal pathology" (p. 398). Other authors do not make that distinction of couples seeking clinical help, but generalise to all couples who inter-marry. Romano (1988) described those who marry inter-culturally as outcasts, rebels, and adventurists, and advised that couples considering such marriages should consider what stress in their lives is pushing them toward this type of marriage.

Some of these statements are backed by research, but generalisability is questionable. The 1995 study by Fong and Yung of interviews with 19 female and 24 male Japanese and Chinese Americans who married outside of their culture did show rejection of pieces of their own culture as a motivation for inter-cultural marriage. Sung (1990), who conducted interviews in New York City with 50 Chinese who had married out of their culture stated that those who inter-marry are unconventional, rebellious, and marrying for the second time around, but also flexible and resourceful in dealing with differences, and willing to make changes and accept the nontraditional.

Again, the limited number of studies and samples prevent these results from being considered conclusive of all people who marry inter-culturally. The mixed results and small amount of research highlight the difficulty of pinning down such a subjective factor as personality traits of a population as varied as inter-cultural couples. Another consideration is that many of these statements are based on research of Black/White couples in America, and then extrapolated to also describe inter-cultural couples. However, these original studies were done primarily in the 1960's and 1970's (Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001), when public perception of Black/White unions was very controversial. That the social environment at the time had some effect on the data is likely, especially since no studies done to replicate these claims were found after 1984.

2.5 Pre-marital Counseling and Culture

Premarital counseling (PMC) has become an accepted way to assist couples in creating a healthy marriage. The emphasis on PMC began following the rise of divorce rates, as a means of decreasing marital discord and the harmful effects that divorce can have on individuals, couples, and families. Some states have gone so far as to require some form of premarital counseling prior to a wedding (Murray, 2006; Brotherson & Duncan, 2004).

Despite the support for PMC within the clinical and political community, the research falls short of explaining the impact of culture for couples, such that culture has been shown to affect communication styles, customs, expectations, and roles within marriages (Halford, Markman, Kline, & Stanley, 2003; Holman & Linford, 2001).

The definition and understanding of culture has changed dramatically over the past decades. Historically, culture was minimised in American society (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). In recent years, culture has been viewed as a way of accepting a person and his or her worldview. One important consideration is that culture and cultural beliefs are fluid and can change over time (Laird, 1998). Additionally, it is important to consider the uniqueness of each culture.

Prior to marriage, each partner has certain expectations of marital roles, customs, communication styles, and problem solving strategies. One's family of origin provides a blueprint for each individual's expectations of marriage. When expectations go unmet, communication styles conflict, or role confusion occurs, leading to marital dissatisfaction. In order to alleviate marital dissatisfaction, PMC programmes have attempted to address many of the factors leading to dissatisfaction, yet these programmes fall short of directly addressing ways that culture may impact expectations, roles, and communication within marriage (Stutzman, 2011).

Within recent literature, there has been some attention given to providing PMC to those of different cultural backgrounds (Synder, Larson, Duncan, & Stahmann, 2007; Asai & Olson, 2004), but these studies fall short of addressing the clients' wants and needs of clients and also understanding how different cultural backgrounds impact the couple's beliefs and expectations about marriage. Translation of PMC materials has been one aspect of addressing culture within PMC (Asai & Olson, 2004; Carroll, Holman, Segura-Bartholomew, Bird, & Busby, 2001). Translation has increased premarital couples' accessibility to PMC materials. Although the translation of PMC assessment forms, workbooks, and interventions to different languages has increased couples' accessibility to PMC, research is needed on increasing the understanding of different cultures and how to assist couples from varying backgrounds.

2.6 Theories of Inter-cultural Marriage

It is important to emphasize from the beginning that each couple, regardless being mono-cultural, or inter-cultural relationship, need to deal with the variety of factors, which potentially may be detrimental to the marital satisfaction. Marriages are constructed differently and uniquely across each and every couple. However, conflicts are highly likely to occur, and act as potential obstacles (Falicov, 1986), and just like any other regular couple, inter-cultural marriages are no doubt faced with various sources of marital conflict (Romano, 2001).

Having said that, it is also crucial to signal, that inter-cultural couples are subjected to more complex dynamics, due to the additional factors affecting their satisfaction, which is linked to the very fact of coming from different cultural backgrounds. Research shows that the cultural differences in language and communication, stereotypes, child rearing, and financial issues, as well as social support, family, and religious beliefs are likely to affect the marital satisfaction of a couple(Sprenkle, Davis & Lebow, 2009; Herr, 2009). For instance a study conducted by Jabar (2006) on Filipino women who were married to a foreigner discovered that cultural differences played a pivotal role in marital conflict and dissatisfaction.

Within this literature review, prominence and analyses will be concentrated solely on the Ecosystems theory, the Dynamic goal theory and the Social exchange theory. The important issues in this study will be evaluated with the aid of these theories.

2.6.1 Ecosystems Theory

The eco-systems theory (also known as the ecological systems theory) by Bronfenbrenner gives an in depth analysis of how background and contextual factors could affect the quality of marriage for interracial couples (Wong, 2009). It speaks of multiple environments or levels that affect the quality of inter-culturally married couples. The micro level context (microsystem) explains factors that stem from within the couple itself. Some examples of factors that affect marital satisfaction in the micro level context are the couple's style of interacting, commitment, tolerance and respect.

The exosystem level explains how social settings, that partners do not experience first-hand, still have the ability to influence their own interactions. The macro level (macrosystem) context explains factors that stem from the environment around a couple, in other words, structural factors that put extra strain on marriages. Some examples are workplace demands and discrimination. The eco-systems theory shows how the internal processes within a couple, and the external factors in the environment surrounding them, interact to determine a couple's marital satisfaction.

Bronfenbrenner's eco-systems theory proposes that individuals exist within a variety of settings, beginning at the individual level and extending to outward levels such as family, workplace and society (Duerden & Witt, 2010). Brofenbrenner portrays development as a process that involves interactions both within and across these different contexts.

His theoretical position held that interpersonal relationships, inclusive of micro-processes in the parent–child relationship, either existed, nor functioned in a social vacuum, but were embedded in the larger socio-cultural structures of community, such as society, economics, and politics. Bronfenbrenner maintained that a person's development is hence the product of the interplay of many forces— cultural, social,

economic, political and psychological. This theory shows that the marital satisfaction can be affected by a broad spectrum of factors.

2.6.2 Dynamic Goal Theory

Marital goals (the goals people want to accomplish in their marriage) are one of the core elements in the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction (Li & Fung, 2011). The theory argues that the achievement of marital goals, especially the prioritized ones, is the most essential determinant of marital satisfaction. To be more specific, the four key elements of the dynamic goal theory of marital satisfaction are as follows.

First, people have multiple goals that they want to achieve in their marriage. Second, the priority of different marital goals is bound to dynamic changes across adulthood. Third, the achievement of prioritized marital goals in a certain developmental stage determines marital satisfaction. Fourth, other factors can also affect marital satisfaction by either changing the priority of different marital goals or by facilitating the achievement of the prioritized marital goals.

Personal goals are the consciously accessible and personally meaningful objectives people pursue in their daily life (Brunstein, Dangelmayer, & Schultheiss, 1996). Personal goals indicate what individuals desire to achieve in their current life situations and what they try to attain or avoid in different life domains. Both receiving and giving support for personal goals are systematically linked to spouses' marital satisfaction. In summary, the dynamic goal theory explains the marital satisfaction is determined by whether the marital goals, especially the prioritized ones during a certain developmental stage, are satisfied in marriage.

2.6.3 Social Exchange Theory

Another theory that may be useful to explain inter-cultural marriage phenomenon would be the exchange theory. There are various forms of the exchange theory. First is the marrying of a man with power (wealth, status, intelligence) to a beautiful young woman (Rosenfeld, 2005). This is supposed to represent a man's success in life and to have earned a beautiful woman with his power. Second would be that men who are skilled at work will marry women who are good housekeepers (Rosenfeld, 2005).

This form may not be very relevant today as in the past, because more women are going out to work. Third would be that people in ethnic groups of higher social standing and lower socioeconomic status would marry those in ethnic groups of lower social standing but having a high socioeconomic status (Rosenfeld, 2005). The suggestion is that the person of higher social position but lower socioeconomic status would stand to gain more rather than lose out from the marriage by marrying a wealthy person of a 'lower' ethnic group although their social status by being affected by associating with a person of that race.

The core of this theory is that people get married in order to benefit from the marriage, which is a kind of exchange. This exchange could explain why people marry those of a different race, in hopes of gaining something in return. This theory can be used to a certain extent to explain inter-cultural pairings, for example, a European man may marry an Asian woman because he may be looking for a traditionally oriented wife.

2.7 Challenges Facing Inter-cultural Couples

All couples face specific challenges in their marital relationships, however, couples with divergent cultural backgrounds and values may find that these issues are exacerbated. They may also find it difficult to understand and articulate their conflicts in ways that foster workable solutions. Moreover, because often there is a lack of

support from family and friends regarding inter-cultural marriage, these couples may find few resources for support to navigate their relationships (Killian, 2001).

In the views of Sullivan and Cottone (2006), not all differences cause problems for inter-cultural couples, and even those that easily can and often do, do not cause problems for everyone. Hence, making a definitive list of potential challenges is difficult. Again, not only is the personality mixture different for each couple, as it is in all marriages, but in inter-cultural marriages there are inexhaustible possibilities for multiple mixtures of cultural values, assumptions, and beliefs; religion; ethnicity; and educational and social background. However, there are enough areas that are continually cited as trouble spots by inter-cultural couples to make it possible to draw up a list of potential challenges (Romano, 2008).

As with the literature on personal characteristics of those who marry inter-culturally, what extra challenges these couples actually face are often uncited and non-research-backed statements. No research was found that specifically looked at these factors, although they were mentioned as side notes in a few studies. These factors seem to be such a given that no proof of their truth is needed, which raises the question of whether these beliefs were really ever based on truths, or rather products of historical societal views on inter-cultural couples (Dovan, 2004).

Romano (1988) lists some of the challenges of inter-cultural marriages as values, food and drink, sex, male-female roles, time, place of residence, politics, friends, finances, in-laws, social class, religion, raising children, language/ communication, dealing with stress, illness and suffering, and ethnocentrisms. Many of these stressors are common to all marriages, regardless of the culture of the partners. Additionally, Markoff (1977) addressed problems in communication, differences in values and the concept of

marriage, autonomous behavior and practices, prejudices and stereotypes, and the surrounding family. Lewandowski and Jackson (2001), Hegar and Greif (1994), Forna (1992) and Sung (1990) all listed stereotypes held by our society about them and their families as challenges. Gaines and Agnew (2003), Laird (2000), Biever *et al*. (1998), Pearlman (1996) and Bonacci *et al*. (1978), all raised the issues of cultural differences about lifestyle and family decisions. Killian (2002), Biever *et al*. (1998), Fernandez (1996), Oriti *et al*. (1996), Thompson and Jenal (1994), Forna (1992) and Atkeson (1970), listed personal experiences with oppression.

2.7.1 Values

The term "values" comes from the Latin, valere, meaning to be of worth (Black & Roberts, 2011). Values are about what matters in life, about what is viewed as right or wrong, true or false, important or not (Romano, 1997). Values tell us much about who we are, what we believe in, and how we will behave and evaluate behaviour. They are windows into a persons' belief systems and behaviours. They are culturally derived, so cultural difference brings with it value differences that shape and impact inter-cultural marital relationships. Trissler (2000) posits that values are taught in the home, often unconsciously, and reinforced by society, so we can say that values are generally culturally determined.

It can usually be said that when couples are in conflict, it is because they are operating from within two different value systems that are not in agreement. Couples with similar values generally have a greater chance of marital compatibility, no matter what their cultural differences may be. The problem is that many couples have similar values in some domains but not in others, which they may not realise until they are well into the marriage.

Values are the great intangible. People speak of the importance of having the same values in marriage but become tongue-tied when it comes to expressing just what their own values are. They often recognise what values or beliefs they hold dear only when one of these has been stepped on. A continuum of values exists between what are known as "high-context" and "low-context" societies (Hall, 1990). High-context cultures tend to be more rural than low-context cultures, and they are also more collectively focused (Perel, 2000).

The ancient Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato said that human beings desire real goods and apparent goods. Simplistically put, real goods are things we need; apparent goods are things we want. Needs are biological, inherent, and natural (we are born with them) and universal, but often unconscious. Wants are acquired (bred into us by environment and circumstances); they are individual and conscious (we generally know what we want).

People of different cultures, while having the same fundamental needs (eating, sleeping, procreating, etc.), may very well have not only quite different wants (social and psychological) but also quite different ways of perceiving their needs. Both are convinced of the "rightness" of their ways, because they are behaving instinctively, naturally, and properly according to their own cultural logic. There is a potential for conflict because what is natural for one is not always natural for the other. Their divergence is further complicated by the fact that many, if not most, of their behaviour patterns are based on unconscious values and cultural assumptions about how life should be lived. They have learned to breathe their cultural logic and to forget that they had learned it.

Psychologist Edward C. Stewart and co-author Milton J. Bennett in American Cultural Patterns offer a model for better understanding the nature of these assumptions and values and how they vary from culture to culture. The authors divide cultural values and assumptions into four components, which they then analyse from a cross-cultural perspective: (1) form of activity, (2) form of relations to others, (3) perception of the world, and (4) perception of the self.

Under "form of activity" they compare the American orientation toward "doing" (working as an active way of forming the future, making and being responsible for one's own decisions, etc.) with the orientation of other cultures in which "being" is the predominant value (living for and making the most of, or enjoying, the present), and with still others, which are oriented toward "being-in-becoming" or self-growth.

In "form of relations to others" they evaluate the American orientation toward interpersonal equality (with easily established, informal, but relatively impermanent relationships) with the status-conscious, formal, longer-lasting, and involved relationships common to many other cultures.

Sepänmaa (2016) and Romano (2008) in their studies stated that for "perception of the world" they consider the ways different cultures consider humankind's relationship to nature (Americans see humans as separate from nature, while many other cultures see humans as an integral part of it) and show how they deal with the world around them (exploiting it for their own needs versus respecting or fearing it as a force beyond human control). And finally, under "perception of the self" they compare the manner in which people in different societies conceive of themselves (as separate individuals or as part of a tightly knit group) and how that affects the way they behave (emphasising a reliance on self-motivation or acting in terms of obligation toward a group). For the

inter-cultural couple this means that there may be complex differences in their view of the world or vision of life behind many of the issues causing misunderstandings in their marriage, made all the more complex because those values are obscure.

Most spouses do not know much about their own cultural value orientation (as they are just doing what comes naturally), much less that of their partner's. They just know when something is not working right or does not make sense, and they automatically react defensively when their sense of rightness is attacked (Romano, 2008; LeBaron, 2003).

Romano (2008) continued by stating not all creatures adheres to the dominant values of their culture. Within each group are subgroups that may veer from, or actually oppose, the mainstream values. There may be inter-cultural spouses whose personal values do not coincide with the predominant cultural values of their society and who often identify more with aspects of those of their spouse's culture (which is possibly what attracted them to one another in the first place). Generally, people who enter into an inter-cultural marriage have already distanced themselves somewhat from a strict adherence to many of the predominant values of their own society (Popova, 2008). But, at the same time, their own culture's values are familiar territory for them, and to a certain degree they are who they are because of their society's value orientation. Whether they personally accept all of those values or not, they were shaped by a society that espoused them.

At the other end of the spectrum are couples from cultures so widely divergent in the way right and wrong and good and bad are perceived that it is impossible for those who strictly adhere to their cultural tenets to coexist peaceably under the same roof. The key word here is strictly (Romano, 2008).

Similarity in values can help couples overcome differences in age, race, ethnicity, and religion (Schwartz & Scott, 1997). Rickey, a Dutch woman married to a Ghanaian who was different from her in all of these respects, says that because they shared the same fundamental values, they had a happy marriage that allowed each to fulfill their own potential. "The way we look at the world is the same. We respect the other's right to differ and to live according to individual principles. Beneath everything else we share the belief that everyone—black, white, male, female, atheist, religious—has the right to have the same opportunities in life" (Romano, 2008).

However, when conflicting values outweigh similarities, both spouses have to be ready to talk about and explore the meaning and depth of these differences, which is an especially difficult task for people from cultures that put little value on words for communication, but important for those from more verbal cultures. With honest, controlled, mutually respectful, and timely communication-not waiting until they are in the middle of a fight to unveil their feelings-each can learn to work at identifying where different and possibly contrasting values are at work. In most cases sorting this out is a lifetime task, but with practice it usually gets easier as couples become more skilled at it (Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

When the couple's conflicting values are deeply ingrained or completely unconscious, or when one or both of the partners is inflexible (will not admit to the existence of another value system), the marriage will be threatened. For it is only by understanding and being able to allow for one another's uniqueness, even regarding deeply held convictions about how life should be lived, that a married couple can continue to live in harmony (Caroll, 1998).

2.7.2 Gender roles or cultural stereotype

Just like a regular marriage, both spouses in an inter-cultural relationship have their specific roles to play, and they may vary across cultures. Cultural stereotypes often serve as a basis of what one's roles should be, leading to misunderstandings due to these distorted perceptions. When one creates expectations for others' behaviour and character based on the knowledge structure, a stereotype is formed. The sources of stereotypes may come from ideas portrayed by mass media that represent a particular culture or people as having the same type of behaviour and characteristics. Taweekuakulkit (2005) provided an example that the North Americans' views of Southeast Asian women as quiet, submissive, uncomplaining, and eager to serve, because of the reinforcement by their mass media, which often represent them as so.

However, these stereotypes may only be partially true, or even distorted, as many Asian women, especially younger Asian women tend to be an ill-fit for this stereotype. In fact, Coupland, Giles, and Wiemann (1991) found that many Asian women living in the United States of America (U.S.A.) may appear to be quiet, not because of their culture, but because they are afraid to make mistakes when communicating in a second language.

In even the most progressive societies, true equality between the sexes is more a goal than a reality. As pointed out by Condon and Yousef (1975), it is the form of male superiority that differs from culture to culture. In some societies, primarily non-Western ones, ". . . the woman's role is to serve the man—including, often, doing hard physical labour, deferring to his judgments, and socially subordinating herself in such ways as walking behind him and eating after he has eaten".

Romano (2008) opines that Western societies, on the other hand, male dominance takes a more subtle form: the woman is afforded certain courtesies (which designate her as

the weaker sex), and certain customs are followed that demonstrate the man's authority. These have traditionally been indicated by who holds the door, pays the restaurant check, buys the house, or takes the other's name in marriage. In fact, it is many of these customs that have been targeted with some success by feminists in their battle for equality (and defended by women who are happy with the status quo).In either case there are many activities that are limited to men and others that are the exclusive province of women, but the specific activities vary considerably from culture to culture.

All cultures have gender-based role expectations for men and women. Although those roles have been called into question over the past thirty years (Lott, 1994; Ortner & Whitehead, 1981; Ryan, 1979), especially in western cultures, nevertheless, they still impact couples' relationships. Gender issues become especially complicated when the couples' cultural differences are great and when each partner has strong and contradictory beliefs about appropriate gender roles. Notable conflicts arise when the woman has an egalitarian view of marriage and her husband a male-dominated one. The challenges are increased as well if the couple resides in a country whose gender role expectations are well-defined and strict (Romano, 1997).

Today, however, dual-career couples are very common in many countries and new kinds of compromises have to be established. When two people from cultures that view these roles differently marry and attempt to build a familial structure, the differences may become a major issue. This is especially true if (1) the societies are culturally far apart, (2) one or both of the spouses adheres strictly to his or her society's interpretation of gender roles, (3) the man comes from a male-dominant culture and the woman from an egalitarian one, and (4) the couple lives in the country with the stricter male-female role delineation (especially if the woman is the foreigner).

If one of the partners is forced to adhere to a severely different role delineation from the one that was customary at home, there may be problems, and the wider the gap between the partners' cultures, the more severe those problems may be. Mismatched role expectations are frequent occurrences that couples need to face and to clarify.

Of course, today more and more partners are well traveled and expect their spouse's culture to be different (Perry, 1999). Furthermore, not every person adheres to his or her own culture's beliefs and behaviors. Many also do not like the way their own society has assigned gender roles. Some women might want to escape the responsibilities of their own culture and be willing to sacrifice some of their freedom in exchange for being taken care of. Some might prefer a culture in which the role of wife and mother is glorified and clear-cut in regard to duties and rights.

Sometimes cultures seem more similar than they really are, and so the couples are truly unprepared for the subtle differences, especially in role definition. Some unexpectedly difficult combinations are those between English and Americans, Danes and Swedes, Filipinos and Indonesians, and Japanese and Koreans, because these cultures, which appear similar on the surface, are really much more diverse than either partner imagines (Ma, 1996).

The male-female role issue is tied up with subtle and often intangible ideas regarding the meaning of marriage and intimacy; the necessity of respect, integrity, and mutual support; and questions of power. These are the underlying issues that too often are not discussed but must be sorted out. If they are not, both spouses (whose expectations have not been understood and met) can feel betrayed, misunderstood, cheated, or rejected; ultimately, either or both may feel like a failure for not being able to live up to the other's ideals (Condon & Yousef,1975).

2.7.3 Financial issues

Another factor affecting couple dynamics in inter-cultural couples is the different perspectives in handling financial issues. Needless to say, money is often the main cause of concern to couples from an early stage of forming a partnership through the separation of such bonds through divorce (Skowroński, Tay, Wan, Cherie, Fernandez & Waszyńska, 2014).

Disagreements about finances are a hallmark of marital conflict. Because money is considered a symbol of power and control, often in a couple relationship it becomes the purveyor of those issues. When partners hail from culturally different families, frequently they have diverse beliefs about who should make the money, who should spend it and under what circumstances. In addition, gender role expectations also come into play here. For example, in some Latino cultures, women are not expected to work outside the home. Men earn the money and expect to make most decisions in the family (Romano, 1997; Garcia-Preto, 1996). Jabar (2006) found that marital problems arose when Filipino women were unable to control their spending. Additionally, these Filipino wives complained that their husbands were always taking charge of the finances, and not consulting them first before making the final decisions.

In addition, Woelz-Stirling, Manderson, Kelaher, and Gordon (2000) found the disagreements between Filipino women married to Australian men due to financial issues. Filipinos usually possess economic independence and equal partnership in money matters. On the other hand, Australian men often make the decisions and sometimes refuse to let their wives work as they are often the main breadwinners in their culture. Olson and DeFrain (2000) showed that 37% of all inter-culturally married

couples indicated that the main problem in their marriage was related to monetary issues.

Uncontrolled spending, the purchase of items considered too "luxurious," or with-holding money as a means are control are ways that finances surface as indicators of martial difficulty. Family members' perceived capacity to be involved in decision making about money, significantly affects their perceptions about social power, relative worth, and feelings of being valued in the family. All these problems can be seen to be further magnified especially so in inter-cultural marriages especially due to the difference in perceptions and culture differences (Skowroński *et al*., 2014).

2.7.4 Time

There are different times all over the world. Anyone who has traveled over time zones has experienced jet lag when one's body is not on the same time as the clock on the street corner. Many are vaguely aware that in different parts of the world the concept, that is, the meaning and value of time, varies.

The question "How late is late?" is not answered the same way from culture to culture, nor is the notion of being on time assigned equal importance. Some countries (the United States, for instance) are concerned with punctuality, with saving time, because they are countries based on future growth, and every moment counts toward building that future. Other countries (Latin American or Arab, for example) place more importance on using time than being on time; they believe in making the most of each moment by fully living it, because as a rule they are more interested in the quality of present life than in the future.

Although no culture is purely present-, past-, or future-oriented, the importance each places on temporal frames of reference varies, and, as a result, people in different parts of the world move at different paces. In Latin American and Arab countries they are generally more relaxed and unhurried, engaging in time-consuming courtesies and conversations. To them, interpersonal activities are more important than meeting the demands of an external timekeeper. On the other hand, in the United States the emphasis is on productivity; time must be managed efficiently. People are in a hurry, often overlooking the interpersonal aspects of life.

Tomorrow means specifically the day after today in English but becomes mañana in Spanish and Bukra in Arabic, both of which refer to a less defined time in the future. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, in his studies on the cultural nature of time, has found that different cultures move to various rhythmic patterns, and so do individuals. Individual rhythm is inherent, that is, it "begins in the center of the self." Each person has his or her own sense of time and of pace and lives accordingly. But each individual has also been trained to conform to certain cultural rhythms from the moment of birth. Each culture has been choreographed in its own way, with its own beat, tempo and rhythm. Thus, while personality is undoubtedly a factor in interpersonal synchrony, culture is also a powerful determinant. Though not every individual is in sync with his or her own culture, people generally gauge themselves according to a central time clock.

Frequently, people who marry outside their cultural group are incompatible with their own culture and more attuned to the rhythms of another—often that of the spouse, which might partially account for the attraction between the two. For example, an American who marries Japanese might be someone who, while admiring progress, deplores the American habit of continuously tearing down the old to make way for the

new or its obsession with youth, and feels more attuned to a culture that venerates its elders and values its traditions more strongly.

But, generally speaking, inter-cultural spouses are products of their own culture's time clock, which is frequently different from that of their partner's. They may find that their dissimilar, unconscious rhythms and time patterns are being violated when they set up house together and react emotionally to situations.

When these couples first meet, they are usually aware of such differences, but as they fall in love, the differences are temporarily suspended and each feels at one with the other. Only later, in the settling-in phase, do they tend to return to their original rhythms and occasionally find that each is moving to a different drummer. Perhaps one is always late, or the other is always in a hurry, or one does not want to take the time for the little formal rituals that the other cannot live without.

The amount of time devoted to certain activities or pursuits can also vary from culture to culture. Although in time couples do adapt to one another's rhythm or learn philosophically to allow for it, a spouse from one culture can be slowed down only so much and a spouse from the other speeded up just so much before the strain shows (Naylor, 1996).

2.7.5 Sexuality

Romano (2008) highlights that in every sexual relationship a couple takes four sets of grandparents to bed with them. What this means is that each partner is the product of sex education passed down from what the grandparents taught the parents, and each brings a version of (or reaction to) their mores, credos, and expectations into his or her own marriage- whether consciously or not. In any case, this is a startling image, and if

xlviii

we think of it in terms of inter-cultural marriage, with the vast range of possible different beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes vying for position under one blanket, we see why sex can become a real issue.

Like money, sex is often a tool by which one partner wields power and control over the other. Demanding, nonreciprocal, sex can be demeaning and abusive. Withholding sex can be a means of distancing from and punishing the partner. When couples marry inter-culturally, often one of the realities they least expect is the emergence of sexual problems (Romano, 1997). This difficulty is compounded because each culture has its own set of beliefs and taboos regarding various sexual practices. Menstruation, masturbation, circumcision, virginity, fidelity, public display of affection, hygiene, premarital intercourse, contraception, and homosexuality are just a few of the many sexual issues that can drive a wedge in an inter-cultural couple's relationship (Browmiller, 2013).

Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy (2016) noted that one reason sex can be a problem in inter-cultural marriage is that many, especially young, inexperienced people, do not expect it to be. They added that sex and communication are two of the least problematic premarital issues in mono-cultural as well as bicultural relationships. But even fairly sophisticated people, who feel freer to discuss sex openly, often give contradictory messages about the power and the pleasure as well as sometimes the shame they associate with sexuality.

Many people are prepared for differences in ways of eating, dressing, or talking, but they assume that sex is sex—which, of course, it is, with an infinite variety in its expression (Pigford, 2000). So perhaps out of primness, embarrassment, or reticence of any kind, they do not find out about possible differences in beliefs, behaviors, and

expectations that will affect them once they are married. Often they do not openly discuss their needs and wants—and have perhaps not truly even defined them.

In certain cultures, views about sexually-related topics are quite diverse. In Russia, for example, abortion is considered a legitimate means of birth control (Caron, 1998). In Greece, women often reject female contraceptive methods (Georges, 1996). In Sweden, there is a permissive attitude toward sexuality, and families, schools, and medical personnel are supportive of sex education (Caron, 1998).

One example of the impact of diverse cultural values on sexuality is the fact that in some cultures, especially Latino ones, the bond of marriage and the assumption of husband and wife roles radically alter the couple's sexual relationship (Frame, 2004). While sex may be enjoyed with great abandon prior to marriage, however, after marriage, the wife is expected to satisfy her husband's sexual needs and desires. He, on the other hand, is free to engage in sexual dalliances with other women (Garcia-Preto, 1996). Such an abrupt change in behaviour may be both a surprise and source of discord for the couple.

Romano (2008) opines that even for couples from societies that share the belief that romantic love is an important ingredient for marriage, there may be quite different ways of expressing that love. This may include how sex is used to give or deny love, how lustily it is enjoyed, or how openly and honestly it is discussed. In Romano's study on Deirdre, for example, she could never quite shake loose many of her Irish-Catholic in-grained inhibitions and beliefs that some sexual practices were sinful, although she thought she had put these ideas far behind her when she married Mario. He felt she had not been totally honest about how she felt; she had not known how to confront delicate feelings. No one in her family had taught her to speak openly and honestly about "such

things." Like many couples they had failed to tackle the intimate topics, avoiding rather than confronting any discussion of their sexual needs, preferences and fears.

Many couples manage to work out their culturally based sexual differences with few problems because of their own ethno-sensitivity and open communication. It helps if they happen to be of the same social and educational backgrounds, the same generation and religion, and with basically the same moral values, even if different cultures (Groff & Smoker, 2002). Many believe that sex should be the least of their cultural problems, but often just the opposite is true. Much depends on how culturally different the two people are, how grounded they are in their culture or religious dictates regarding sex, how much importance they themselves attach to sex in their relationship, and how openly and honestly they can communicate about it and work to resolve conflict (Romano, 2008).

2.7.6 Religion

Religion is the bearer of numerous values and has a profound impact on what people think and how they behave. In fact, in some religions, such as Islam, the interrelationship between religion and culture is hard to unravel. Couples in interfaith marriages have some predictable patterns of responding to religious difference. In some cases, one partner converts to the other's religion. In other cases partners practice their own religion independently and attempt not to impose their beliefs on each other. When either of these two approaches fails or does not seem feasible, the couple may move away from their religions and adopt a third, completely different religion that meets

both partners' needs. Sometimes, however, the couple abandons formal religion altogether (Romano, 1997). Religion is such a powerful force among a couple that it may influence other aspects of family life such as holiday traditions, food, gender roles, sexuality, and child-rearing. Indeed, religious issues are often paramount with the arrival of children (Frame, 2004).

In a study by Donovan (2004), it was found that having a partner of the same faith was an important factor in the building of their relationship and it also provided a sense of security for them. However should their religion both be very different from the other, inter-cultural couples will respond to such differences in various ways, such as practicing their own religion independently without forcing one's own religion on one's spouse, or converting to one's spouse's religion, adopting a third religion altogether, or keeping away formal religions. Such negotiation and compromising within an inter-cultural couple is not likely to affect their marital satisfaction adversely in the long run.

2.7.7 Child-Upbringing

With the arrival of an inter-cultural couple's first child, issues like religion and parenting style to raise a child often pose as a matter that requires careful consideration and needs to be negotiated; otherwise problems and disagreements may arise when a couple is unable to decide on which belief system should they pass on to their children. The critical concerns of child rearing include disciplinary methods which might differ for the two spouses due to their respective philosophy, values and beliefs (Perel, 2000).

In an inter-cultural family, couples are often faced with the everyday dilemmas of how to raise their child. For example, Jabar (2006) stated that it is common for Filipinos to

punish their children, unlike their White spouses. Lee (2005) discovered that Koreans often punished their children if they do not succeed in their academics. However, their Westerner spouses are very relaxed towards their children, and this upsets their spouses. Koreans also expressed that their children would be confused if their parents had different punishment policies. Parenting preference is also an issue; White spouses of Filipino wives disagree with their belief of preferring their infant to sleep in the same room with them.

Most individuals rely on the parenting styles they experienced themselves as children and these approaches may be quite different and conflicting (Perel, 2000). The degree to which one parent is authoritarian and the other more permissive may be born of their culture's view of children and child-upbringing practices.

Every culture has a pattern for raising children, and what is adaptive in one culture can be seen as maladaptive in another. For example, in general terms the Asian culture is more collectivistic one thus individuals are taught to work closely within the groups. Therefore, encouragement of independence would be seen as poor parenting in an Asian society.

In addition to that Malaysian parents represent a collectivistic culture, therefore; they tend to use an authoritarian parenting approach to their children to promote optimal development. Authoritarian parents are highly controlling, and they deal with disobedient children by forceful punishment. They are less inclined to praise, reward, and show affection. In this particular culture, authoritarian parenting does not reflect a seemingly negative style of parenting. Contrary to that, the authoritarian parenting style in the individualistic society is more likely to be labelled as a negative style as it is inconsistent with its culture's values. Therefore, in an inter-cultural marriage, having

two separate parenting styles can also cause marital disagreements as to which style should be promoted (Skowroński, Tay, Wan, Cherie, Fernandez & Waszyńska, 2014).

2.7.8 Social class, societal views and support

The impact of class on couple relationships often is problematic in mono-cultural as well as inter-cultural relationships. Because a significant aspect of daily life involves the way people move about within a socioeconomic setting, the impact of social class can be difficult for many couples. One of the reasons that some inter-cultural couples are surprised by the challenges of class differences is because they may not have had enough experience with the other's culture to be able to assess their partner's social status (Romano, 1997). In addition, some attributes of social class in one culture may not transfer to the same social class in another culture.

Societal attitudes exist on a spectrum from the curiosity to prejudice. Society often perceives inter-cultural couples as non-conventional. Sometimes, couples do not want to be judged or be given judgmental looks by the public; therefore they do not appear to be together. Inter-cultural couples are often worried about public harassment (Skowroński *et al*., 2014).

La Taillade (1999) stated that racial discrimination is a stressor to an inter-cultural relationship, as it impacts the number of negative spousal interactions and the general marital satisfaction. In a study of Black and White interracial couples by Killian (2001), 80% of the participants felt both personal pain and frustration from the seemingly negative reactions of the public to their relationship. This emotional hurt was the representation of both racism and intolerance in the society. Karis (2003), Wieling (2003) and Faulkner (1983) also suggest that individuals in society may intervene in an

interracial relationship by divulging and making obvious their attitudes on interracial relationships when they interact with these couples.

According to Collins (2004), although the tolerance has risen, many Black-White couples experience discrimination acts from members of their own race; White Americans perceive mixed couples to be "too Black" and African Americans view them to be "not Black enough". Discrimination for Black-White couples is also found in the workplace. For example, problems associated with getting a job once the race of their spouse is made known, exist. Also, individuals, who have been working for a long period, face discrimination as well, such as getting passed up for promotions, racially insensitive humour, and being left out of social events because of the race of the spouse. These reasons are likely to give rise to detrimental feelings or resentment within their relationship and ultimately causing poorer marital satisfaction between them.

Discrimination can also affect marital satisfaction by influencing the interaction patterns, and according to Foeman and Nance (2002), Black partners often feel like their White partners are not aware of the level of discrimination they face in society, and thus they are the ones who have to point out the cases of discrimination and to take a lonesome stand. This can lead to a high amount of strain on the Black partner.

Social support is a substantial factor in predicting marital satisfaction. Shute and Spitzberg (2003) found that as the amount of social support a couple receives increases, the levels of marital satisfaction experienced by inter-cultural couples also tend to increase. Social support is defined as the verbal and nonverbal communication between the individuals receiving the support and the individuals that are giving the support, such as family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours who have nothing against the marriage. Social support decreases anxiety and stress of inter-cultural marriage, and it

also helps the couple to develop a sense of perceived control in these times of stress. Inter-cultural couples often have lesser mutual social network due to their differential backgrounds. Park and Adelman (1983) found that a lack of mutual social networks is a prediction of probable marriage dissolution in inter-cultural couples. Therefore, friends and family should be needed as a common ground for interaction and support.

2.7.9 Family members

According to Skowroński *et al.* (2014), parents usually have negative connotations attached to the inter-cultural marriage, especially if it involves their own children. The couples' family often opposes the relationship and even after the couple got married; it is a common sight for most of the family members to skip the wedding ceremony. Initially, parents either ignore their children's inter-cultural relationship or accept it as a noncommittal one. In the latter scenario, when they come to the realisation of their children's commitment, they usually stop their support.

Traditional parents are most likely to show disappointments and disagreements with their children (Homer, Notman & Nadelson, 2003). Some parents fear of losing contact with their children, thus; they have no choice, but to accept the relationship. Usually, the parents would eventually approve the marriage, and cut-offs are highly unlikely. Therefore, a good relationship with both sides of the family will serve as a very important social capital and foundation for how a couple deals with issues at home. At first, most families usually do not display accepting attitudes towards inter-cultural marriage. However, after getting to know the spouse on a more personal level, acceptance will occur gradually, especially after the birth of a child. In the worst case scenario, some couples may even sever their family ties.

Fu and Heaton (2000) found that even after the acceptance stage, it is hard for each of the partners to understand each other's families. This is so especially when one of the spouses moves to their partner's country, thus not only facing difficulties adjusting to the move, but also adjusting to the behaviours of the partner's family. Wives would often face resentment by their husband's families due to his decision to marry outside his ethnic group. They also undergo challenges of being ill-treated by her in-laws. Furthermore, marital tension might occur if the partner in their home country is unaware of his or her spouse's isolation as an out-group in a foreign country. They also tend to experience cultural losses in terms of language, leisure, food, etc.

The evidence of this kind of phenomena is reported in a study by Faulkner and Kich (1983) where they found that White spouses in interracial relationships were significantly much more likely, in comparison to Black spouses, to experience a negative reaction regarding their relationship from their families. It is, however, the Black partner in a Black-White interracial marriage that usually faces the greatest brunt of racial discrimination.

When the extended family views the partner as an outsider, marital well-being will be negatively affected (Falci, 1997). This is because healthy boundaries between the couples' needs and the needs of the family must be established as it decreases the level of marital disagreements. Therefore, there must be a balance of needs between the individual, the couple, the nuclear and extended family.

2.7.10 Language

In addition to the obvious challenges that occur when partners come from cultures where they speak different languages, more subtle communication problems may be related to non-verbals such as tone of voice, eye contact, and gesturing. A common

assumption among couples who speak the same language is that their own style is universal, obvious and clear (Romano, 1997). In fact, one of the pitfalls in couple communication is the belief that one's partner can be both a mind-reader and accurate interpreter of what is said. Researchers have found that although people may spend 50–80% of their time listening, they hear only half of what is said, understand about one fourth of what they hear and remember less of that (Romano, 1997). Renalds (2011) found that the communication is a key factor in maintaining marital satisfaction in inter-cultural relationships, whereby a lack of good communication with spouses often yields less contentment and happiness in the process.

Although many inter-cultural couples usually come from different backgrounds and have different mother tongue languages, it appears that the basis of communication is to have a mutual language as a mode of interaction. Taweekuakulkit (2005) noted that the communication barriers may occur if inter-cultural married couples do not have an agreement on a shared common language to use. Even when a mutual language is being used, potential barriers are very likely to come in their way as differences of communication behaviours may impact perception of criticism, changes in emotional state, and overall relationship satisfaction of mixed couples to a certain extent.

According to Sechrest, Fay and Zaidi (1972), there are five different language problems that pose as potential obstacles to be encountered by inter- cultural couples. Firstly, an inter-cultural couple's vocabulary of their native language might differ due to their differences in background. An example would be that Americans may use many different words such as ebony, raven, inky, sable, coal black, and jet black to describe the shade of "black". However, on the other hand, one's Thai partner only uses one word to express "black". Hence, it is clear that problems in understanding can arise

between members of different cultures as they may have different expectations as to what distinctions they should be able to express using their vocabularies.

The next potential barrier would be idiomatic equivalence, whereby in every language there are idioms with the specific meaning that might not be familiar to people who do not use the language as a mother tongue. This is seen by Shade (1982) who observed that African Americans and Whites process and interpret messages differently, sharing different meanings of words or actions and having different rules for effective or appropriate behaviour. An example given in an American-Thai context, "the old man kicked the bucket" is understood by the Americans that the aged man died, whereas it could be interpreted by the Thais as that the aged man still is full of energy to have a sexual affair with a young woman.

Thirdly, grammatical syntactical equivalency is a barrier in language communication between people with different native languages. Nouns, verbs or adjectives differ in their position in a sentence, depending on the language addressed (e.g. "book a place" and "place a book"). Furthermore, a study whereby US and Canadian English speakers were surveyed, "Spray paint your car at our workshop" was being interpreted as asking the owner to spray paint on his or her own vehicle, whereas the Singapore English speakers interpreted it as going to the workshop to have his or her cars prayed by the workers there (Fu & Heaton, 2000). This signifies that, the differences in grammatical syntax are bound to cause misunderstanding during communication.

An inter-cultural couple's difference in their language experiences might also pose as a barrier. Cultural differences lead to differential experiences with the same language for an inter-cultural couple. Sometimes, an object or experience may not be represented in different cultures and languages, thus making it difficult to translate words that can

correctly get the idea across. For example, there is a specific meaning of "freedom" to North Americans due to their history, which is viewed as the power to say, do, think and write as one desires to. On the other side, the Thais tend to take "freedom", as that the country is freed of colonization.

Lee (2005) found that English Monolinguals (EMs) tend to be irritated that their Korean-English Bilinguals (KEB) spouses do not understand a Westernized sense of humour; the Koreans seem to have different ideas, of what is meant to be funny and what is meant to be serious.

Furthermore, Lee (2005) also found that KEBs reported that they often lose arguments with their English native speaking spouse. They claimed that the one who had more power in their relationship was the one with the linguistic "upper hand". KEBs also feel frustrated with their linguistic inadequacy, but they did not suggest that their EM spouses should learn Korean, thus the obvious language choice in the household is English.

Additionally, Lee (2005) found that some of the KEB participants also feel frustrated whenever their ideas and content of their arguments are perfectly good, but they do not win the argument because they are unable to express these ideas in perfect English. However, EMs also suffers from language-related frustration. EMs find themselves losing patience with their spouses' imperfect English and also finding that they repeat the same linguistic mistakes again after repeatedly correcting them. On the other hand, KEBs are able to "vent" in Korean which gives them a sense of privacy. Their EM spouses are not emotionally affected by those hurtful comments as they do not understand Korean although they are aware that those negative and hurtful comments are about them. Hence, they can simply not listen to them.

Those who speak both Korean and English also tend to experience un- fairness because they often get upset over their imperfect language skills, but their EM spouses will not. For instance, EMs will correct their spouses English during an argument. KEBs are also insecure about their inability to speak English fluently. This is especially so when EM spouses make this inadequacy more obvious, such as correcting their English in front of their friends. This will then lead the KEBs to 'lose face' which should be avoided for Koreans due to their cultural belief.

In another study, Jabar (2006) found that Filipino women on average have lower education level as compared to their spouses; thus not being able to communicate in English very well. The wives were unable to translate their native language to English or to a language that their husbands could comprehend. These language differences aggravated marital disagreements when their husbands misunderstood what their wives were trying to say. The language problem is not only a communication problem for inter-cultural couples, but also a problem on how they raise their children. In Lee's study (2005), some EMs complained that their KEB spouses rarely had conversations with their children but also complained about the use of imperfect English around them.

English is a widely used language all over the world and might be a mutual language for many inter-cultural couples. Chang (2008) stated that cultural backgrounds often impact one's accent in adaptation to a particular environment, as well as other frequently used languages. Barron (1951) and Biesanz (1950) discovered that in an inter-cultural marriage, learning how to speak the native language of the spouse tends to lead to a stable and happy marriage. Apart from the concerns of speaking the language itself, patterns of expressing oneself influence communications between couples. The patterns of communication are learnt since childhood and continue throughout adulthood. Disagreements between couples occur due to miscommunication

as the partners tend to send and interpret messages based on their own cultural codes for communication

2.7.11 Food

Some wise person once said that compatibility in inter-cultural marriage has as much to do with garlic as with values (Romano, 2008). In nearly all cultures, food is used to celebrate or ritualize life events—to mark births, deaths, weddings. It is the main part of many ceremonies and rituals, both lay and religious, but it is also a pillar of daily life. Romano adds that, food is what keeps body and soul together and as such, can be one of the stickiest of the cultural issues.

Cookbooks from around the world show the diversity of taste, ingredients, and methods of preparing food. Etiquette books point out table manners and culinary protocol. Food brings out the characteristics of a people in many other ways: it shows something of the male-female relationship and roles, of the importance of family and religion, and of the lifestyle and values of a people.

In a study by Anderson (2014), it was evident that Arabs enforce unity around the dinner table; the Irish drink at wakes, the Japanese express Zen aesthetics through ritual tea ceremonies, and the stereotypical Jewish son shows love for his mother in proportion to his appetite. Also in Italy a woman's femininity has traditionally been judged according to how much time she spends making an art out of cooking the daily meal. Again, in certain Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries, the men eat alone and the women cook, or supervise the cooking, and eat later. In others, where the women must not go out alone, the husband buys the food and the women prepare the meal with what he chooses. In Tunisia, where mealtimes are flexible and punctuality not important, the foods are such that they can be prepared ahead and re-heated. In Morocco

large divans surround tables that are always open to the unexpected guest, who may not only arrive unannounced but also stay for the night. In America frozen dinners are popped into the oven or microwave, and fast food and take out free the cook and are emblematic of the fast-paced, fragmented lifestyle of Americans (Gust, 2011).

Williams-Forson and Counihan (2013) opine that inter-cultural couple has to work out house rules that satisfy them both, not only in terms of what is served but also how it is prepared and served and by whom, and who cleans up. These seemingly minor issues often become bones of contention between the spouses precisely because they contain so many underlying meanings and spring from so many un-conscious sources. Romano (2008) suggests that basically, the food issue includes the following categories:

1. What Is Eaten

Some people are open to experimentation while others are tied psychologically to certain tastes. Still others may not be able to digest the ethnic fare of the partner or may even be allergic to it. More often the couple's food problems are subtle ones, based on what each one is used to and prefers in his or her home: a meal is not a meal without borscht, without rice, without fresh bread, without wine, without meat and potatoes, and so on (Romano, 2008).

Longing for one's own foods may play a powerful psychological role in marriage, especially in the lives of spouses who have left their home-lands to live in their partner's country (Romano, 2008). The American may wish for a hamburger and fries to soothe a bout of homesickness; the British, a traditional pudding at Christmas; the Vietnamese, a meal of rice and ginger chicken shared with friends and relatives.

Occasionally the disdain one partner feels for the food (or the manner of preparing or eating it) of the other becomes a silent reproach. Sometimes the spouse's inability to duplicate the fare of the other is a cause for criticism or brings on feelings of inadequacy in the cook. "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach" goes the old adage, and usually the stomach wants the kind of food it is used to. Love is shown in a lot of ways, but in many cultures love and caring are judged by the time and effort put into preparing the repast. In others, food preparation is much less significant as an indicator of love and devotion. The important thing is to understand and empathise with the partner's feelings about it (Williams-Forson & Counihan, 2013).

2. When The Meal Is Served

For many inter-cultural couples mealtime is an issue (Alupoaicei, 2009). This is because some of them cannot accustom their stomachs to new schedules: one may simply not be hungry at noon or the other may not be able to eat a big meal at night. Some want to eat at the same time every day, while others prefer to eat when they are hungry. Much depends on the degree of formality in the family they grew up in, which often depends on where the family is from.

3. Where The Meal Is Eaten

Where a family chooses to eat its main meal varies also and tells a great deal about whether the family is formal or informal, united or fragmented, authoritarian or permissive (Romano, 2008).

4. How The Meal Is Eaten

Kaplan (2012) posited that how the meal is eaten also depends on the customs and manners of each partner's culture. For instance, Sara and Joachim held their forks in

different hands, Cecil used a fork and knife, and Ikumi used chopsticks. Stefan used monogrammed utensils and linens; Cristina had grown up mostly with finger food. Also, other couples have to decide how the table is to be set (if it is to be set), who sits and who serves, and what constitutes good or bad manners according to their own family practices. Moreover, in some cultures, it is appropriate to slurp soup or burp to indicate appreciation of the meal, while in others such behavior raises eyebrows, at the least. Eating rice with fingers is all right in Bali but not in Italy or in France.

These small things can be daily irritants; often one partner is disdainful of the other's "bad" manners. One partner may resent being pressured to conform to unfamiliar customs, while the other complains because the partner has not managed to adapt well. When there are also children, the couple may argue continually about the whole matter, creating a tug-of-war at mealtime (Romano, 2008).

2.7.12 Place of residence

One partner in an inter-cultural marriage is the foreigner and has to learn to live and function in a foreign country, unless they live in a third country (Shultz & Lavenda, 2017). The country where the couple lives, the degree to which the culture is similar to that of the expatriate spouse, and the couple's location whether urban or rural, will all affect their relationship (Romano, 2008). This means that like it or not, the world outside the door will intrude on their marriage, be it his land, her land, or a neutral third one. Regardless of their individual cultures or the style they have chosen for their marriage, they will have dealings with the people of their chosen country and will have to respect its customs and values. Again, they will have to observe the laws of the land and will be touched by the climate, the living conditions, the political situation, and the

moral standards. They will also be affected by the way the society at large (family and neighbours as well as strangers) views their marriage.

In some countries it is the difference in the religion of the two partners that will be the cause of societal disapproval and subject them to antagonism (Schalet, 2011). However, in other countries the society may be indifferent toward the mixed marriage, especially if no children are born of the union. Still others welcome marriages between people from different lands. Often much depends on how physically similar the expatriate spouse is to the people of the country where the couple lives, how much he or she stands out.

Wherever the inter-cultural couple goes, there is adapting to be done, and adapting means effort and sometimes strain. Problems that stem from where the couple is living differ according to the people and the circumstances:

i. Some couples meet in the country of one of the partners and remain there. Thus, one spouse is at home and the other is already familiar with the style of life in that country and already functions there more or less successfully.

ii. Some meet in the country of one partner, then marry and move to the country of the other. The tables are turned and one goes from being the native to being the foreigner. Most frequently (but certainly not always) it is the bride who follows her husband to his homeland and has to learn and adapt to a whole new set of living patterns in order to function and be accepted in that country.

iii. Others meet and remain in or move to a country that is home to neither of them. Thus both are expatriates, with the job not only of working out a marital style that incorporates their two cultures, but of adapting personally and as a couple to a third

style. There are many couples who maintain that living in a third country is the only (or ideal) way for an inter-cultural marriage to succeed.

Romano (2008) highlights that the foreign spouse is normally the one who has to make most of the adjustments, which is fine if the foreigner likes and admires the culture of the spouse; it is miserable if this is not the case. Also, it is one thing to know intellectually that all cultures are valid and that one must adapt; it is quite another to be able to suspend judgment in the face of cultural differences that are seen as wrong.

Probably the most difficult adjustment has to be made by the couple who meet in one spouse's country, set up a pattern of living, and then move to the other's country. Whatever the conditions in the country, the move itself may affect the relationship. Any change is difficult and stirs deep anxieties, often at an unconscious level (Romano, 2008). The couple's world gets shuffled. What worked for them before often has to be reworked in light of the ways of the new culture. Not only does the foreign spouse have new customs, living conditions, and often a new language to adjust to, but also both spouses often have to mold a new kind of personal relationship to suit the new land; they have to start over again (Victoria, 2014). Perhaps the most upsetting and thorny problem is that the spouse often goes through significant personality changes upon returning home, resuming old, familiar roles.

Moving to a country that is home to neither spouse is considered an ideal situation for many couples in inter-cultural marriages (Honman, 2016). This option (alternative 3 above), however, also has its challenges, particularly if the couple is faced with substandard or vastly different living conditions, repressive laws, human rights violations, difficult climate, political unrest, manifest poverty or hunger, or a religion that dominates the lifestyle of all who live there. Simply knowing about these

difficulties does not prepare people for the harsh reality of learning how to live with them. The external stress can interfere with the couple's relationship and bring about tensions, especially if the spouses' adaptation is out of sync. One may be up while the other is down; each may be having a different experience and reacting accordingly (Tsirigotis, 2008). "If their progress is out of sync, the two may approach the host culture from a very different perceptual base, experience different symptoms, and each may need very different kinds of support from the other.

Where to live is often an issue for couples who come from different countries, and the decision may depend on what stage they are at in their lives-whether beginning their careers, schooling their children, or preparing for retirement (Romano, 2008). Often the country they left willingly when they were young begins to lure them back as they age, and for couples who came from different countries, which one to return to can become a major problem. Or they return "home" to find that they do not belong there anymore, that they have evolved through their marriage and the passage of time and become a culture unto themselves (Donnan, 1990).

All of these marital challenges are exacerbated by cultural differences. Counselors can be aware of the unique nuances that present themselves cross-culturally, and assist couples in gaining increased awareness of the cultural dimensions of their relationships that may contribute to marital disharmony (Frame, 2004).

2.7.13 Illness and Suffering

Romano (2008) posited that one problem that can be particularly trying for inter-cultural couples to handle has to do with illness and suffering. This is because couples try to find answers to how sick is sick; what is healthy; how can illness be prevented; how should it be reacted to; who should treat it and how?

McGoldrick, Giordano and Pearce1 (1966) stated that people differ across cultures in how they experience pain; what they label as a symptom; how they communicate their pain or symptoms; what their beliefs are about the cause of illness; how they regard helpers (doctors and therapists); and what treatment they desire or expect.

The way people experience and express pain is influenced by culture. In some cultures, the norm or ideal is to suffer silently, while in others one is expected or allowed to be demonstrative and verbal. What is labeled as a symptom also differs from culture to culture (Romano, 2008).

Beliefs about the causes of illness vary according to cultural background and will often dictate treatment. According to some, illness may result from breathing the night air, while others will swear that fresh air is a cure-all. In some cultures, people rigidly adhere to rules of cleanliness as infection preventives, while in others all the fuss about hygiene is regarded as exaggerated nonsense (Honman, 2016). Some cultural groups believe that illnesses are the result of a curse or spell, or are a punishment for a past evil deed. Illness can be perceived as caused by spirits that must be placated, by one's own carelessness or inattention, or by fate, over which one has no control (Romano, 2008).

Attitudes also vary greatly about doctors and other healers. People from some cultures believe medical professionals are the most qualified to treat illness. In others, people have more faith in spiritualists, traditional healers, or God. Some people run to the doctor at the first sign of fever, while others self-prescribe pills and cures. The relationship between the healer and the patient differs across cultures as well. While many in the U.S., for example, prefer full medical disclosure, even in the case of terminal illness, in other cultures such disclosure would be considered heartless and counter-productive, denying the patient the disease-fighting ability that hope provides.

Some couples accept each other's preferences concerning health care providers, but others insist on conforming to their own beliefs (Romano, 2008).

Many cultures will not even consider mental health professionals. Brislin (1993) opined that therapists are for crazy people, they maintain, and they do not believe in seeking assistance for normal life traumas. Also, it is seen as shameful to be unable to resolve problems alone and a betrayal of the family to discuss personal matters outside of the intimate family unit.

According to Romano (2008), inter-cultural couples can also disagree about treatment for their illnesses. These include whether to buy over-the-counter drugs, bathe in mineral waters, depend on acupuncture or the laying on of hands, use cures handed down through the family, take natural herbs and roots as the Chinese and others have done for centuries, or use no medicines whatsoever?

Old beliefs and rituals still prevail; traditional cures are used instead of, or often together with, modern medical practices. Many educated people have more faith in what family history has proven than in modern medicine. Aside from what the spouses themselves adhere to, the conditions where they live will often have a profound effect on their lives, especially if they live in a country where medical care is difficult to obtain. Sometimes one spouse does not trust the medical practices of the partner's country. Treatment is too aggressive or slipshod, medicines are strange, or prescriptions are handled differently (Brislin, 1993).

Romano (2008), in his study, concluded that while couples are young, healthy, and without children, issues of illness often do not arise, but when children are born and need medical attention, or when one of the partners becomes seriously sick, deep-seated traditions and beliefs about illness may surface. Most people feel comfortable with their

own culture's medical practices, whether justified or not, and their distrust of others may have a negative effect on the healing process.

Some people however object to any list of challenges, feeling that it is more constructive to concentrate on commonalities. While there is a certain truth to this, at the same time it is a bit naive to pretend that the hurdles are not there simply because one does not look at them. In most cases they do exist and when they do, a couple must be able to recognise and identify them in order to make progress toward managing them. It is extremely helpful to be exposed to the possible cultural "why-for" behind a partner's behaviour or point of view. Knowing that there are differences that might possibly be cultural rather than individual, the couple can get some distance from them and so learn to work at exploring rather than personalizing the perceived wrongs.

According to Countz (2006), some couples insist that cultural differences are not issues at all if two people are truly in love. This, however, does not mean they are not issues. It usually means that these couples have not thought about or do not see these differences as cultural issues, that they did not cause the couple problems, that the couple has somehow managed to overcome or resolve these areas of difference without being aware of what they were doing, or that in their particular personal/cultural mix, certain differences were unimportant or even non-existent. Or it may mean that they had so much else going for them in common interests, goals, and complementary personalities that they simply slid past the cultural hurdles. But generally speaking, cultural differences do indeed exist, and many pose challenges for the inter-cultural couple.

2.8 Resources/Coping Skills

The area of coping skills and resources is the least understood and researched of all areas relating to inter-cultural couples. Because the majority of research on inter-cultural couples either considers them from a negative perspective (Chan & Wethington, 1998) or an outsider's view (Gaines & Ickes, 1997), little is known about what resources and coping skills inter-cultural couples possess.

What happens at this point in the marriage depends entirely on the particular couple. Some end the marriage, having decided that their differences are insurmountable. While many inter-cultural couples believe that their marriage actually has a greater potential for success than a mono- cultural one and work diligently until they iron out the problem areas, others never manage to reconcile their differences, and their marriages end in separation or divorce. Some couples who enter an inter-cultural marriage learn very quickly how their differences can be the catalyst for either excitement or conflict. Early in their relationships they adopt particular approaches to dealing with cultural difference (Frame, 2004).

From the study conducted of interview with 50 Chinese in New York City who married outside of their culture, Sung (1990) stated that inter-cultural couples also have a strong commitment to the relationship and each other, "are willing to make changes and accept the nontraditional, and are "more flexible and resourceful in dealing with differences" than their same-culture peers. Brown (1987) suggested that inter-cultural couples enter relationships more aware of possible conflicts, and have higher standards for their relationship in areas such as shared interests and personal compatibility because they are aware of the difficulties they will face due to their different cultures.

Romano (1997) suggested that couples embrace one of four styles of managing their cultural incongruity. In some couples, one partner submits to the other's cultural

practices and relinquishes his or her own. Other couples endorse compromise in which each partner gives up some aspect of his or her culture in order to achieve balance and to minimise conflict. A more severe method of dealing with cultural diversity in a couple is complete denial of difference.

Essentially, couples forfeit their traditions and obliterate their values in the search for neutral territory. Still others aim for a win-win situation by seeking consensus. This style involves mutuality and flexibility, but each partner retains that of his or her culture that she or he considers essential to well-being (Romano, 1997).Some resolve their difficulties by habitually fighting them out, usually from their original starting point, and continue doing so, time after time, until the end of their marriage or their lives.

Others turn their back on the issues. They try to ignore them and pretend they do not exist. Neither partner is converted to the other's point of view and knowing that discussion about the problem will always end in a fight, they choose to ignore it. Some choose to live loosely connected, separate lives. The issue of their separateness or repressed, unresolved disagreements seethe beneath the surface of their relationship but is never permitted to explode. Many consider this a resolution because they are convinced that there is no other answer for them and exploring the issues always leads to a fight (Reynalds, 2012).

Another related way couples deal with problematic differences is to sublimate them and concentrate on the advantages of the relationship, the superior qualities of the spouse, the pluses of the other culture that perhaps outnumber or override the negatives. They change their focus: they learn over time to heed missing elements less, even things that once seemed important to them, and to value what they have gained through their marriage (Romano, 2008).

Many couples report that as time goes on, it becomes easier. They learn to get beyond the minor clashes, to recognise cues that they are heading into dangerous territory, to discuss things that were difficult to verbalise at first and therefore to understand, or to resign themselves to what is behind the other's position, even though they may not understand it.

Counselors who work with inter-cultural couples will want to assist them in determining which style of coping with cultural differences they have adopted. In addition, such helpers should enable these couples to acknowledge their specific difference and to seek complementarity (Perel, 2000). That is, the goal is for inter-cultural couples to celebrate the balance that the other's cultural practices provide for their marital enrichment. As a result of cultivating an appreciation for specific cultural differences between them, the couple may be able to carve out a new way of relating that honours the "both/and" of their relationship, rather than the "either/or" that has led to their distress (Frame, 2004).

2.9 Conceptual Framework

The original family stress model was developed by Hill (1949), who studied families' responses to war, war separation, and eventual re-union after World War II. The ABCX Model (Fig. 1) detailed how the three factors (the ABC components) of a stressor event, the family's perception of that stressor, and the family's existing resources interacted to predict the likelihood of a crisis (X) occurring.

The double ABCX family crisis model is an expansion of Hill's original linear model of stress in which A (the Stressor event) interacted with B (the family's crisis meeting resources) and C (the definition the family makes of the event) to produce X (the crisis) (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The double ABCX model expands the linear model to

a circular one, in which the original factors include other variables interacting in each section, to contribute to the overall outcome, or how the family copes with a specific stressor.

Figure 1: The Double ABCX Model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

In the double ABCX model, A is not only a specific stressor, but also a pile-up of all the other stressors including life event or transition impacting the family unit that has the potential for changing the family social system.

Stressors can occur in any aspect of the family's life such as roles, functions, values and goals.

B is not only the resources the family has and uses, but also those resources the family develops and seeks out in response to a specific stressor. All families have some level of resources. Concept of existing resources is the family's use of community and intra-familial systems, such as friends, religious involvement, mental health professionals, togetherness, role flexibility, shared values and goals, and expressiveness. These

resources may be adequate or inadequate depending on the nature of the stressor event or family's level of functioning.

C is the meaning the family gives to a specific stressor and the meaning the family makes of the situation and how that meaning has influenced the family's ability to adapt. In other words: how well does the family define the problem, grasp the problem and understand the situation? When the C factor is positive, family members are better able to cope. (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). X encompasses the amount of crisis in a family, the family's adaptation to the crisis, whether good or bad, and the effects of mal or bon adaptation (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Families develop basic and unique competencies, patterns of functioning, and capabilities designed to protect the family from unexpected or non-normative stressors and strains and to foster the family's recovery following a family crisis or major transition or change. Families also draw from and contribute to the network of relationships and resources in the community, including its ethnicity and cultural heritage, particularly during periods of family stress and crises. Families faced with crisis situations demanding changes in the family's functioning work to restore order, harmony and balance even in the midst of change. Family systems theory and the Double ABCX model highlight the integral influence of the family system on each individual member's development and vice-versa.

In this study, at the pre-crisis stage, how the couples perceived the stressor influenced the use of existing resources and may result to crisis (crisis stage). With the passage of time, other stressors developed and new resources were acquired by the couples. The perception of both the pileup stressors as well as the existing and new resources

determined the strategies adopted to cope with the crisis. The strategies may end up in

positive (bon) or negative (mal) adaptation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used for the study under the following sub-headings:

1. Study Area

2. Research Design

3. Population

4. Sample and Sampling Technique

5. Instrument for Data Collection

6. Data Collection Procedure

7. Data Analysis

3.1 Study Area

Elmina is a town and the capital of the Komenda / Edina / Eguafo / Abirem District on the south coast of South Ghana in the Central Region. It is situated on the south-facing bay on the Atlantic Ocean coast of Ghana, 12 km (7.5 ml) west of Cape Coast. Elmina plays a significant role in farming, fishing, salt mining and mining of sand, stone and clay. The agricultural activities, which involve about 51.571 people, are dominated by subsistence farming because eighty-six percent (86%) of the total land are arable. Also, Elmina is made up of fishermen, fish processors, traders, canoe and boat builders as

well as mechanics, making up 10% of the total Ghanaian population, who depend on fishing to make a living.

Elmina is the first European settlement in West Africa. During the colonial era, many European men, including high officials in the Dutch administration, married women from local families. The marriage concluded according to local rites, reinforced the already close connections between the local and Dutch elites in Elmina (KEEA Municipal Assembly, 2006). Elmina therefore provides the ideal setting for providing information on challenges and coping strategies of people in inter-cultural marriage.

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative research methodology was employed in this study since the method is the most suitable for inquiring about inter-cultural marriages (Salama, 2012). In describing the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research, Berg (1989) noted that qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things.

Qualitative research is a means to gain insight and knowledge into a topic that is of interest to the researcher and may involve issues of gender, culture, and the concerns of marginalized groups. These topics can be filled with emotion, directly related to people's daily lives and relevant (Creswell, 1998). He proposed that the researcher should not assume the role of the expert, but rather ask open-ended questions in order to allow the respondents to express their true emotions and feelings in their responses. He also suggested that the questions might change through the research process to reflect an increased understanding of the problem. In the case of this study, hearing the concerns and challenges that inter-cultural couples in Elmina have experienced in the

past and becoming better acquainted with them were all extremely significant components of the research.

Creswell (1998) identified five different traditions within qualitative research: (1) biography, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, (4) ethnography, and (5) case study. Phenomenological research was chosen as the guiding principle of this qualitative research inquiry. Phenomenology is derived from two Greek words: phenomenon (an "appearance") and logos ("reason" or "word", and hence, "reasoned inquiry"). Phenomenology is thus a reasoned inquiry which discovers the inherent essences of appearances. Creswell (1998) notes that phenomenology has its roots in the philosophical perspectives of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who emphasised the intentionality of consciousness in experiences that contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning.

Phenomenological research investigates questions about common, everyday human experiences believed to be important sociological or psychological phenomena of our time or typical of a group of people and transitions that are common or of contemporary interest. The defining characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

Creswell (1998) defined phenomenological study as describing the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Creswell further described phenomenology as an approach to studying the problem that includes entering the field of perception of participants; seeing how they experience, live, and display the phenomenon; and looking for the meaning of the participants' experiences.

This research focuses on individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of inter-cultural marriage in Elmina, and involves an attempt to describe the essence of this experience and to draw certain conclusions about it. The description of the lived experience includes both what individuals have experienced and how they have experienced it. Both Creswell (1998) and Merriam (2002) emphasise the importance of bracketing the researcher's own experiences and taking a fresh perspective of the phenomenon being studied through the eyes and experiences of the participants. Bracketing is described as the act of suspending one's various beliefs in the reality of the natural world in order to study the essential structures of the world.

This research methodology is ideal for this topic because it expresses genuine concern for the needs of inter-cultural couples and an authentic interest in their lived experiences.

3.3 Population

The general population for this study consists of all married couples in Elmina. The accessible population constitutes all married couples of different ethnic backgrounds in Ghana who had been married for five years or more and were living together.

These couples have been married for at least five years to thirty-five years and have raised or have at least one child residing with them. This is because research has shown that majority of challenges between inter-cultural couples revolve around child rearing (Hegar & Greif, 1994; Forna, 1992). Therefore these couples must have gone through inter-cultural challenges since they were either raising or had raised at least one child together to be included in this study.

Participants for this study were recruited from Elmina in the Central Region of Ghana. This area was chosen in part because of convenience to the researcher, and because of the large number of inter-cultural residents there, both due to migration, education, formal and informal work available.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Snowball sampling was used in identifying 20 of the participants (10 couples) for this study. This technique is used for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other participants. According to Atkinson and Flint (2004), these participants may themselves open possibilities for an expanding of contact and inquiry. The use of the snowball technique helped to identify respondents who were likely to have readily, information for this study and also because inter-cultural couples in this category are difficult to identify. Again, issues concerning experiences in marriage are sensitive, hence only people who find it comfortable to talk about their marital issues could be involved.

The rest, 20 participants (10 couples) in number were hand-picked by the researcher from her church (5 couples) and work place (5 couples). The participants who were hand-picked were very well known by the researcher; hence getting the needed information from them was not difficult.

3.5 Instruments

In phenomenological study, the main process of collecting information is through interviews (Pishoy, 2012). The researcher used the same semi-structured interview guide to interview all the 40 participants or 20 couples. Audio recorder was used to

capture all vital information to enable the researcher remember all information provided in the interview.

3.6 Data Collection

The interviews which were conducted in February 2016 ranged from 30 minutes to 1hour. Once participants had agreed to be interviewed, a time and location was determined for the interview. Twenty-six participants agreed to be interviewed in their homes, while fourteen of them agreed to be interviewed at their work place. The researcher interviewed the couple individually, not as a couple at the agreed locations because the interviews addressed delicate issues. 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 (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006; Seymour & Eardley, 1995). In each case their spouses excused us or were not available at the time of the interview.

Interviews began by explicitly stating the purpose of the study. Participants were made aware that the study was being done as a requirement for a Master's programme and to better understand the experience of couples of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The researcher repeated that the interview normally lasted for 30 – 60 minutes but would make sure to keep within their time in order not to waste their time.

The next step was to talk through the consent form. It was explained to the couple that participation was voluntary. The consent form was presented to them to read through it, but those who could not read, the researcher explained it to them in their local language (Fante, Twi and Ewe) that they could understand. Participants were asked if they had any questions about the study. When they were ready to proceed, the researcher asked them to sign the form. The consent form included that they consented

to be audio-taped. All participants agreed to be recorded, hence, the researcher turned on the recorder.

Interview schedule of questions begun with demographic information from the participants. Specifically they were asked to identify their gender, age, ethnicity, number of years married, level of education, occupation and number of children they have. After gathering these demographics, the interview process began to collect data on the research questions set for the study.

A variety of questions were asked to direct the interviews, in that way, the interview guide had structure. Yet, at the same time, the researcher wanted to be able to adapt to the context and the needs of the participants, therefore kept the interview semi-structured. Interviews began with an open-ended question inviting participants to tell the story of how they first met. This proved to be a wonderful icebreaker as both participants and researcher were all soon laughing about funny stories the interviewees pulled to release tension such as "I am looking for your brother" routine. Generally from there the interview proceeded to talking about background checks and issues couples went through prior to their marriage; ethnic related challenges they face with their partners; the impact that the observed ethnic differences have on their marriage lives; the coping strategies they adopt to ensure functionality of their marriage. Throughout the interview process, the researcher utilised active listening skills and verbal prompts such as 'so what happened next? Is that so' to encourage the interviewee. The researcher also noted particular non-verbal communication patterns such as their facial expression, shaking of the head or a wave of the hand as well as verbal techniques employed by the interviewee such as the tone used in answering a particular question.

The last question on the interview guide asked participants about any additional significant information that was not covered in the interview as well as their impressions about the interviews and whether they will need any follow up information. (See Appendix C for a complete semi-structured interview guide).

Many times during the closing of interviews, interviewees would ask personal questions about the researcher's motivation for the study, if the researcher was thinking of marrying someone of a different ethnic background, and how much longer the researcher had to complete school. These questions were welcomed and answered honestly because of the level of disclosure and vulnerability the study expected from them.

Several couples apologized for being "bad" examples of inter-cultural relationships because they did not have any serious problems to help this study. The closing of the interviews tended to yield some of the best stories and comments.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis was an effort to identify themes in the experiences of inter-cultural couples. The goal was to gain a deeper understanding about how inter-cultural couples have overcome the odds against these relationships, and how they have managed in their relationship to work out the challenges of many inter-cultural marriages.

The data collected for this research was taken from the transcriptions of the interviews, demographic questions, and notes of the interviewer. As the interviews were conducted, the researcher continually transcribed the data collected with the help of an analyst. This information was then used to ask about additional areas in subsequent interviews. After the interviews were completed, the transcriptions were coded with the help of a

professional transcriptionist using QSRNVIVO 9, a computer programme software used in qualitative research. The demographic data was manually analysed to generate percentages for discussion.

All of the transcripts were cross-coded by both the researcher and the analyst. Cross coding helps to control for researcher bias, acts to reinforce the credibility of the research results, and is an effort to get a sense of the whole (Boss, Dahl& Kaplan, 1996) of the participants' experiences. The first few interviews were analysed using an open coding approach to identify major themes of challenges and coping strategies within the couples experiences. Open coding is a method of analysing qualitative research that allows the researcher to breakdown and examine data, then compare and conceptualize it (Strauss& Corbin, 1990).

The themes identified in the first four interviews (two couples) were primary themes that the researcher then looked for in the rest of the interviews. The results of the initial open coding was used to develop selective coding, which allowed the themes initially identified to be generated into a more substantiated understanding of the themes underlying the responses to factors influencing decisions to marry a culturally different person; challenges that these couples have experienced; effects of inter-cultural marriage on ethnic identity and children; and resources or coping strategies utilised in building a stable marriage. The identification of these themes throughout the data collection was then used to develop insights into the challenges and coping strategies of inter-cultural couples. For the purpose of anonymity, the couples were numbered **P** (participating couple) **1** to **20**. **P1a** and **P1b** represent participating husband number **1** and participating wife number **1**. Meaning **P** is the participant; **1** is couple number 1, **a** is the husband and **b** is the wife.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

This chapter presents the demographics of the participants, followed by the findings and themes that came out of the interviews. While some themes fit into more than one category, they have been organised under the two parts of the double ABCX model: the stressor events, and the family's crisis meeting resources. Frequencies, percentages of some respondents and quotes of statements from the participants were used to illustrate these findings.

4.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

Each individual participant answered demographic questions outlining some personal information. The questions included essential information such as age of respondents, ethnic background, languages spoken, education and occupation, number of years in marriage, number of children and religion. These were paramount in becoming acquainted with the participating members of the study and have been outlined and summarised in this section.

4. 1. 1 Age of Respondents

All participants for the study (100%) had their ages ranging between 66 and 27. The youngest male participant was 38 years old, and the oldest was 66 years old. The youngest female participant was 27 years old, and the oldest was 51 years old.

4. 1. 2 Ethnic background of Respondents

All participants were Ghanaian citizens and could ultimately be identified as Ghanaians. However, they were able to trace their ethnic identity. Since the purpose of this study is to explore inter-cultural marriages (ICM) in Elmina, one spouse of each could be of any other ethnicity. Out of the 40 participants interviewed, there were 20 males and 20 females. From the 40 participants, there was a great ethnic diversity which included the Kwahus (2.5%), the Nzemas (7.5%), the Fantes from Elmina (32.5%), Komenda (10%) and Cape Coast (5%), the Efutus from Winneba (2.5%), the Ashantes from Kumasi (5%), the Akuapims from Larteh (2.5%), the Gas from Teshie (2.5%), Labadi (2.5%) and Osu (5%), the Ewes from Sogakorpe (2.5%), Adidome (7.5%) and Anlo (7.5%) and the Gonjas in the Northern part of Ghana (5%). It appears that many individuals have been able to break ethnic barriers and find solace in partners from across the country.

4. 1. 3 Languages spoken by Respondents

Participants for the study reported a diverse range of languages spoken which includes Ewe, Fante, Nzema, Larteh, Hausa, Ga, Wassa, Asante Twi and English. Four participants (10%), however, reported they could speak French in addition to their local language because they stayed in one of the French speaking neighbouring countries for a couple of years.

4. 1. 4 Education and occupation of Respondents

The spouses interviewed had different levels of education. The education level reported included: Basic School (55%), Senior High School (27.5%), Ordinary Level (7.5%) and Advanced Level (10%). Thirty-six of the participants reported their current work as

being a fisherman (47.5%), business person (10%), house-wife (10%), trader (10%), driver (7.5%), and a pupil teacher (5%), whereas the remaining four (10%) were retired public servants.

Although couples interviewed are not highly educated, participants were functional members of society who have acquired respected jobs in their communities. The average household income was not observed, neither is it significant in this study. The main observation here was that all couples (100%) were financially stable.

4. 1. 5 Number of years married

The earliest marriage occurred in 1974 and the latest in 2010. Five couples (25%) had their length of marriage ranging from 25 years to 42 years and the other five (25%) had been married for 6 years to 16 years. Eight couples (40%) reported that they were in their first marriage, while two couples (10%) mentioned that this is their second marriage.

4. 1. 6. Children of Respondents

There were 14 couples (70%) who had children ranging from 1 year to 38 years in age. In addition, there were 2 couples (10%) expecting their first child, and 4 couples (20%) who had adult children from a previous marriage. None of the couples reported having no children.

5.1. 7. Religion of Respondents

Seventeen couples (85%) were of the same faith prior to their marriage and still worship together. Three couples (15%) were of different faiths before they got married but two of them decided to be in the same faith while the other couple is currently of different faiths.

4. 2 Meeting and Deciding to Get Married

This section summarises the results of the responses from the first question of the one-on-one interviews in appendix C that the researcher conducted with the respondents. The sub-questions revolved around: (1) where the couples met and (2) how long they dated. These questions were intended to make the researcher familiar with the couples' early memories from the time they met.

4. 2. 1 Where couples met

The interviews revealed that individuals meet their spouses in many different places which represent parts of their daily lives. Forty percent of the couples met in Church and 30% met at workplaces which were the most frequent places where spouses met. These were followed by mutual friends (15%), travel (10%), and school (5%).

4. 2. 2. How long couples dated

Couples reported that before their wedding, they dated or were engaged between nine months and five years. Eight couples (40%) dated for four years; six (30%) dated for three years and three couples (15%) dated for about one year while the other three (15%) never dated. Those who never dated indicated that their parents selected their spouses for them, and never had the chance to date. Participants gave various reasons for the length of time they took for dating prior to marriage. Some participants gave a reason while others gave several reasons. Seventy-three percent gave a reason that they wanted to ensure that they loved one another, (68%) was due to mutual understanding concerning major factors affecting their future life together and (31%) had to prepare for the wedding.

4. 3 Ethnic Background Checks and Issues Raised by Couples and their Relatives/Friends Prior to Marriage

This section summarises the results of the responses to questions revolving around: (1) mate selection; (2) any stereotypes that they grew up with towards their own or other ethnicities; and (3) their openness to ICM prior to meeting their spouse and (4) reaction of family, (5) reaction of friends and (6) current relationship with family and friends.

4. 3. 1. Mate selection

Physical attraction (62.5%), being compatible spiritually (46%), socio-economically (23%) and sharing similar interests (11.5%) were the four main categories that arose from the question about mate selection. Some participants (7%) also stated that people should first judge themselves before they judge others. These participants added that people should remember that a couple is made up of two people, not two races or cultures. One participant (P6b for anonimity) stated:

"*I was attracted to my husband because he was considerate, caring, and someone I enjoyed spending time with*".

4. 3. 2. Stereotypes

Majority of the participants (75%) did not have any negative stereotypes about any other cultures while growing up. They mainly looked for the right person to meet, regardless of where they came from. In that sense, compatibility was more important than ethnicity in terms of choosing a spouse. There were several spouses (65%) who mentioned that they knew specifically that they were not going to end up marrying from their own ethnic group. The reasons given included their indifference about other races, multiculturalism, immersion into a different culture, having friends mostly of different

cultural backgrounds, and the ethnic diversity within their own families. P9b stated that:

'*I have friends from different cultural backgrounds and we get on well with each other*'.

Another participant (P18a) reported that his parents were from the same ethnic backgrounds but they settled far away from their hometowns. They were in good terms with everyone in that community regardless of where each comes from and instilled that sense of multiculturalism in their children.

4. 3. 3. Openness to inter-cultural marriage (ICM)

Most of the respondents (34) indicated that they were quite open to ICM. Nevertheless, a few couple (6) indicated that while growing up, they thought that they would marry someone from their own ethnicity. It made sense to them, and it was going to be much more convenient to share in the same religion, culture, language, and family values. Yet, as they got older, they kept an open mind to the possibility of meeting someone from another culture, knowing that there might be some adjustments to be made. A participant (P1a) revealed that;

'*My parents were of the same cultural background and I always thought their marriage was perfect. They encouraged me to marry someone of the same ethnic background, but as I grew older and met people of diverse cultural backgrounds, my aim was to get the right woman no matter where she comes from*'.

4. 3. 4. Reaction of family

Many parents (80% of couples' parents) welcomed the spouse of a different ethnic background with open arms into the family, while others (20% of couples' parents) had some reservations concerning their children's choice to marry outside their ethnicity. Thus, the majority of the couples' parents (80%) were open to the idea that their

children would marry a culturally different spouse and even expected it at times. Once the parent met the spouse and learned that they were the right person for their child, there were generally no major objections and the child received the parents' blessing. One respondent (P15a) whose parent had some reservations about their son's choice to marry someone of a different ethnic background mentioned that;

"*My parents couldn't see me getting married to a culturally different person*".

Another respondent, a native of Tamale (P8b) recalled a conversation with her mother asking if the mother would have been happier if her fiancé was of the same cultural background. But the mother responded by saying, *"No. I don't mind if he is not from our ethnicity. I like him just as he is; I love him*"

4. 3. 5 Reaction of friends to couples

Couples (95%) were extremely appreciative for the support and guidance which they received from friends. Majority of friends accepted the idea that their friend was marrying a culturally diverse person and offered pieces of advice that helped the couples proceed with joy. Two participants (P11b & P20b) recalled similar comments made by friends that they do not have any problem whom their friend marries; all they want is for them to be happy.

However, a couple (P3a & b) reported having friends who had severe reactions to the relationships, which resulted in feelings of anger and animosity with the friendship. They felt that the rejection from friends and problems at the beginning of their relationship have pulled them closer together, bringing about the feeling that, "*If you have to work hard for the relationship, you appreciate it more*"

4. 3. 6. Current relationship with family and friends

For the most part, 80% of couples currently enjoy a great relationship with their parents, in-laws, extended family members, and friends. These couples said it took some time, either prior to or after the wedding, to figure out their comfort zone with one another. It took some time for everyone to adjust to the language barrier, customs, and traditions and for their parents to face the fact that their new son-in-law or daughter-in-law was not from their own ethnicity. The presence of grandchildren often resolved many misunderstandings that might have existed between them and their parents prior to the marriage.

The following is a quotation by a participant (P14a) which expresses the current relationship between his spouse and the in-law, after they had spent the past 8 years trying to bridge their differences and adapt to one another:

"*I think my wife and my mom have finally solved their differences and have come to a place, ultimately, where they really have a lot of respect for each other and now have a very nice relationship*".

There were only a few participants (20%) who expressed that tension still existed between themselves and their in-laws. This was because these parents never accepted their children's marriage or might have had ongoing concerns about the character or personality of the spouse. In particular, one respondent (P13a) mentioned that he still feels very nervous visiting his in-laws stating that, "*my father-in-law barely talks to me when I am left alone with him*".

4. 4 Ethnic related challenges observed by couples in their marriage (A factor)

The majority of these couples (75%) did not immediately see their different cultures as presenting any specific challenges and only as the discussions went on were they able

to articulate examples of challenges. Others (25%) were immediately able to talk about the difficulties they experienced because of their being from two different cultures. The challenges and hardships reported by these couples have been divided into normal challenges and culturally based challenges or those challenges the couple saw as a result of their coming from different ethnic backgrounds.

4. 4. 1 Normal challenges of couples

All couples go through challenges and hardships, and all marriages face rough times. Many of these challenges are deemed normal, that every marriage faces almost as a rite of passage, regardless of where the partners are from (Sung, 1990). The couples interviewed for this study were no different. The first challenges they often spoke of were not necessarily culturally related ones, but challenges common to marriage in general.

4. 4. 1. 1 Adjustment to marriage.

A few (15% of participants) mentioned the adjustment to marriage, to go from being on their own or living with parents to suddenly living with someone else was hard. A participant from Kumasi in the Ashanti Region, who had been on his own for a while before his marriage (P20a) said:

"*I think it was just the fear, for me just getting married, in general. It wasn't so much where my wife was from or where I was from, it was just getting married*".

His wife, a Gonja from the Northern Region (P20b), talked about the difficulties she experienced in having to adjust to living with her husband, and also to his lifestyle as a

fisherman, whose home was mostly on the sea. This couple stated that their marriage was their first time living away from family.

Another couple (P17) felt that the first few years of marriage were the toughest for them. The wife (P17b) from Anlo talked about her difficulties in letting go of the expectations she had for her marriage and appreciating what it was instead of comparing her marriage to that of her friends. The husband (P17a) from Cape Coast verbalised his difficulties adjusting this way:

"*With monetary issues, it's like I never really had to pay bills because I was living with my father and my mother and I just broke off from them and I got married, and then we're on our own, and it is the first time I have been on my own, and I have to pay the bills and the money that I am earning is no longer just mine, I have to spend it on bills which cause some discrepancies*".

Another couple (P2) mentioned finances as playing a role in the difficulties adjusting to marriage. When asked what the biggest challenges they have faced together in their marriage were, (P2b) from Osu in the Greater Accra Region replied "*probably financial ones*". P2a, a native of Elmina in the Central Region confirmed what was said by the wife that;

"*We had only completed Senior High School, and lived in an uncompleted building. So yes, it was the financial pressures, and having a child, and making ends meet. It was difficult and we had to work pretty hard on that. I would say that money was the single most important challenge*".

4. 4. 1. 2. Personality and gender differences

Personality and gender differences also came up in the interview about challenges to the marriage. A couple (P19) mentioned male/female difference in perspective that caused friction at times in their marriage. For them, personality differences were a huge hurdle. The wife was not interested in sports whereas the husband spent considerable time involved in it, and he had no interest in Evangelism and church activities the wife wanted him to attend. As a participant from Larteh (P19b) stated:

"*His personality and mine are very different. I am very outgoing but he is so shy, so I think that was more of a challenge than being culturally different*".

Another participant from Komenda (P11b) reported that:

"*My husband and I had twins, but he wouldn't even offer a helping hand; I bathed them, cooked for them, washed their clothes, and took them to school before I go to work every day. When I get angry and start to complain, he tells me he doesn't know I need help, I think it was shear laziness on his part*".

4. 4. 1. 3. Parenting

The literature on inter-cultural couples stated that they were likely to have conflicts because of their cultural differences in disciplining children. Some of the couples (P2, 9, 16, 17, 18 and 20) mentioned challenges because of culture in this area, while others (P5, 4, 8 and 19) felt that their cultural views on parenting were in agreement, but their personalities conflicted. A participating wife (P4b) stated:

"*If it was time for school and they weren't in their school uniform, I would get mad where my husband would say; not going to school today is not going to make a difference*".

Another participating wife (P8b) felt that their friction over parenting was two-fold: The husband (P8a) was not around much due to his fishing career, and then his temperament was very different from the wife's. She stated:

"*He is too lenient on the children than I want, and I sometime wish I would have gotten some help from him, but he just stays politely out of the way. Because he just doesn't want the children to think he doesn't like them, I think it's his nature*".

4. 4. 1. 4 Time factor

Another normal challenge that was recorded during the interview was time. A participant (P16a) revealed that 'time' has been one of the major challenges in his marriage. He is time conscious whereas his wife is not. He stated:

"*My wife can waste time, she doesn't seem bothered whether she is late or not. When I am in a hurry and I have to leave her behind, she nags the whole day. She is just refusing to consider time as a resource that she must manage. This has nothing to do with ethnic differences'.*

4. 4. 2 Cultural/ Inter-ethnic related challenges

Literature on inter-cultural marriages indicates that these couples face family and societal disapproval, and have difficulties with their spouses around cultural traditions, raising children, and language barriers, among other difficulties (Romano, 1994). The couples were all questioned about other challenges they faced that they attributed to their cultural differences.

4. 4. 2. 1 Family disapproval

The literature often lists family disapproval as the biggest stressor that inter-cultural couples face (Sung, 1990). Parents of two couples (10%) had a very negative reaction to the news that their children were marrying from outside their ethnic background. Their main concerns were that they did not know the person and her/his family and that they might not be able to speak to them in their mother tongue, hence, communicating with them would be difficult. Ten percent of the couples reported that their parents were concerned that the couple was not compatible socially; that the couple would divorce if they were not both brought up with the same concept of marriage. One respondent (P1b) mentioned that her father's reaction was "*so violently against it*", while another (P15a) said that his family completely rejected the idea because "*there are so many differences*". Another concern came from a participants' (P16b) parent who was not comfortable because the spouse '*was not part of the network*", meaning that he (P16a) was not someone who lives or has relatives around, in which case the parents could easily get information about the family and character. Another major concern came from a respondent (P4b) who mentioned that her father was completely against her marrying from a certain ethnic group. She (P4b) recalled that her father said:

"*I don't care if he's the President of Ghana. My answer is no*".

The specific ethnic group their member was marrying into was also a concern to some families. A participant (P4b) a native of Nzema in the Western Region, stated that her family was concerned over the high divorce rate among Fantes, but were reassured when she and her husband explained their personal beliefs about marriage.

Family disapproval was the challenge another couple labeled as their strongest challenge, and one that they were still struggling with today. The husband (P15a) stated:

"*The root cause of most of the challenges that we had wasn't between us, it was my parental involvement again. My parents were relentless; they tried to drive her out. Drive down her self-esteem, and her feeling unworthy of me, the majority of what we went through stemmed from that malicious effort to try and separate us*".

Forty percent of couples' parents expressed mixed reactions between being supportive and encouraging, and yet cautious, about their children marrying a culturally different person, with the apparent differences in ethnicity and lifestyle. These parents objected to the idea of their children marrying outside their ethnic group and wanted a clarification of the spouse's culture and the implication of their marriage on their faith and raising children. Sixty percent of couples responded that their parents were happy with their choices and did not have any objections.

4. 4. 2. 2 Language and communication barriers

The literature states that language and communication barriers will be a challenge to inter-cultural couples (Atkeson, 1970). This constituted one of the largest barriers on which 25% of couples commented during the interviews. One respondent (P7a) explained his challenge by commenting that:

"*You are not really motivated, just like if you go to church and you do not understand the service at all. And feel like you do not belong to the group. That is how I feel when I am surrounded by my wife's family*".

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For a participant from Adidome (P10a), learning to understand the wife's accent was a challenge in the beginning. And not being able to understand what was going on when P10b was speaking Ga with her friends was very frustrating. At times he felt excluded and even wondered if they were talking about him.

On one occasion, a wife (P12b) spoke about her husband (P12a) a Fante, in the Ewe language with her sister, and after they left, the husband discovered that he was being disrespected while he stood there smiling at the sister-in-law speaking Ewe. He shared his feelings after understanding what was being said about him saying:

"*This didn't make me feel very excited to become a member of her family*".

However, there were few couples (20%) who did not mind the language being used by their spouses when communicating with family and friends, as they thought that it is part of their cultural heritage to communicate in their mother tongue.

4. 4. 2. 3 Cultural norms

The participants also mentioned other norms that conflicted or were a challenge in their marriage. P6a, from Tamale's strict background was what P6b from Larteh termed chauvinistic. His clear ideas about "*what is a woman's job and what is a man's job and what is a woman's place, and what isn't a woman's place*" contrasted sharply with the wife's when she wanted to work and earn income to help with family finances. The husband felt that a mother should stay home, and told her; "*If you choose to go back to work, it is over for us*".

P8b from Elmina mentioned that the differences in opinion on how close to family you should be were also a big stressor when she first married her husband (P8a), a native of Komenda. In fact, she stated that she wondered if there was something wrong with

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P8a's family because they did not talk to each other often like hers did, and other families she knew among her ethnic group members did. And to P8a, the amount of time P8b spent on the phone with her parents, and the frequency of visits she wanted were excessive. P8a stated:

"*My wife had her family constantly visiting us and at one time I felt they were intruding in our privacy. I complained to her but she thought I disliked her family*".

P3a an Ashanti, also spoke about the way P3b a Gonja dressed for certain occasions as too old fashioned but she on the other hand thought it was decent. He added that he most often liked to attend programmes without the company of the wife because he did not want his friends to tease him. He stated;

"*I love my wife but her way of dressing sometimes puts me off. We've had series of arguments concerning this issue, but she doesn't seem to care, saying; that's how she was brought up*".

4. 4. 2. 4. Raising children

Participants wanted to provide the best life for their children in terms of their upbringing, spirituality, education and social life. Many of the couples (60%) felt that when their cultural differences emerged as challenges, it was often around the children.

Differences in cultural expectations for the children came up in the interviews. A husband (P9a) felt that his wife's culture's emphasis on education influenced her to be stricter with their children in regards to school than his was.

Another respondent (P16a) from Sogakorpe in the Volta Region expressed that his parenting perspective clashed heavily not only with his wife from Elmina (P16b), but

with his children as well. Neither of them agreed with the strict, harsh discipline that came naturally to him, and that was a challenge for them. About these differences and the challenges they brought to their family he stated:

"*The cultural impact between the parents and children was a major one. Bringing children into those cultural differences has to be a significant factor in the survival or failure of a marriage relationship*".

4. 4. 2. 5 Cultural traditions of couples

Most of the participants (70% of couples) mentioned the benefits of being able to celebrate two festivals, but for some others (30% of couples), the balance of cultural traditions was a challenge. A participant (P17a) a Fante from Elmina felt it was important to expose their children to both cultures, but for his wife (P17b) an Ewe from Anlo, teaching the children her cultural traditions was hard. She stated:

"*We stay in Elmina so it is quite easy to teach the children his cultural tradition such as festivals, but when it is time for mine he says the children and I cannot go to my hometown because it is far and it is waste of money*".

4. 5 Impact of the observed ethnic differences on the couple's marriage lives

The purpose of this question was to discover the effects that marrying someone from another ethnic group had on one's own identity and probably, the children. Some participants (57.5%) expressed that ICM gave them the opportunity to learn about other cultures, rather than being confined to one's own heritage and cultural norms alone. It broadened their horizons and made them realise that there is much more in the world that could be explored and realised.

Other participants (42.5%) expressed that they were still the same and that nothing much has changed as a result of marrying someone from another culture. This was greatly manifested in the fact that couples still identified themselves with their original ethnic group, regardless of their marriage. P9b expressed that;

"*I eat what I feel like eating even if my husband doesn't eat that food, he doesn't restrict me on my choice of food or language*".

Many participants (80%) were optimistic that their children will have the best of both cultures in the general society. Inter-cultural marriages are becoming more common, and many children have this new, unique identity that is celebrated. One respondent (P5a) stated that;

"*Most children now communicate in English, so children of inter-cultural marriages will not be at a disadvantage*".

Among 70% of couples who wanted to maintain an association with two different ethnic groups, there was a bit of tension as to what would be the right balance and what would be the effect on the children belonging to either culture. The general consensus was that trying to belong to two ethnic groups would ultimately cause confusion for the children, which could eventually make them reject both. Nevertheless, children of couples (2 couples) who were very strict in denying them an association with the spouses' family were received with frowning and rejection by that family.

4.6. Coping strategies adopted by couples to ensure functionality of marriage

(B factor)

Resistance resources, or coping strategies, are what these couples turned to in hard times to help them cope. The couples interviewed used a wide range of resources to help them through their challenges. The most common have been listed as, humour (100%), learning about the other's culture (51%), social networks (46%), supportive communication (42.5%), caring and loving actions (40%), personal preparation (29%), religion (16.5%), working towards common goals (12%) and binding daily chores (8.3%).

4. 6. 1. Humour

All participants (100%) specifically mentioned humour as a coping resource for them. One respondent (P13a) shared that humour is very important to them and that sharing funny things together with his wife (P13b) is a basis of their friendship. All of the interviews were interspersed with laughter as participants shared some memories of challenges and how they used humour to curb a particular challenge with the researcher. The participants stated that they enjoyed laughing with their partners. P10b recalled an event in which she used humour as a resource stating that:

'*I made fun with my husbands' ethnic group that they believed so much in superstitions which make them old fashioned. When I realised that he was angry, I quickly talked about something funny which happened at my work place and he burst into laughter. That saved me from his anger*'.

However, some participants (22.5%) also clarified that some types of humour were not helpful. One interviewee (P14b) was quick to point out that laughter can be challenge relieving, but must be well timed and used in an effective way. She said:

"*I laughed over an issue but my husband got intimidated the more, hence I had to use a different strategy to manage that specific challenge*"

4. 6. 2. Learning about the other's culture

All of the couples (100%) talked about how important learning each other's culture was to their relationship, and as a resource to combat challenges. An important distinction in these couples from others mentioned in the literature is that neither spouse in these marriages gave up their own culture when they married someone from a different one. Instead, all of these couples talked about ways they worked to incorporate each other's cultures into their personal family culture together.

All of the couples in some ways made efforts to learn about each other's cultures, and to teach their spouse about their own. In this category, culture was defined broadly as both the traits and customs of the place of origin, and as the specific interests and hobbies of their spouse. Those that did not know their spouse's first language made efforts to pick up words and phrases, even when they communicate with their spouse in a different language. All had learned some of the background and history of their spouse's ethnicity.

One participant from Elmina (P13a) gave an example that, when he is with his wife (P13b), he sometimes asks for things in Nzema, even though Nzema is his wife's native language and not his. He again commented on how nice it was to visit his wife's family and communicate with them in their mother tongue. He also mentioned specific hobbies and interests he and his wife developed because they knew their spouse was interested in those and they wanted to share.

Another participant from Anlo P17b referred to her husband (P17a) a Fante from Cape Coast as "*the best Ewe I have ever known" because of his respect for and knowledge of my Ewe culture*". She considered her husband's appreciation for her ethnic language as a resource for them. In addition, she has also learned some history regarding her husband's ethnic background. According to P17b, she has learned how to prepare 'fante fante', a local dish mainly eaten by the Fantes.

The participants also put effort into learning what parts of their own and their partner's cultures were ones they wanted to keep and emphasise in their family, and also made conscious effort not to carry on traditions and cultural norms they felt were harmful. All the participants (100%) have made conscious efforts to better know where their spouse is coming from, and what makes them happy.

4. 6. 3. Seeking professional help (books, counseling, etc.)

In addition to learning specifically about their spouse and their spouse's culture, some of these participants (82.5%) also talked about specific efforts they have made to learn about marriage, and about the opposite gender. A couple (P8) both felt it was important at times to seek professional help in solving their differences. Some couples (80%) have sought out counseling at times when they felt they needed someone who they thought could be of helpful advice to help them resolve a challenge. A respondent (P1b) stated;

"*I know one of the things that has made a big difference is that I took part in seminars that were pertinent to what was going on in my life, either how to raise children, how to relate to your in-laws, or marriage relationships. I did not come into this marriage very well equipped to know what a successful marriage was. I realised earlier on that I didn't have all the tools that I needed to deal with cultural differences. I sought out professional help from Pastors and church leaders*".

4. 6. 4. Social networks

The literature states that one of the biggest challenges inter-cultural couples face is disapproval and lack of support from others for their relationship. These participants did mention some of that disapproval from others as a challenge, but they also listed the support they did get as a coping resource they drew on heavily. This section on social networks discusses two kinds that came up in the interviews; support from others such as the family, friends and society for their relationship, and the support they felt from each other.

4. 6. 4. 1 Support from others (family, friends and society)

Except for four couple's parents (P15, P1, P16 and P4), all of the participants (80%) stated that their families supported their marriage once it happened, and have remained supportive since. All found that concerns in the beginning were easily laid to rest and that support of their families has been huge resource to them individually and as a couple. In many cases, relatives lived faraway and practical help was not possible. Instead, mental support, when available was seen to be crucial. A participant (P10b) spoke of a sister who had married outside of their culture before her, and how that normalised her marriage. Another participant (P8b) also spoke of how knowing her parents were there for her gave her the strength to continue working on her marriage when things got rough. She expressed that;

"*Yes, I had parents I could turn to. Parents that never said fine, then come on home. But always, my parents, especially at the beginning, my dad would always say, listen, I think you should work on it, but if you need to leave, there's always a place for you to come. And that alone, to know that there is somebody behind me and to lean on if I need it was a huge resource*".

Friends also provided a resource for these couples. When asked about disapproval from friends or society for their relationship, many of the couples (95%) replied that they had never felt any at all. On the contrary, they felt that friends and society were very accepting and even encouraging of their inter-cultural marriage. As P2b, an Ashanti shared her experience:

"*We were married in court in Kumasi by an Ewe judge*".

Other participants (32.5%) talked about how much they relied on the support they got from their religious groups through social activities and faith based ones, such as the bible study group, women and men's ministry they attend. Others (22.5% of participants) mentioned a few friends who were also inter-culturally married, who shared their experiences with them before their marriage.

4. 6. 4. 2 Support for each other

Participants (45%) showed a lot of support for their spouses, both through the stories they told and experiences mentioned. They also spoke admiringly of their spouses and often gave examples and appreciation for what the other had done. When pointed out, the participants stated that this appreciation and support from each other was a resource to them. One participant (P9a) specifically stated that his wife cooks for him, even when she is not hungry, and that he was grateful, even if he does not show it often. Another, (P4a) also spoke of how proud he was of his wife's skills in training the children and cooking. One other participant (P18b) told of her husband's accomplishments in the fishing business and commended her husband in a passionate way for being able to manage his workers and keep proper accounts so that the family will be financially stable.

Examples were also given of times in the past where couples have used this resource in combating challenges. A husband (P15a) physically stood up for his wife against his brother, sending the message that insults against her were now against him as well. The wife (P15b) attributed the husband's support for her against his parents as being pivotal to their marriage. She stated:

"*I think that if he had ever taken his parents' side against me, I don't think that we would have made it this far*".

4. 6. 5 Supportive communication

When asked how they dealt with challenges so as not to let it destroy their marriage, every one of these couples (100%) mentioned communication as key. A comment of a participant (P6a) showed the importance of communication to his marriage. When asked if he and his wife had ever sought out counseling or professional help, he replied, "*We counsel ourselves!*" 30% of participants also felt that nonverbal communication was an important resource as well. They talked about knowing when to talk and when to give each other space as another aspect of communication that helped them to cope. These couples were each other's best friends, and felt about their partners as one participant (P2a) stated:

"*Basically my wife is my best friend; she is the one I talk to most of the time. If something is bothering me, if something comes up, I just talk to her*".

They felt this friendship and their ability to talk to each other were the first resource they turned to when things got hard. Another respondent, (P20a) also stated:

"*I, for one, think that one of the reasons that our marriage has endured is because I don't ever get tired of talking to my spouse. I would say talking is one of our pastimes, we enjoy talking to each other*".

These couples worked to have open lines of communication between them, and to always feel that they could talk to each other. They did not let things build up between them; as a participant (P5b) puts it, "*we didn't let anything eat us up, so that we got depressed or discouraged*"." While these couples did not set aside time to talk regularly, they made talking a priority when it was needed.

4. 6. 6 Working towards common goals together

Working towards common goals was listed as a way these couples coped with stressors. One interviewee (P11b) felt that their work together for their fishing business forced them to communicate and work things out, as well as provided an opportunity for them to spend time together and get to know each other more.

Others (20% of participants) spoke of parenting as another common goal they worked on. For them, presenting a united forum for their children was important. For others (3 couples), finding ways to teach their children about both cultures provided a common goal for them to work towards achieving it together. One participant (P5a) recalls;

"*It is both fascinating and interesting when we are with the children one evening talking about each other's culture, those moments bring us together and for that period, whatever we were upset about passes through the window*".

4. 6. 7. Personal preparation

The couples felt that their own personal preparation for marriage through acculturation, life experience, and personal coping skills were resources for their marriage. Some

participants (15%) stated that their own level of acculturation to their partner's culture helped in dealing with challenges in their marriage. Others (7.5%) also spoke of how their experiences with hard times in their youth through depressions prepared them to cope with the challenges that came with marriage. A respondent (P7b) credited part of her success to resolutions she made as a teen not to perpetuate the cycle of divorces she saw in her own family.

A couple who had been married for the second time around (P18), stated that life experience and their experiences from their first marriage have served as resources to them in the marriage. P18a stated:

"*Like she has learned from her other marriage, I learned from my other marriage. And things that didn't go well over there, I don't bring them over here*".

4. 6. 8. Religion of respondents

All of the participants (100%) listed religion as a resource they used. They felt that both the shared activity of practicing religion and the things taught to them by their faiths served as buffers to challenges. While some of the couples (15%) were not of the same faith in the beginning of their marriage, 95% of couples now both participate in the same religion together. Only one couple were still of different faiths. Some participants (32.5%) stated that following the precepts taught in their religious groups prevented other problems they feel they might have had without their faith. Others (42.5%) also talked about their religious beliefs providing a broader culture that overcame other cultural differences they had. One participant (P11b) said:

"*I think the religious group, brings certain values that tend to overcome cultural differences, although not completely, but that creates the commitment*".

Another (P8b) added;

"*To me it was the knowledge that something beyond myself had chosen him to be my life companion and, during difficult times, when I wanted to give up or runaway, or whatever, I would say to myself no, it might be awful right now, but will get better if I continue to try to do the right thing*".

The religious practices of praying, reading together, and trying to live their religion were also important. One other participant (P20a) stated that their recent practice of praying aloud together has made a big difference in their marriage. Some respondents (47.5%) stated that praying and studying scriptures together helped them. All the couples (95%) with the exception of one stated that their partners being of the same faith they were was important and provided a sense of security to the relationship.

4. 6. 9. Binding daily chores

Fluent everyday life consists of simple things as described by the research participants. Like in any relationship, spouses in inter-ethnic marriages appreciated basic, balanced everyday life instead of, for example, expensive gifts or presents.

"*When we started to do things together and function as a family… everything changed… I noticed that it did me a favour…*" said P16b.

Shared daily chores, such as washing dishes, cleaning, and taking care of children, represented these small matters referred by the participants. One of the interviewees (P10b) told that their marriage was a happy one if they were able to find moments together in their everyday life, for example preparing a meal together, watching a film after children's bedtime, or something similar.

'I like doing things and going to places together. We for example, cook together and chat… We have not ever been saying that you wash dishes and clean up, and you do this and that, but we both do always what is needed… and if I, for example, have a headache, he says to me that I should go to sleep and I will take care of it…' (P10b).

Regardless of the way of finding time together, doing the effort for the relationship mattered. Interviewees described how important it was to show caring concretely and by doing things together.

4. 6. 10 Caring and loving actions

Many interviewees (37.5%) talked about the importance of time spent together. While some of them (20%) appreciated little, daily honours, others (10%) preferred breakaways from the everyday life. Gifts or gentle gestures and favours were considered as manifestations of love. Physical intimacy and its importance to the quality of relationship were mentioned in all interviews.

"Of course, it [sex] *cannot be the same any longer… passionate, like in the beginning… now, it is like; we can hold our hands and it does not always have to lead to anything…"* P4b reported.

4. 7 Concluding Thoughts

The final segment of the interview provided participants the opportunity to mention any last thoughts, reflect on the topic under investigation, and to indicate if they were interested in being updated about the progress of the research. The comments

referenced here helped bring the interview to a reasonable conclusion and to thank the couples for their willingness to participate in the research.

4. 7. 1 Additional significant information

Prior to concluding the interview, the respondents were given one final chance to either emphasise a point that they made earlier or to mention other significant information that was not covered in the previous questions. When the interviewees were asked to think of advice they would like to give to other inter-cultural couples, many of them emphasised the meaning of humour. Without an ability to look at the funny sides of daily events, marriages would not have probably last. Humouristic attitude helped to survive with various daily chores when even going to a shopping center necessitated thorough negotiations.

"You have to have a sense of humour. If the corners of your mouth are downward all the time, it starts to affect the family… and the relationship too… So we laugh a lot…" stated P3b.

Another respondent (P13a) also stated *"…and you have to have humour. It helps to pass any time of trouble…"*

4. 7. 2 Impressions about interviews and follow-up information

The research subject was of great interest to all the participants, as it had direct implications on their lives. Some (17.5%) mentioned that they were happy that the University was investigating this phenomenon. They were hopeful that, through this research, a lot of people would have a better understanding of ICM and empathise with members of different ethnicities and cultures. Others (12.5%) mentioned that the interviews gave them an opportunity to discuss many matters which they rarely venture

into as they were able to verbalise opinions that they thought about but never discussed openly.

55% of couples were very interested to know the results of the research, i.e., what other couples said, and the practical application or implementation of the research in their daily lives and in the entire Elmina community. These participants requested that they be updated on the progress of the research.

4. 8. Discussion of results

The fundamental aim of this phenomenological study is to bring awareness to the challenges couples of differing cultural backgrounds face and coping strategies utilised by these couples in order to maintain their marriage. Forty extensive interviews were conducted with spouses in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina, in order to answer four research questions: (1) What are the ethnic background checks and issues raise by couples and their relatives/friends prior to marriage? (2) What ethnic related challenges do couples of different cultural backgrounds encounter? (3) What impact does the observed ethnic differences have on couple's marriage life? and(4) What strategies do inter-cultural couples adopt to manage the challenges they encounter in their marriage? This chapter presents a more exhaustive analysis of the findings in reference to cited literature vis-à-vis ethnic related challenges and coping strategies of couples in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina.

4.8.1. Ethnic background checks and issues prior to marriage

Many essential pieces of information were revealed in this section that contributed to the overall inquiry. The findings on mate selection in this present study contradict

Reiss' (1976) argument that one's social and cultural background is a key basis of standard by which one chooses a partner; therefore, members in a culture will not generally choose inter-cultural marriage because it negatively violates their culture's prescriptive expectancy for marriages. For the most part, participants (75%) grew up with no negative stereotypes about other ethnicities. Living in a multicultural society enhanced the feeling of co-existence and friendship between everyone.

Like other couples deciding to spend their lives together in marriage, inter-cultural couples have many reasons for their choice to marry. The words of a female participant during the interview point out the importance of recognising that inter-cultural couples are attracted to each other for the same reasons as intra-cultural couples. The findings on factors influencing decision towards inter-cultural marriage confirm a study by Lewis, Yancey and Bletzer (1997) who stated that cultural selection factors tend to be less important in selecting an inter-cultural partner for marriage than non-cultural factors. In other words, as with other couples, inter-cultural couples in Elmina are typically attracted to each other based on other similarities rather than cultural differences. In line with Watts and Henriksen (1999) perspective, inter-cultural couples in Elmina tend to marry because of four important facts: they shared common faith, the attractiveness of the partner, shared similar interests, and socioeconomic similarity.

Another encouraging phenomenon was the fact that couples in this study did not rush into their marriages, but took their time to learn, discuss, and contemplate the risks and sacrifices involved in an ICM. This definitely showed maturity and wisdom on the part of the couples and the ability to understand that marriage is a lifelong commitment.

Although in Western cultures parents no longer play an overt role in arranging marriages, parental approval of the choice of a marital partner one makes is of great psychological importance for most individuals (Duan&Claborne, 2001).From the findings in the study, it is evident that people's decision to marry someone of a different culture inevitably includes the extended network of their parents and even friends' reactions to the marriage and the subsequent relationships with the family and friend network. Many reactions from parents were mild, accepting, and accommodating, which usually rendered a respectful response from their children, based on dialogue. The parents' extreme reactions created animosity and bad feelings within the family unit. It was encouraging to see that most difficulties or misunderstandings have been resolved, with the exception of a few participants (4) who continue to face struggles.

4.8.2. Ethnic related challenges observed by couples in inter-cultural marriages

(A – Factor)

Some common beliefs in the literature are that inter-cultural couples will face challenges resulting from their differing cultural backgrounds, such as stereotypes held by our society about them and their families (Brown, 1987; Hegar & Greif, 1994; Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001; Sung, 1990), cultural differences about lifestyle and family decisions (Biever *et al*., 1998; Laird, 2000; Pearlman, 1996), their personal experiences with oppression (Biever *et al*., 1998; Fernandez, 1996; Forna, 1992, Killian, 2002; Oriti *et al*., 1996; Thompson & Jenal, 1994) and issues relating to their children and childrearing factors (Atkin, 2001; Forna, 1992; Grove, 1994; Hegar & Greif, 1994; Sung, 1990).

Couples in this study (90%), with the exception of the few (10% who reported they are still struggling with family disapproval), did not report their biggest challenges as

stemming from their cultural differences. When first questioned about their challenges, they in fact felt they did not face many challenges at all that were due to their different cultures. However, they did vocalise stories and experiences that fit with the challenges stated in the literature. Two factors may contribute to their not listing these experiences as challenges. The first could be that the time removed from these challenges (the majority of them occurred before marriage or just after) caused them to remember them as being less of a challenge than they were at the time (the halo effect). Another factor that may have played a part in this finding was the age of the participants involved (three of the couples were in their fifties and sixties) and the time removed from the earliest years of their relationship, when most of these issues stated in the literature will surface. The couples may not have listed challenges because they simply did not remember them.

This finding of not feeling challenges stemmed from cultural differences was in fact consistent with findings in other studies, such as Sung's (1990) study which found that participants did not report major cultural differences. Sung also found that religion posed little or no problems with inter-cultural couples just as this study. All participants in this study were Christians (97.5%) with the exception of one who was a Moslem and they all reported having no problem stemming from their religion.

4.8.3 Impact of ethnic differences on couple's marriage lives.

There is no doubt that individuals in ICMs still maintained their unique experiences and identities, which have enriched their marriages and were accepted by all parties involved.

4.8.4 Coping strategies ensuring functionality in inter-ethnic marriages (B –
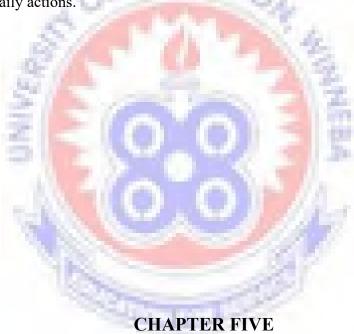
Factor)

The best people to offer advice on how to have a successful ICM are those who have experienced it themselves. Sung's (1990) study researched inter-cultural couples, as this present study did. Giladi-McKelvie (1986) also conducted qualitative interviews with inter-cultural marriages, and found that participants reported a strong sense of religion and both made efforts to learn about each other's culture. This finding was also true in the experiences of the couples in this study. Inter-cultural couples tend to build support networks of like-minded people and build strong bonds with each other as a means to overcome challenges. Other factors included having open communication, humour, achieving common goals and expressing caring and loving actions.

Though participants for the study were not highly educated, they have identified many techniques through which they could enjoy a happy life together. Therefore the findings in the study does not support a statement made by Chan and Wethington (1998) stating that many of the people engaged in stable, well-functioning inter-cultural marriages tend to be more educated, whiles inter-cultural couples that appear to be more vulnerable to marital difficulties tend to have lower level of education.

It is important to realise that different ways of communicating and expressing ourselves make an important part of communication in relationships (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). Gestures, tones, use of space, and facial expressions are part of everyone's communication, and vary between cultures (Frame, 2004; Roos, 2009). When moving to a new ethnicity, culture-specific habits of what one can and should not say would be important to learn. Likewise, nonverbal communication (e.g., body language, positions, and movements) is different in different ethnic groups (Viertola-Cavallari, 2009).

In inter-ethnic marriages, acceptance and intimacy can become tested for example in situations where spouses do not fully understand each other because of language problems. Likewise, cultural differences can cause difficulties if expressions of love are interpreted differently. Therefore, finding the mutual way of showing love and caring that suits both spouses is especially important in inter-ethnic marriages.

Noteworthy, every human being loves and shows love in his or her own way, and spouses should bother to find out each other's personal love styles. Everyday life can turn into a treasure land of love in inter-ethnic marriages if spouses are willing to show caring by daily actions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

5.0 Overview

This chapter summarizes in greater details the findings of this research study, presents the conclusions and offer some recommendations for improvement of inter-cultural marriages.

5.1 Summary of findings

This study was done with the purpose of identifying ethnic related challenges and coping strategies of couples in inter-cultural marriages in Elmina. The objectives for the study were to examine ethnic background checks and issues raised by the couples and their relatives prior to marriage, investigate ethnic related challenges observed by couples in their marriage, identify the impact that the observed ethnic challenges have on the couple's marriage life; and identify the coping strategies adopted by the couples to ensure functionality of their marriage. Various topics were reviewed to find out more about what other people have said relating to this study.

The best people to offer advice on how to have a successful ICM are those who have experienced it themselves. In this regard, the researcher employed a qualitative research approach because this study focused on individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of inter-cultural marriage, describe the essence of this experience and draw certain conclusions about it. The sample for this study was made up of 20 couples in Elmina who were of different ethnic groups. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect information from the participants. Interview was done individually and not as a couple and each interview session lasted about 30 minutes at the participant's own place of preference. Data gathered from the interviews were transcribed, coded and discussed under various themes giving insights into ethnic related challenges and coping strategies of inter-cultural couples.

The major findings of the study have been summarised in the sub-section that follows:

5.1.1 Key Findings

The demographic characteristics of respondents revealed that there is a wide range of ethnic diversity in Elmina and 55% had the basic certificate as their highest level of education whereas 10% had the advanced level certificate as their highest level of education. None of the respondents reported having no children.

Furthermore, 62.5% of respondents indicated that they selected their spouses based on physical attraction and 30 of the respondents had no negative stereotype about any other cultures and that they were open to inter-cultural marriage.Family (80%) and friends showed a great deal of support for couple's decision to marry from a different ethnic group.

It was also revealed in the study that couples go through a lot of challenges due to the differences in culture with the highest reported challenge as child upbringing. Participants again indicated that their marriage to culturally diverse person has not changed their own identity but has rather broadened their horizon about other cultures.

With regard to coping strategies adopted by couples to ensure functionality of their marriage, 100% specifically mentioned humour.

5.2. Conclusions

In the current global climate, there is both increased tension and greater openness. People are more likely to engage in activities that cross ethnic boundaries. However, there also continues to be prejudice and fear about ethnic groups with whom many people have little contact.

The ongoing debate about the perception of inter-cultural marriage (ICM) in some parts of Ghana is still under discussion and dispute by members of certain Communities.

There are many who are still clearly against the idea of unity between members of different ethnicities, claiming that these marriages only end up in divorce. The findings of this study revealed that there is a clear indication that there are successful and prosperous ICMs among people from a variety of different ethnicities in Elmina. These couples have managed to find practical ways to make their marriages work and to overcome their differences. Even though every marriage may face turbulent times at some point, these couples have resolved their differences and have "figured out their dance". Many factors needed to be considered to view ICM from a panoramic perspective. Family, culture, personal compatibility, and willingness to accept the other were all essential factors in having a successful ICM. There is a clear call from couples in ICMs in Elmina for Ghanaians to remain open, accepting, and willing to nurture these relationships.

In all, it is worth remembering that attempts and efforts to integrate in the new ethnicity do not mean that one should forget his or her own culture. For balanced life and healthy cultural identity, also in marriage, one should pursue balance with one's own and the spouse's culture. The study also showed that especially in inter-ethnic relationships, it is not just the individual spouse's and their fit but also the surrounding people and society can function either a supportive or challenging, even shaking, factor when it comes to the stability and successful development of an inter-cultural relationship.

5.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations to help inter-cultural couples maintain stability and functionality of their marriage are made based on the findings of the study. Couples in inter-cultural marriages are recommended to organise their relationships, make decisions and deal with each other and the larger community. Analysis revealed that

couples experienced most issues as cultural issues. Couples in inter-cultural marriages are recommended to organise their response to cultural differences in a bid to increase dealing with their framing differences, emotional maintenance, positioning in relationship to family, community and societal context. Thus, these strategies provide a basis for interventions that may help inter-cultural couples identify what works for them and strengthen their relationships.

The following recommended points are central to the maintenance and healthy tips of inter-cultural marriages in curbing the issues relating to dealing with cultural differences, openness to inter-cultural marriage, reasons for inter-cultural relationships, appreciation beyond culture, social networks and support. It is vitally important for the couple to find support and position themselves within family, community, and societal context.

Counsellors can use culture as a lens to explore the aspects of difference and opportunities in inter-cultural marriages, being mindful to avoid over-emphasising or under-emphasising the significance of cultural differences among couples based on prior assumptions.

5.4. Suggestions for Future Research

No study is complete in itself, but there is always room for expansion and further study. As the research progressed, there were other questions and subjects which were identified as outside the scope of this study, but still considered worthy of additional study.

First of all there is the need to research on divorced inter-cultural couples. Whether same culture or inter-cultural, all marriages have the potential for separation or divorce.

Nevertheless, identifying circumstances and reasons which may lead to divorce would be extremely beneficial for couples who are or intend to be in an inter-cultural marriage. Again, there is a need to carry out a comparative study of Inter-cultural and Intra-cultural Marriages. All participants in this study were inter-cultural couples in which both spouses were of different ethnicities and their marriages still stand. It would be interesting to further investigate, compare, and contrast the experience of these couples with those of people in same-culture marriages. The emerging generation of young adults is still marrying from within same ethnicities and may share similar or possibly different experiences with inter-cultural couples. Researching this phenomenon would deepen the knowledge of current marriage trends in Ghana as a whole.

Research should also be conducted on Children of Inter-cultural Marriages. Even though some of the interview questions inquired about the effect of inter-cultural marriage on the children, the couples responded from their own experience and based on their opinions. It would be interesting to hear directly from the children about their own experiences of living in a home with parents who come from different cultures and any effect that this might have had on their upbringing. Another question to consider is how culture affected their upbringing and if they felt more compelled towards either culture.

Additionally, researchers could conduct a quantitative study exploring Ethnic Related Challenges in Inter-cultural Marriages. This type of study would survey a greater number of participants and perhaps add additional information necessary to understanding inter-cultural marriages.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTRODUCTORY LETTER

The purpose of this study will be to understand how couples of different ethnic backgrounds have built long-term marriages and have overcome some barriers in the marriage. You will be asked to participate in a 30 - 1hour interview. During this interview you will be asked about the challenges you have experienced in your marriage, what challenges you relate to being part of an inter-cultural couple, and what

you have done to overcome those challenges and build a happy marriage. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience in a mutually agreed upon location, and will be audio taped to make sure we understand exactly what was said.

The researcher anticipates that there will be no risk to you as a result of your participation in this research study. The researcher will ensure that your information will be kept confidential. In an effort to really understand all the components of your experience, the interview will include some questions about emotional issues; however, you may decline to answer any question at any time.

As a result of participating in this study you may feel empowered and feel a sense of satisfaction because you have contributed to an important study that may benefit both other couples seeking successful inter-cultural marriages, and those professionals who work with them in building an effective way of working. Every effort will be made to keep all information you provide in the strictest confidence. Any specific identifying information will be omitted from your transcript (e.g., name changes, age). Your responses will be kept locked for the duration of the project and access will only be allowed to the researcher and her assistant. After the study has been completed your name and any other identifying information will not be reported in any publications or presentations, and videotapes will be destroyed. Once the data collection is complete and the interviews are transcribed, a copy of your interview transcription will be sent to you if you so request. If there are any portions of the interview you wish to change in order to protect your confidentiality, you may do so and send it back to the researcher by the date designated. You may also highlight any portion of your transcription that you do not wish to be quoted later when the research project data analysis is reported. These highlights can be sent back to the researcher as well. If you do not respond to the interview transcription by the designated date, the researcher will assume that you do

not wish to make any changes. Your participation is completely voluntary and there will be no compensation other than the researcher's appreciation for your time. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions and you may drop out at any time.

Thank You,

……………………

Cynthia Sappor

APPENDIX B

Participants Permission

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research project. I have read and understand the Informed Consent and the conditions of this project. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project by signing my name on the line below. I realise that, although I choose to participate right now, I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without any penalty.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questions

Gender: Male (   ) female (   )

Age: …………………………………………

Ethnicity: …………………………………………..

First language: …………………………………….

Other languages spoken: …………………………………………….

Highest level of education: …………………………………………….

Number of years in current marriage: …………………………………….

Number of children in marriage: ……………………………………………

Sex and Ages of children: ……………………………………………

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Preliminary Questions

1. Where did you meet your partner

2. How did you meet you partner?

Ethnic Background Checks and Issues Raised by Couples and their Relatives or Friends Prior to Marriage

1. Had you ever thought that you would marry someone outside of your culture?

2. Were you aware that your partner is not of the same cultural background as yours?

3. Did you consider the cultural background of your partner before marrying him/her?

4. What influenced you to marry your partner regardless of the differences in cultural background?

5. How did your family and friends react to you getting married to someone of a different cultural background?

6. What is your current relationship with your family and friends?

Ethnic Related Challenges Observed by Couples in their Marriage

1. Do you think your marriage is different from same culture couples you know? What makes/does not make it different?

2. What do you feel your biggest challenges as a married couple have been?

3. Do you feel these challenges were influenced by your different ethnic backgrounds? How or how not?

4. What other cultural elements pose challenges in your marriage?

Impact of the Observed Ethnic Differences on Couples Marriage Lives

1. Are the differences in ethnicity affecting your individual identity in any way? How or how not?

2. Do you feel that the difference in your ethnic background is affecting your children in any way? How or how not?

Coping Strategies Adopted by Couples to Ensure Functionality of their Marriage

1. How have you managed to stay together?

2. What are the things that have helped you to cope with the challenges you have encountered in your marriage so far?

3. Are there other measures you would want to employ to ensure stability in your relationship?

Concluding Thoughts

1. Do you have any other significant information that was not covered in the interview?

2. What was your impression on the interview and would you like any follow up information?