The impact of cross-cultural transition on intercultural relationships using a strengths-based approach

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THE IMPACT OF CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSITION ON INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS USING A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the
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in collaboration with
The Intercultural Communication Institute
Portland, Oregon

2012
THE IMPACT OF CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSITION ON INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS USING A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH

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Kristen Naylor Calderon
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Margarita Clark. I never realized what a positive influence she had on my life until the last few years that she was alive. She contributed immensely to my love and passion for Latino culture, which brought me together with my wonderful husband. I would like to dedicate my hard work to her as well as to every other immigrant in today's world. Those that have moved across cultures and enriched their lives doing so have truly lived. I also dedicate this thesis to every individual committed to bridging cultures and uniting differences in hopes of making this world a better place.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank Kent, Adair, and Elizabeth for their support in the thesis process. I could not have picked a better committee! I am also grateful to my mother who truly acted as my fourth committee member. Her feedback on my ideas was incredibly valuable and her pep talks helped me through the challenging times. My deep gratitude goes to my Chilean husband for his endless support and patience in the long drawn-out path that my graduate education ended up taking. I also want to thank my step children, Lucas and Catalina, as well as the Calderon extended family for understanding that I needed to study instead of spending time together. Finally I want to thank myself for having the patience, self-discipline, and motivation to complete the MAIR program throughout some major life transitions.
The Impact of Cross-Cultural Transition on Intercultural Relationships Using a Strengths-Based Approach

Abstract

by Kristen Naylor Calderon
University of the Pacific
2012

This study explored the ways in which intercultural relationships are affected by cross-cultural transition through the lens of the female experience. Specifically, this research examined (1) in what ways women felt that cross-cultural transition impacted their relationship, especially with regards to cultural values and male-female role taking; and (2) what kinds of benefits women experienced in their relationships as a result of moving across cultures with their partner. A total of 15 non-Chilean women in intercultural relationships with Chilean men were interviewed; all women had lived with their partners in her home country and then moved together to Chile.

Results revealed that all 15 participants maintained at least some of their own core cultural values regardless of conflicting societal pressure after moving to Chile. In addition, 11 women reported adopting Chilean values of being more relaxed surrounding time and schedules as well as openly expressing affection, which directly benefited their families. Female participants who reported gender role shifts in their relationship either
described it as circumstantial since they simultaneously became stay-at-home mothers, or as a direct result of moving to a culture that adhered to stricter notions of male-female role taking. Although about half of the women reported having to make career sacrifices, most felt their roles as females, wives, and mothers directly benefited from moving to Chile due to more affordable domestic help and living in a more child friendly culture.

Finally, although most women discussed some of the challenges of moving across cultures with their partner, 11 women felt their relationship had been strengthened as a result. They also described a number of skills for achieving relationship maintenance: practicing patience, good communication, and a willingness to continually negotiate with one another were the most important abilities for sustaining a highly mobile yet stable intercultural marriage.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Rationale for Study

Intercultural romantic relationships (partnerships, marriages, etc.) are becoming much more common as a result of the increased contact that is taking place across cultures today. Multinational business, study abroad, increased travel, the boost in Internet communication, and heavy migration are just some of the ways that inevitably force people into many different types of intercultural encounters. If indeed “the end of the twentieth century has seen an unprecedented rise in the numbers of mixed marriages because of . . . refugees, wars, famine, work migration, tourism and so forth” (Breger & Hill, 1998, p. 13), then it can be expected that the twenty-first century will bring even more people around the world in contact with one another. Intercultural romance is just one of the natural consequences of globalization that makes it an important area of research, now more than ever.

Throughout the literature on diverse couples, the terminology for describing these types of relationships has varied a great deal. Cross-national, cross-cultural, interracial, and interfaith are just some of the terms that scholars have used in describing couples that come from divergent backgrounds (Kellner, 2009; Mansyur, 1995; Reiter & Gee, 2008; Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006). Rohrlich (1988) identified the inconsistencies in still other terminologies for married persons from different cultures. He argued that the terms mixed marriage, intermarriage, and intercultural marriage do not accurately
reflect distinguishing features of the marriage in which each partner holds unique perceptions, value orientations, and customs. Consequently, he chose to use the term dual-culture marriage in his research. Rohrlich claimed that while the term intercultural marriage focuses on the multiple-culture context, “it lacks the specificity of the two cultures that are involved in the union of two people” (p. 36). I disagree with his opinion and feel that intercultural best describes the interaction between people of two or more cultures. I believe that this term is inclusive of the dynamic nature surrounding different perceptions and value orientations, and it is precisely this specificity that will be explored in this study.

Therefore, intercultural relationship, for the purposes of this thesis, is defined as a committed, romantic tie between two people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who were raised in different countries speaking different languages, which may or may not signify differences in race and/or religion (Breger & Hill, 1998; Bognar, 2000; Gaines & Agnew, 2003; Maretzki, 1977; Romano, 2008). Although intercultural relationships may consist of same-sex pairs, discussion in this particular study will refer to male-female pairs only. In addition, the term partner will be used in this research instead of spouse to be inclusive of individuals within long term, co-habiting relationships.

Research has shown that couples in intercultural relationships tend to be highly mobile since many of them either visit their home countries often or move continuously between them: “Going back is a recurrent theme among many intercultural couples” (Hirschoff, 1990, p. 16). For this reason, further research is necessary to understand the ways in which relationships might be impacted as a result of cross-cultural transition.
There are a number of different factors that might influence a couple's own culture as they experience international transition together. In this study, relational culture will be referred to as the way in which intercultural couples combine different influences from their multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds as suggested by Dimitrov (2002). Dimitrov asserted, "intercultural couples build a unique relational culture that combines norms, values, roles, and languages from both of their cultural backgrounds . . . [which] evolves through a process of trial-and-error" (p. 5). Studying this aspect of couple culture in the context of cross-cultural transition is the primary motivation for this study.

Cultural values, gender roles, and adaptation generally play an important part in an intercultural couple's unique relationship as they negotiate their differences. If the couple moves from one country to another, their unique relational culture may be transformed as a result of the particular surrounding culture in which they live. The intention of this qualitative study is to explore these factors by examining women's experiences regarding the transition from their own home culture to their partner's home culture, and determining how their relationship was impacted as a result. Although many intercultural couples decide to move to a third culture (neither the home culture of either partner), for the purposes of this study, only those couples that transitioned from one person's home culture to the second person's home culture will be examined. Factors such as value systems and gender role behaviors may play important functions in how couple culture evolves in the midst of considerable transition. The concept of family and its link to societal orientation are important moderating factors as well.

In general, a focus on assets or strengths is lacking in the current literature when it comes to analyzing how intercultural couples make their relationships last. There is even
less information available on how couples benefit from cross-cultural adaptation challenges, or how their relationships might be enriched as a result. Problem areas and pitfalls tend to be the focus of discussion, and most peer-reviewed articles on intercultural relationships come from a counseling perspective where marital dissatisfaction is highlighted.

I would like to suggest that intercultural couples might have certain unique coping strategies during cross-cultural transition due to the fact that two or more cultures are entwined in their relationship on a daily basis. They have already been faced with numerous cultural differences, have created their own relational culture, and found a middle ground amidst dissimilarity. Therefore, they may have certain skills or practices to fall back on during the challenges of cross-cultural transition that a monocultural couple might not have. This study will take a more positive focus by examining women’s experiences of remaining in committed long-term intercultural relationships while living highly mobile lifestyles. Specifically, the thesis hopes to uncover some of the benefits women might experience in this unique set of circumstances.

My own interest in this topic comes from being in an intercultural marriage myself. My spouse and I have decided to take turns living in each other’s home country so that each has the experience of living near her/his family while also taking advantage of what each country has to offer. Considerable adaptations have had to be made on both of our parts to accommodate this complicated lifestyle. Since intercultural relationships are on the rise and many couples are choosing this way of life, investigation into these themes is worthy of greater attention.
Research Purpose

While there exists a great deal of research on cross-cultural transition and on intercultural relationships, little research has specifically addressed the interaction of the two. This study will attempt to combine these topic areas by addressing the following research questions:

RQ 1—In what ways do women feel that cross-cultural transition has impacted their relationship with regards to cultural values and male-female role-taking? In what other ways might their relationship dynamics have changed as a direct result of moving across cultures with their partner?

RQ 2—What kinds of benefits have women experienced in their relationships as a result of moving across cultures with their partner? How has experiencing cross-cultural transition together prepared them for managing ongoing intercultural issues within their relationship?

Usefulness of Research

As a result of the gap in the literature on this topic area, this study will offer enormous contributions for a number of different reasons. First, it would elicit deeper understanding around how certain elements of a romantic relationship can be affected by cross-cultural transition when the partners have distinct value systems and may be influenced by the societal norms within the country in which they are living. This research could benefit areas such as international business where global executives are sent abroad with their spouses. It would also benefit companies that assist in international relocation or private consultants who provide support to families who are moving abroad. In addition, this study could benefit the area of cross-cultural counseling,
especially for those who provide therapy to diverse couples who have moved abroad together.

Finally, this research could benefit educators of intercultural relations who are devoted to bridging cultural differences, especially between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. It will not only explore these cultural differences, but also serve to reveal how couples from these cultures make their partnership work when moving abroad together. Couples in these circumstances could learn about some of the potential rewards to experiencing cross-cultural transition together and that could help decrease their anxiety about the potential challenges in store. According to Breger and Hill (1998), “there are no internationally available statistics on mixed marriages contracted in one country, nor on what happens to the couple if they leave and live elsewhere” (p. 27). The absence of literature on intercultural marriages in cross-cultural transition, especially how these relationships might be strengthened as a result inspired me to design this exploratory study.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Overview

Upon a thorough review of the literature, very little was found that specifically examined intercultural couples in the context of cross-cultural transition. Even less information was available specifically on how cultural values, gender roles, and other dynamic forces in a relationship are impacted by this kind of transition. The literature that was available surrounding these topics could be divided into four general areas: (1) intercultural relationships, (2) cultural values, (3) male-female role taking, and (4) cross-cultural transition and adaptation. Investigation into these themes will be the point of discussion in the sections that follow.

Intercultural Relationships

Much of the literature on intercultural relationships emphasized the assumption that partners face many more difficulties than those in monocultural relationships. Few publications had looked at the rewards these intricate relationships could provide from a strengths perspective, and the literature tended to stress the following terminology: challenges, problems, pitfalls, or marital dissatisfaction (Cools, 2009; Fontaine & Dorch, 1980; Mansyur, 1995; Nagata, 1978; Romano, 2008; Shelling & Fraser-Smith, 2008). Since these types of relationships were often looked at from a deficits perspective of being problematic, it was not surprising that much of the current literature had to do with counseling or couple’s therapy (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Falicov, 1986; Hsu, 2001;
McFadden, 2001; Molina, Estrada, & Burnett, 2004). One study by Troy et al. (2006) sought to specifically disprove the notion that interracial couples had lower relationship quality than intraracial couples. This study found that compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples actually reported much higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, Gaines and Agnew (2003) argued that “despite the odds they face, many intercultural couples successfully maintain stable, satisfying relationships over time” (p. 249). In addition, they purported that “few empirical studies have yielded substantive insight into the relationship maintenance processes that promote marital stability among intercultural couples” (p. 233). Two studies, Donovan (2004) and Reiter and Gee (2008), provided important exceptions. Donovan found that although couples revealed stressors in their intercultural relationship, the coping resources they used were communication, humor, support, learning about one another’s culture, and working towards common goals. Reiter and Gee discovered that open communication and partner support helped decrease intercultural relationship distress.

While the above research was valuable, still further investigation into the benefits of intercultural relationships was needed. Fontaine and Dorch (1980) asserted that “very little research has focused on the benefits of close intercultural relationships - benefits in terms of cross-cultural learning, reduced prejudice, and personal growth and enrichment” (p. 330). For these reasons, the present study will be an invaluable contribution to the gap in this part of the literature. Part of the focus of this research was to explore whether women in intercultural relationships reported growth and enrichment in their partnership, and/or whether they experienced benefits as a result of moving across cultures with their partner.
A unique study by Lorig (1997) examined a similar demographic group to the current thesis and provided longitudinal data on the acculturation experiences after moving to Chile of North American women married to Chilean men. This qualitative study involved in depth interviews across 3 years that exposed women’s salient issues as they adjusted to living in Chile with their spouses. Experiencing financial stress and career challenges were highlighted as major themes as well as the importance of having support networks. Participants also went into great depth about their identity adjustment issues and the process in which they formed new identities over the years living in Chile. Finally, the clashes they felt between their own culture and Chilean culture were salient in their acculturation experiences.

In Lorig’s (1997) study, interviews were very open-ended and the participants discussed their personal journeys throughout their transition. The challenges were highlighted, and they spoke of their immense difficulty in adjusting to Chilean life where their gender, genetic heritage, and roles as wives were suddenly put to question. One of the few advantages they spoke of with regards to their transition to living in Chile was of their children’s language education and resulting fluency in multiple languages. Although this study uncovered valuable information, it did not focus on the advantages to or benefits women experienced in their relationships in the context of cross-cultural transition. The current thesis will build on this research by taking a more positive look at the difficult transition made by international women as they moved to Chile with their Chilean partners.

In a preliminary study in 2011, I uncovered some important issues Chilean/international couples faced when they moved from one partner’s home culture to the
other partner’s home culture. The research explored what relationship challenges and benefits intercultural couples experienced as well as how couples experienced cultural adaptation together. Thirty-three female participants completed an online survey and cited relationship stress, change in gender role expectations, and shifts in power dynamics as moderately significant in their experiences. They recognized that certain aspects in their relationships suffered as a result of the emotionally stressful transition such as increased arguing and overwhelming social/familial engagements. Yet, as a couple, they relied on open communication and humor to overcome the challenges. Although the women reported that they adapted in different ways from their partners, they felt their relationships were strengthened by an increased understanding for one another as a result of living in each other’s cultural context.

In sum, participants easily identified the skills they used within their relationship and the benefits they experienced in the face of challenge. These findings motivated me to further explore these topics in the current thesis through in-depth face-to-face interviews. Furthermore, since relationship challenges were already identified in the previous study (2011), I preferred to take a positive approach in the current thesis by interviewing women who have stayed together with their partners in these circumstances. This approach should identify any additional skills and resources women have relied upon in order to maintain their relationships while facing enormous transition.

Additional research by Romano (2008) uncovered some of the benefits intercultural couples experienced, instead of just the challenges. Numerous intercultural couples were interviewed who reported that “what keeps life interesting for them is the challenge of continuous discovery, the possibility of reshaping their own perspective as a
result of encountering their partner's" (p. 23). This may have important implications for an intercultural couples' ability to cope with cross-cultural transition.

Tseng (1977) was one of the first scholars to analyze the extent to which intercultural couples mingle their individual cultural backgrounds with one another. He argued that the cultures and value systems each partner brought to the relationship either led to considerable conflict or positive enrichment. The differences, he argued, have a tendency of continually influencing each other, even in the long-term. New value systems might also be created due to the merging of different beliefs, what Tseng described as synthesis. He stated,

Culture is something which is learned through experiences in early life. An individual has developed strong emotional attachments to his culture—associated with his belief system, values, and habits—his style of life. In the process of intercultural marriage adjustment, he has to learn how to overcome, correct, and adjust his emotional reaction to the necessary change and expansion of his cultural behavior. (p. 97)

In analyzing this adjustment process, Tseng created a theoretical basis by which intercultural couples try on new behavior patterns and/or cultural traditions to negotiate their differences.

Tseng's (1977) theory included four different terms for describing certain patterns of intercultural adjustment within relationships: one-way adjustment, alternative adjustment, mixing, and creative adjustment. One-way adjustment happens when one partner gives up his or her own cultural values or behavior and adopts those of the spouse. This can happen due to one partner's culture being more dominant, or can also be due to the practicality of everyday living in the country or culture in which the couple is living. Alternative adjustment occurs when the spouses alternate cultural behaviors between them, neither giving up their individual ways, nor mixing them together.
Mixing, the most frequent adjustment pattern, according to Tseng, occurs when the couple combines their values and behaviors together. Finally, creative adjustment occurs when the spouses create an entirely new behavior pattern instead of adopting either his or her customs. This thesis will help test this theory and take it a step further by providing more in-depth understanding about not just the adjustment patterns intercultural couples make within their union, but also how cross-cultural transition influences this factor.

In a similar light, Markoff (1977) addressed the problem areas intercultural couples face and described problem-solving approaches that he called the asymmetric solution versus the symmetric solution. The asymmetric solution occurs when "one of the marital partners adopts, almost entirely or in large part, the culture of the other, and appears largely to give up his or her own culture" (p. 60). Conversely, the symmetric solution occurs when "each partner gives up some elements of his own culture and adopts some elements of the other's culture, with a rough sort of equivalence" (p. 60). Markoff argued that the latter solution would lead to a more successful outcome. Similarly, Tseng (1977) argued that achieving a healthy balance between the two cultures is what helps make an intercultural marriage succeed. Just what makes an intercultural marriage succeed in the face of cross-cultural transition? Do women report they adopted new values upon moving to their partner's culture? How did their own cultural values fit into the relationship in the new country—were they incorporated or left out? The current research will help unveil the answers to these questions.

Romano (2008) also proposed a more recent theory that described four different types of intercultural marital models for managing cultural differences. The first, submission/immersion refers to the dynamic in which one partner submits to the other
partner's culture yet is unaware that he/she has done so. Obliteration refers to the situation in which couples deny their individual cultures, and in fact erase them in order to manage their differences. Compromise refers to the dynamic in which each partner gives up some of their own important cultural values or beliefs to include some of the other partner's cultural values or beliefs. Finally, consensus refers to an agreement between couples to include important aspects of each of their cultures. Consensus is different from compromise in that it is about working together for solutions instead of making trade-offs and sacrifices. Romano argued that these four marital models encompass all of the ways in which couples deal with the cultural influences in their relationship. What Romano did not examine, however, is how moving between the two partners' cultures could potentially influence these functional systems. Will moving from the female's home country to the male's home country impact the ways in which they manage their differences? This thesis sets out to examine this question.

Evanoff (2006) suggested an alternative model for integrating cultural differences and multiple frames of reference. He proposed that when intercultural dialogue takes place between people who have different ethical norms, it is helpful that they find a common ground, or "third culture" in which new norms can be constructed between them. The end goal, he argued, "is an integration of norms across cultures which serve to govern relationships between individuals in cross-cultural situations" (p. 422). Evanoff recommended this method be used in intercultural interactions as a conflict resolution strategy. Similarly, Dodd (as cited in Dodd & Baldwin, 1998) proposed that intercultural partners develop a new, common culture, or "third" culture perspective to help resolve anxiety and uncertainty. This may have important implications for intercultural couples.
who have experienced cross-cultural transition. Do they construct new norms and create a third-culture common ground to integrate the norms of their own individual cultures? Is a different kind of third-culture constructed depending upon the dominant society in which they are living? The current research is intended to examine how the relational culture of the couple is impacted in these kinds of ways.

Upon a further review of the literature, most other research on intercultural relationships focused on the general cultural differences couples reported. Few studies are available that have looked specifically at the cultural issues that arise directly as a result of the country of residence in which the couple lives; two studies, Cools (2009) and Imamura (1990) provide important exceptions. Cools examined language and communication challenges that arose directly as a result of the intercultural couple’s country of residence. Imamura examined the experiences of foreign wives living in the home countries of their spouses. This study demonstrated their feelings of being marginalized within the culture in which they were living. They had trouble “fitting in” as a result of extreme cultural differences and societal expectations.

A number of studies on intercultural relationships have examined language use and communication styles as one of the most salient cultural differences amongst diverse partners (Breger & Hill, 1998; Cools, 2009; Mansyur, 1995; Telser-Gadow, 1992).

Breger and Hill asserted:

In a mixed marriage where the partners do not share the same mother tongue, the language in which they decide to communicate at home can be symbolic of the extent to which each partner is prepared to forego her or his cultural background and incorporate new elements. (p. 21)
Still other studies have looked at language dependency, and how multilingual partners manage language use both inside and outside of the home (Barbara, 1989; Bognar 2000; Breger & Hill, 1998; Cools, 2009; Dimitrov, 2002; Romano, 2008).

In another article, Rohrlich (1988) explored the nature of communication, self-disclosure, and decision-making power in dual-culture marriages. He argued that couples must communicate openly about their differing perceptions and values in order for the relationship to last. Furthermore, Rohrlich suggested that decision-making is much more complex for couples coming from different cultural backgrounds than for couples coming from one culture. This is partly due to the way in which “cultures impose varying roles within the power structure” (p. 41).

A separate study investigated the complexity of decision making about where to live for cross-national couples (Adams, 2004). She found that many different factors came into play for couples making these decisions such as emotions, influential family and friends, and the on-going nature of the process. These findings revealed the constructive ways in which cross-national couples work together and have the capacity to maintain stability.

Although she studied primarily monocultural couples in this particular study, Ting-Toomey’s (1984) research has very important implications for intercultural couples. She argued that in every kind of marriage, relationship partners constantly negotiate different spheres of marital influence such as who attends to which household chore, and how major decisions are made. The research for this thesis will explore how experiencing cross-cultural transition together impacts decision-making power and adherence to gender roles in intercultural couples.
In another study, Cools (2006) specifically investigated relational dialectics between couples and found that the intercultural dialectics of difference-similarity, and privilege-disadvantage were very relevant in how couples reported issues surrounding cultural differences and communication. Cools discovered that the intercultural dialectic of belonging-exclusion was very significant for the couples and a tension was reported between a sense of belonging and not belonging in the country and culture in which they resided. This study also exposed a number of other cultural issues besides language and communication that the couples discussed as very relevant in their relationship; those issues included friends, raising children, female-male roles, visibility, and traditions. It also included the issue of the adapting spouse, or the one in the couple who was living in a different culture from his or her own culture, and thus adapting in a new environment.

Since a number of studies have already looked at language use and communication styles in intercultural relationships, the current thesis will delve further into the topics that have not received sufficient investigation such as cultural values, male-female roles, and adapting partners. In particular, how might intercultural couples experience these issues when moving from one partner’s home culture to the other partner’s home culture? Furthermore, how might their individual and shared cultural values be impacted by cross-cultural transition?

Cultural Values

According to Bennett (1998), “cultural values are the patterns of goodness and badness people assign to ways of being in the world” (p. 23). Romano (2008) discussed how intercultural couples bring a diverse set of cultural values to a relationship. Their relational culture may be made up of a combined set of values influenced by two or more
cultures. In addition, the culture and society in which a couple is living might very well influence their shared values and thus the relational culture between them, according to Romano (2008). Consequently, partners may adapt to certain societal orientations and cultural values or perhaps even adopt new values that were not salient in their relationship prior. According to Breger and Hill (1998), “where a mixed couple lives seems to play a significant role in the flexibility they have in negotiating around their different cultural expectations” (p. 5). Some individuals may even have personal values that coincide more with their partner's culture than with their own culture or that of the dominant society in which they are living.

Hirschoff (1990) interviewed Peace Corps volunteers in intercultural marriages who reported that they tended to reject what they felt were the negative aspects of each of their national cultures, and embrace the positive aspects only. In Hirschoff’s study, A U.S. American married to a Bolivian stated that he identified more with his wife’s Latin American values than with the U.S. American values in which he was socialized. Some culture-specific value comparisons between individualistic and collectivistic cultures are worthy of discussion due to the demographic makeup of participants in the current study. Although there are vast differences, only the differences relevant to the topics in the research will be reviewed: (1) culture specific values and (2) family.

**Culture specific values.** According to research on cultural values and societal norms, in regions such as North America, Northern and Western Europe, and Australia, people tend to adhere more to the concept of individualism (Hofstede, 2001; Kohls, 1989; Newbold, 1985; Ting Toomey, 1999; Triandis, 1995). On the other hand, in the region of Latin America, people tend to adhere more to the concept of collectivism (Foster, 2002;
Hofstede (2001) differentiated between the two:

Individualism stands for a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after him/herself and her/his immediate family only. Collectivism stands for a society in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (p. 225)

For these reasons, people from countries such as England, Germany, Australia, and the United States tend to value independence, self-reliance, and privacy. On the other hand, the collectivism that exists in Chile, for example, reveals itself through values of interdependence in which a sense of community is prominent, and group goals are prioritized over individual goals. These very different societal orientations can have important implications for intercultural couples as they move amongst them and experience successive impacts on their relationship.

In comparing values and behaviors in institutional and organizational contexts, Hofstede (2001) measured national differences of individualism across fifty countries and three regions. He found that the United States, Australia, and Great Britain scored the highest index values for individualism: 91, 90, and 89, respectively. Germany also scored a high value at 67. Countries in Latin America tended to score much lower on the individualism dimension, though Chile scored 23 in comparison to Venezuela and Ecuador for example: 12, and 8, respectively. This finding demonstrated how concepts of individualism and collectivism at the societal level are essentially "opposite poles of one dimension" (p. 216). Analyzing this societal dimension helps shed light onto the cultural differences in Chile versus the U.S., Australia, the UK, and Germany.
Two other scholars, Triandis (1995) and Kohls (1989), asserted that the value of privacy is characteristic of individualistic societies such as the United States. Kohls explained this concept to foreign visitors to the U.S. in the following way:

Privacy, the ultimate result of individualism, is perhaps even more difficult for the foreigner to comprehend. The word “privacy” does not even exist in many non-Western languages. If it does, it is likely to have a strongly negative connotation, suggesting loneliness or forced isolation from the group. In the United States, privacy is not only seen as a very positive condition, but is also viewed as a requirement which all humans would find equally necessary, desirable and satisfying. (p. 1)

This societal value has important implications for foreigners who move to live in the United States, and for US Americans who move to live in countries in which privacy is not conceptualized. How might intercultural couples manage this difference, especially when moving from a country that values privacy to a country that does not? How might the significant presence of the extended family in a collectivistic setting impact the notion of privacy for an individualistic person? A more in-depth discussion on family culture can be found in the next major section.

In reviewing the literature, another cultural value difference relevant to this study has to do with equality and fairness. According to Kohls (1989), U.S. Americans tend to value egalitarianism where people are treated the same and have equal access to the same opportunities. Women’s liberation movements and the rise of feminist thinking in the U.S. may be one of the reasons why male partners are expected to participate actively in the domestic sphere. Machismo, on the other hand, is a traditional concept in Latin America that signifies excessive masculinity that tends to perpetuate more rigid role delineations between the sexes in which the female is expected to carry out all of the household duties.
Stephenson (2003) found that the “widely popularized concept of machismo has done a real disservice to intercultural understanding between Anglos and Latinos by presenting a narrow and oversimplified view of Latin men” (p. 84). She argued that the concept of machismo is considered outdated by many South Americans, especially now with the vast increase in the last 30 years of women working outside of the home. Along with the increase of females in the workforce, so too has there been an increase of males participating actively in the domestic sphere. Roraff and Camacho (1998) made a culture-specific observation: “Although Chilean society can be described as conservative and traditional, there is no blatant machismo” (p. 66).

Even though most Latin countries are considered patriarchal and class-oriented societies, Stephenson (2003) insisted that South American culture has been specifically described by some as a hidden matriarchy. She suggested that although the father appears to be the patriarch who holds the power in the household, in actuality, the mother has far greater influence. For these reasons, this study hopes to bring about some more in-depth understanding about how these kinds of culture-specific influences impact the intercultural couple moving abroad. After moving to Chile, might women experience blatant machismo with their partners or not? How are women affected by moving to a more conservative and traditional society? This research seeks to explore whether there are shifts in roles and/or value orientations amongst intercultural relationship partners that move from a specific cultural context to the Chilean cultural context.

In contrast to the value of social equality in some individualistic countries, status and class are highly valued in Chilean culture. In her analysis of cultural values in South America, Stephenson (2003) found that “Chile is a profoundly classist society, and
everyone is keenly aware of both his or her own place in society and that of others” (p. 202). According to Stephenson, Latin America has the most unequal economic distribution out of any region in the world, which explains why class and social status are so highly valued in society. For these reasons it will be interesting to find out more about how cultural values and societal influences may impact the intercultural couple that moves from a country that tends to value social equality to a country that tends to value class differences. Might women adopt new values, or experience new benefits surrounding class and status issues that might not have existed before? How might this affect the relationship? Furthermore, how might family influence this factor?

**Family.** A great deal of research demonstrates a link between collectivistic cultures and the importance of family as well as the roles of extended family members (Hofstede, 2001; Imamura, 1986; Dodd & Baldwin, 1998; Markoff, 1977; Stephenson, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Triandis, 1995). Ting-Toomey (1999) described familism (*familismo*) as a social pattern in which family is prioritized much before individual interests. It is the act of placing immense value on the family and is widely practiced around the world.

Like many other Latin countries, Chile places a huge emphasis on family and interdependence of the extended family unit (Stephenson, 2003). This extended kinship system demonstrates how many relatives beyond the nuclear unit are often relied upon for participation in gatherings as well as social and emotional support systems. It is also common that extended family members live under the same roof (Roraff & Camacho, 1988). Large family gatherings are frequent occurrences and those who do not live together often stop by unannounced. In Roraff and Camacho’s (1998) description of
Chilean customs, they described the experience of living with a Chilean host family whereby numerous family members often came over during mealtimes: “Everyday a crowd descended upon the house for lunch” (p. 72).

In contrast, U.S. individualistic culture portrays a very different picture: “rarely do grandparents reside with the families of their children; generally they prefer to maintain their independence” (Newbold, 1985, pp. 2-3). The nuclear family tends to be the main family unit in more individualistic cultures. Less emphasis is placed on extended family members, and many families have grandparents who live long distances from them. Since individualism and privacy are highly valued in these cultures, it is less common to accept external interference of family on one’s own interests and desires. Thus, there exists a concrete cultural difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures surrounding family, roles of extended family members, and social familial commitments. This may have important implications for couples that come from these different backgrounds, and particularly so as they move from one societal orientation to the other.

Dodd and Baldwin (1998) explored how intercultural relationships are deeply linked with the family. They found that family culture profoundly influences relationships since they can be thought of as fundamental perceptual frameworks. They explained how a family culture that has specific rules, norms, social styles, and gender role expectations could have a major impact on the relationship if the other person comes from a very different family culture. For example, if one partner comes from a family that encourages total dependency (the tendency in collectivistic cultures), and the other partner comes from a family that encourages complete autonomy (the tendency in
individualistic cultures), the couple may confront challenges not only in their own relationship, but also as a part of extended family networks.

Graham, Moeai, and Shizuru (1985) found that intercultural couples reported that their relationship problems did not stem from internal issues, but rather external issues surrounding the extended family. Couples made up of U.S. American wives and Samoan husbands together reported that the most intense pressure they felt on their marriage came from the extended-family-in-laws. According to Graham et al., “the marital clash between the so called ‘keeping’ values of American nuclear family and the ‘sharing’ of the extended Polynesian (Samoan) families was evident in this study” (p. 432). Again, this study confirms the existence of divergent family culture when comparing individualistic and collectivistic societies.

In a similar light, Imamura’s (1986) study demonstrated the difficulties that Anglo wives had in adjusting to the family culture in Nigeria. These wives felt overwhelmed by the responsibility placed on them to host extended family members: “Adjusting to unexpected and lengthy stays as well as to the expectation that a meal would always be ready was extremely difficult for the foreign wife” (p. 41). They had this reaction in part due to their own cultural conditioning coming from a society that emphasizes the nuclear family as the primary support group and economic unit. These wives had prioritized the needs of the nuclear family above and beyond that of the extended family, something that they were socialized to value, but that was not culturally acceptable in Nigeria. These results showed that regardless of the country, similar challenges were felt by women who came from individualistic cultures and moved into collectivistic settings where the value of familism is stronger.
Both Markoff (1977) and Falicov (1986) argued that the greater distance the intercultural couple put between themselves and their own families of origin, the more successful their relationship was. Falicov recognized that setting boundaries with the in-laws as far as nuclear family business was concerned was a major issue for those in intercultural relationships. Still other scholars examined best practices for couples in adapting to these kinds of challenges.

Dodd and Baldwin (1998) emphasized the importance of the non-dominant relationship partner in his/her adaptation to the dominant family culture. Being receptive to a new family culture is paramount for adjustment, especially when that person is entering into a new cultural environment. These scholars suggested that open communication and mutual agreement amongst the intercultural couple could facilitate cultural adaptation for the non-dominant member amidst a family culture that is made up of divergent norms and values.

Decision-making and deciding what rules or roles to follow are issues the intercultural couple is sure to face in their family contexts as they navigate cultural differences. What are the experiences of family like for a female moving to her partner’s culture? Does that partner take on the role of intermediary between what his family expects, and what the couple decides as far as rules and roles within their own family? Finding out how couples navigate these kinds of issues in a new cultural context is part of the focus of this research.

While the roles of wife and mother in the nuclear family unit are important, so too are the female roles within the extended family unit, particularly in Chilean culture. In her study, Lorig (1997) found that participants either benefited from the Chilean extended
family culture in Chile, or felt smothered by it. Some received their extended families with open arms partly due to the loss they felt from leaving their own families behind in their home country. Others felt a loss of independence and felt pressured from Chilean extended family to participate in frequent social-familial gatherings, which they described as overwhelming.

In my earlier study conducted in 2011, I also found that one of the most difficult adjustments international women felt in their move to Chile was feeling overwhelmed by their Chilean partner's extended family social gatherings. They reported that the social engagements with extended family members were too frequent, and they felt they had little time alone with their partners or with their own nuclear family. This factor demonstrates the cultural value differences surrounding family culture and how societal expectations influence the roles as female, wife, mother, and extended family member. I did discover some positive findings, however. I found that participants felt they understood their Chilean partners better by observing them in their own cultural context with their families. For these reasons, the current study seeks to further examine the degree to which these extended family gatherings have had a positive impact on women in intercultural relationships. Besides being overwhelming, have they found these situations enriching, and if so, has their relationship benefited as a result?

As demonstrated by the review of research, most studies have repeatedly discovered the enormous difficulties intercultural couples face when it comes to the pressures of family culture. Calderon (2011) and Lorig (1997) identified the challenges specifically for foreign women transitioning to Chile. The current thesis sets out to explore whether more positive aspects of the extended family experience exist as well.
Are there benefits to becoming part of a powerful extended family network? Furthermore, do women that come from individualistic cultures feel that their family values have been positively influenced by Chilean culture in any way? How might these factors affect the relational culture in the partnership? Might they feel more connected to one another? The proposed study will set out to examine these questions.

Another vital factor in how relational culture is impacted when couples move abroad together is the behavioral expectations that societies around the world have developed for men and women. Discussion of gender roles and their implications in the intercultural couple experience is the focus of the next section.

**Male-Female Role Taking**

Many scholars have argued that male-female role definition plays an important part in intercultural relationships when so many different layers of culture are involved (Barbara, 1989; Imamura, 1986; Kellner, 2009; Ma, 1996; Refsing, 1998; Romano, 2008). Gender roles, according to Kellner (2009), “define and explain the differences in each partner’s attitudes toward work, power, money, and house-related responsibilities” (p. 226). Some women even actively choose to marry foreigners in order to avoid the strict gender role expectations that are traditionally adhered to in their own native countries (Breger & Hill, 1998).

Barbara (1989) argued that the female or male’s bond that they each hold to their original cultures might have profound impacts on how they play out their gender roles within their relationship. Furthermore, changing circumstances might alter their roles at different times: “Indeed, partners in a mixed couple know right from the start that objective differences exist, but they have not always appreciated how significant these
differences might become at certain moments" (pp. 55-56). What Barbara failed to mention was how significant these differences might become the moment the couple moved from one partner’s culture to the other partner’s culture.

In a different study, Kellner (2009) studied gender perspective amongst cross-cultural relationships. She explained that the identity of the couple must constantly be redefined as a result of the influences from their individual families of origin, the cultural community in which they are a part, and their own children. In her research on gender differentiation, she found that enormous differences existed between individualistic and collectivistic cultures with regards to gender role expectations.

Kellner (2009) suggested that in individualistic cultures, there exists an emphasis on equality and the balance of power where greater flexibility exists between the gender roles of men and women. In contrast, Kellner noted that collectivistic cultures tend to maintain more rigid standards regarding the gender roles of both men and women. Power distribution is clear and women are defined more by their male counterparts, whereas women tend to be more independent and secure in their rights in individualistic cultures, according to Kellner. This may have enormous implications for intercultural couples moving from an individualistic culture to a collectivistic culture, such as from the United States to Chile. Might couples redefine their couple identity by adopting the gender roles of the surrounding culture in which they live or do they maintain their gender role patterns as they move across cultures together? The current study will build on Kellner’s research and examine how a couple’s relational culture might be impacted in this way.

Romano (2008) addressed this issue in depth in her interviews with intercultural couples and found that a couple’s place of residence indeed had a direct impact on role
delineations. Whether the couple lived in the male’s country or the female’s country was a moderating factor. Romano suggested that couples in cross-cultural transition might experience gender role expectations of the surrounding culture in one country and then experience very different ones as they move to another country.

Some studies have shown that inconsistencies with regard to gender role expectations within the intercultural couple can lead to marital dissatisfaction (Imamura, 1986; Mansyur, 1995). Similar to Kellner (2009), Mansyur (1995) claimed that a society defines role expectations as a direct result of whether the culture is individualistic or collectivistic. Williams and Best (as cited in Mansyur, 1995) also found that “as one moves from less developed to more developed countries, sex role ideology shifts from a more traditional to a more modern orientation” (p. 4). Studying role expectations in cross-national marriages, Mansyur found that “Americans tended to respond in a more egalitarian manner than international spouses, regardless of gender” (p. 15). Although my previous study (Naylor, 1999) did not examine intercultural couples, the research did demonstrate the extent to which U.S. American wives place significant value on how household chores are divided between themselves and their husbands. These findings are compelling and demonstrate the power of cultural and societal expectations and values surrounding attitudes towards gender roles.

In a study that examined the experiences of foreign wives that had moved to their husband’s home country, Imamura (1986) discovered that husband-wife role misunderstanding was salient. She found that immense problems developed after the international couple moved from the wife’s individually oriented culture to the husband’s family-oriented culture: “there was a wide gap between role relationship before and after
coming to live in Nigeria” (p. 39). She investigated wives’ role adaptations with regards to etiquette, their own role as wife and mother, and their husband’s role as Nigerian man.

Imamura (1986) found that cultural and societal expectations of the men were that he be involved in work-related all-male social life. If he did not act out this role, or if the woman required his support and frequent presence as a result of entering into a new society where she knew little, then the woman was often blamed for separating him from his very culture. The role of wife in this case was to remain submissive, not having to depend on the husband in ways that would inhibit him from carrying out the societal roles that he was expected to follow. As for her role as mother, she was expected to provide many children for the husband, and if she was unable, it was expected that the husband would find a second wife. Furthermore, as a wife in Nigerian culture, she was expected to attend to the greater family structure by cooking and participating fully in extended family celebrations. In fact, the husband’s family pressured the couples to conform to their cultural expectations of proper husband and wife behavior.

Imamura (1986) suggested that the modification of gender role expectancies directly affects whether an international marriage can be sustained or not. If actual roles in the relationship end up being different from what was anticipated by each person, the couple either resolved it through accommodation or the marriage dissolved. The current study hopes to reveal personal experiences surrounding these issues as intercultural couples move across cultures. One of the goals of this research is to discover how couples have managed this factor considering the participant sample has remained together.
In examining role differences as a result of cross-cultural transition, Calderon (2011) found some important comparisons. Women reported that their husbands’ changed dramatically in their domestic roles from when they lived in the female’s home country to when they moved to the male’s home country. These women used the term “machista” in describing their husband’s newfound behavior once in Chile where he no longer picked up after himself or helped with the children or household duties. This thesis will more deeply explore how societal expectations of gender roles impact men and women in their roles both inside and outside of the home. Did they accommodate their roles at all to fit in with societal norms or not?

Lorig (1997) found that the roles of North American wives married to Chilean husbands changed dramatically after moving to Chile. Most of the couples had begun their lives together in the United States, and then moved to the husband’s home country. Participants described this shift as a “Jekyll-and-Hyde” experience in which their husbands’ domestic behavior varied greatly from his previous behavior in the U.S. Lorig concluded:

Once their husbands returned to their culture, they seemed to be different persons than the ones they had married in the United States. A marriage that was once based upon more egalitarian roles between husband and wife now took on shades of a more traditional patriarchal structure cued by the broader Chilean society. (p. 222)

Lorig reported that most middle to upper class families had household maids, and that the cost for a live-in maid was significantly cheaper than in the United States. In her study, participants reported that upon moving to Chile, having a maid also seemed to influence their husbands’ more lackadaisical behavior in regards to the sharing of domestic roles in the home. The current thesis will investigate this topic further by exploring the ways in
which women's gender roles might benefit by living in Chilean culture and society. How does living in a culture where hired domestic help is the norm impact women's roles inside of the home? Do women feel they benefit from this domestic help, and if so, how? Please note that the term maid, nana, and nanny will be used interchangeably in this thesis though referring to the same kind of domestic employee.

Although a study done by Bognar (2001) did not look specifically at intercultural couples, her research was very relevant to issues surrounding the cultural implications of gender roles. Bognar investigated the impact of cross-cultural transition on gender related norms. She specifically studied the extent to which Eastern European sojourners in the U.S. used adaptation and coping strategies when faced with significant gender role differences. The current thesis seeks to understand whether women's gender roles changed after moving to Chile, and if so, how they adapted this change within the relationship. For this reason, a discussion surrounding transition and the process of change deserves further attention.

**Transition**

Three models of transition, or processes of change, are relevant to the proposed research. First, Bridges (2004) asserted that transition is a psychological state whereby one experiences an inner re-orientation, and an identity shift or redefinition takes place as a result. Bridges claimed that “the transition itself begins with letting go of something that you have believed or assumed, some way you’ve always been or seen yourself, some outlook on the world or attitude toward others” (p. 129). This theory might have important implications for intercultural couples in transition, especially across cultures. The partner leaving home to move to the other partner’s home country might experience
a shift in certain beliefs or assumptions that he/she once held in his/her previous worldview. This person may also end up seeing him/herself in a different light in a different cultural context and in new and different roles. This kind of individual transition experience might certainly have an impact on the relational culture of the couple.

A second theory on change proposed by Marris (1975), analyzed how transition happens when one feels a loss or change in one’s identity. He argued that conservative impulses help us predict events and behaviors that are necessary for adaptation and basic survival. Without any certainty of purpose, predictability ceases to exist, and control of the environment is lost. The connection of past experiences and present survival is closely intertwined according to his theory. For these reasons, it may be important for intercultural couples in transition to maintain some continuity alongside the enormous change. Do couples maintain their shared values when they move across cultures, or do they change? Do they manage their cultural differences in the same ways or in different ways? How does the transition itself impact certain aspects of their relationship? This thesis will shed some light on these questions.

Finally, Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) offered a very comprehensive review of the social and psychological factors individuals experience during cross-cultural transition. They emphasized the importance of both societal and individual level variables in influencing the transition experience. Within the societal level variables, they discussed how social, political, economic, and cultural factors in the society of origin versus the society of settlement factor into transition outcomes. In other words, societal aspects play a large role in terms of how a person deals with the transition when
moving from one culture to another. Ward et al. also stressed the individual factors such as personality, language fluency, values, previous cross-cultural experience, social support, and whether the person engages in cultural immersion in the society of settlement as affecting the transition experience. Ward et al.’s model provides crucial information about how individuals handle transition as a result of a number of different factors. What they did not examine, however, were the issues that couples in transition experience; and even more complex, the issues that intercultural couples in transition experience.

Shelling and Fraser-Smith (2008) discussed the imminent shock for the intercultural marriage partners who return home:

Partners who grow up in one culture and move to another often experience quite a shock and an enormous loss. Their earlier experience will affect the way they see and experience not only the new physical environment, but also the social context in which the couple now live. (p. 31)

According to these authors, in the specific scenario where one spouse is going home, and the other is living there for the first time, it is likely that they will experience the transition differently. Surely the partners in the relationship will have to make different kinds of compromises in the adjustment process. One of the intriguing questions this study poses to answer is: How might women experience the transition in the context of their relationship? What might this process of change look like as the couple adjusts to living in a different cultural context together? What are the major influences that impact a couple’s relational culture as they move from the female’s society of origin to the male’s society of origin?

One of the few contributions to the literature that looked specifically at women’s experiences of cross-cultural transition was presented by Bystydzienski and Resnik
(1995). They documented women's personal narratives of how they perceived their own experiences moving from various countries and cultures to the United States. These individual women shared their processes of moving across cultures and the consequences of the transitions they faced. The authors highlighted gender as an important factor since women are socialized differently from men, and thus experience cross-cultural transition in unique ways.

Bystydzienski and Resnik (1995) suggested that "emotionally, cultural changes may be more difficult for women, because they are socialized to 'feel' their way in relation to others and the world, while men learn to suppress their emotions" (p. 4). They asserted, however, that the experience of cross-cultural transition may be so overwhelming emotionally that women may need to suppress their feelings in order to cope on a daily basis. Identity issues and feelings of marginality were identified in the women's experiences: "many cross-cultural travelers experience the problem of negotiating a new identity in the host culture... those going through the process experience a transformation of identity, including some loss of their former sense of self" (p. 7).

Although these women in transition faced a great number of challenges and emotional sacrifices, each narrative described that their lives were also enriched by new experiences. They felt they had grown into stronger, more autonomous and resilient individuals. They also reported they became more confident and open-minded. Bystydzienski and Resnik's (1995) review provided a comprehensive picture of how women as individuals have experienced cross-cultural transition. The current thesis will address women's experiences of cross-cultural transition in the context of their
intercultural relationships. We know about the issues women face in their individual circumstances, but what about how their relationships are impacted? In what ways do women in intercultural relationships benefit from cross-cultural transitions? Do they feel their relationships have been enriched as a result of their shared experiences? More in-depth discussion on cross-cultural adaptation issues in impacting the couple experience is the focus of the next section.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural adaptation scholars investigate the ways in which individuals (international students and business people) or groups (immigrants and refugees) tend to learn the norms and values associated with the new culture into which they move, whether it is a temporary or permanent relocation (Berry, 1997; Dimitrov, 2002; Ward et al., 2001). Much of the literature in this area examined individual or group transition experiences (Bridges, 2004; Bystydzienki & Resnik, 1994; Marris, 1975; Ward et al., 2001).

When spousal adjustment has been studied amongst couples who have relocated internationally, the research has primarily looked at monocultural, not intercultural couples. Much research on expatriate adjustment has addressed the prominent issues women face as the “trailing spouse” moving across cultures due to her husband’s international assignment (Copeland & Norell, 2002; Hess & Linderman, 2002; Kalb & Welch, 1992; Kohls, 2001; Pascoe, 1992; Pascoe, 2003; Romano, 2008; Storti, 2001). These scholars reported that shifts in the female role are common in this case since she often becomes a housewife foregoing her career. This literature has demonstrated the difficulty women have in adapting to living across cultures; as Kohls (2001) stated: “In
many countries foreign spouses are not permitted to work, and the status of women remains rooted in traditional values and behaviors which American women are likely to find objectionable” (p. 115). The question is: Do international, non-Chilean women in relationships with Chilean men experience these issues? How have they adapted culturally to these differences as a couple?

Hess and Linderman (2002) provided advice on how to keep marriages strong during cross-cultural adjustment: “If you can communicate well, support each other, and face the challenges and adventures of your new environment as a team, you may (eventually) find yourselves growing closer than ever before” (p. 222). The current thesis seeks to find out whether these kinds of relationship maintenance skills have been used by couples in intercultural relationships that experienced cross-cultural transition together. If couples practice these skills, is their relationship more likely to last? This study will explore whether women feel they relied on certain skills to manage the cultural issues that became salient after moving to Chile with their partners. Furthermore, it will examine whether women felt an increased connection with their partner.

Barbara (1989) speculated that intercultural marriages become more complex when couples relocate internationally:

As soon as one changes the place of residence, various phenomena come to light . . . if the partners first met in the home country they will have found a whole system of dual and social adjustments to the majority group (that of one of the partners) right from the start of their married life . . . moving to another country, to another social group can only be achieved with a certain destructuring of this primary relationship which has come into being since the encounter. (p. 196)

Pascoe (1992) also suggested that marriage dynamics most certainly change when moving across cultures, where “you will find yourself simultaneously adapting to not only a new country but also to a new role as spouse which you didn’t play at home” (p.
She argued that “your spouse may also suddenly heap expectations upon you which were not part of your original nuptial agreement” (p. 85).

Romano (2008) advised that one of the factors for successful intercultural marriage is being cross-culturally aware and empathetic to one another’s viewpoints. Furthermore, a coping mechanism the intercultural couples in her interviews discussed was finding a way to synthesize the various cultures, or “blend the two cultures into a new one that validates both” (p. 149). This theory was reinforced by Evanoff’s (2006) discussion of the benefits to creating a “third” culture when people are interacting who come from two or more cultures. Relying on this strategy might not only help the couple’s communication, but might also help them adapt more readily to cultural differences in a new context. The current study seeks to find out whether couples described their relationship dynamics as sharing a unique culture they built apart from their individual cultures, and whether they adapted this relational style once they moved across cultures together. Do couples have to adapt their relationships in new cultural contexts? How might their relational culture change as a result?

Ataca and Berry (2002) provided a huge contribution to the gap in research in this area by looking specifically at the interaction between immigrant couples’ adaptation and their marital adaptation. Ataca and Berry asserted that “acculturation constitutes a double transition for married immigrants in that both the individual and the marriage adapt to the new culture” (p. 15). Mutual accommodation existed when the couples faced a number of changes together each acculturating in their own way.

Ataca and Berry (2002) suggested that the process of positive marital adaptation benefits the couples’ acculturation process in the new culture. However, their study only
looked at Turkish immigrant couples, not intercultural couples from unique cultural backgrounds. The present study will seek to further test this theory on intercultural couples immigrating together by examining how they might experience relational adaptation as they move from one partner's cultural context to the other's. Furthermore, how might couples use this experience as a relational asset? For this study I will replace the term marital adaptation with relational adaptation to be inclusive of those who are in long-term, cohabiting relationships.

Kim (2002) described cross-cultural adaptation as a complex, dynamic process that increases self-awareness and "facilitates the development of an identity that reaches beyond the original cultural perimeters" (p. 237). She discussed the process of acculturation (learning the elements of a new culture) and deculturation (unlearning the old cultural habits) in order to negotiate adaptation in a new culture. Through coping mechanisms, one finds the means to function in new ways that lead to adaptation. Growth, or "subtle internal transformation," could then occur where "creative responses to new circumstances" (p. 238) take place. This study seeks to find out about the specific experiences intercultural couples have in adapting to living in one of the partners' home country. Must they unlearn old habits, adopt new ones, or does their relational culture work in the new context?

Berry (1990) described the acculturation process as a series of psychological adaptations individuals or groups engage in when they move across cultures. He argued that not everyone acculturates in the same way: "Not every person in the acculturating group will necessarily enter into the acculturation process in the same way or to the same degree" (p. 239). During the acculturation process, individuals experience different
levels of stress, and different intensity factors impact their ability to adapt to a new environment.

According to Berry (1990), prior intercultural experience can cause an individual to have greater coping skills, greater familiarity with, and more realistic expectations about the cross-cultural adjustment process. Might intercultural couples, as a result of their heightened intercultural experience, have increased coping mechanisms to face challenges that arise during international relocation and the acculturation process that follows? This thesis will explore this question in part. Furthermore, how might their relationships be strengthened as a result of their shared experiences?

Romano (2008) suggested that the country of residence could impact the intercultural couple's relationship in challenging ways: "Wherever the intercultural couple goes, there is adapting to be done, and adapting means effort and sometimes strain" (p. 65). She argued that the spouse living in his or her home country has the advantage while the spouse living outside of his or her home country is the foreigner or outsider and is disadvantaged in many ways. The foreign spouse is the one who has to adapt and adjust to societal norms and expectations while typically living the more isolated lifestyle being far from family, support systems, and often times his or her native language.

Romano (2008) discussed the special challenges couples face who live in one partner's country, and then move to the other partner's country. What worked for their lifestyle and relationship in one context might need to be adjusted in another: "Both spouses often have to mold a new kind of personal relationship to suit the new land; they have to start over again" (p. 67). Certainly there must exist some kind of process of
ongoing mutual clarification as they adjust to their new environment whether explicitly expressed or not. A couple might not even be aware of the extent to which their relational culture has been modified from what it might have been up until that point. A goal of this research is to raise women's awareness of precisely how their relationships were impacted with a focus on the positive outcomes.

Another relevant article in the literature on this topic was written by Dimitrov (2002). She reviewed theories and models of both cultural adaptation and intercultural relationships to hypothesize about some of the physical, emotional, and psychological effects cultural transitions have on couples in close relationships. She argued that couples may experience the intensity of transition differently according to entry versus reentry shock, the pace of the transition shock itself (short-term or longer-term), how dependence plays out amongst the partners, and how they manage their identity confusion. This research project will seek to help answer the important question of how women have dealt with these kinds of immense transition challenges in their relationships. Do women feel that they made unique adaptation efforts to preserve their relationship? What have women learned about managing ongoing intercultural issues in their partnership? The current thesis will examine these unique issues.

**Literature Summary and Conclusions**

While there exists a great deal of literature on themes of cross-cultural transition and themes of intercultural relationships, much less research has specifically addressed how they intersect. This study will make a contribution to the literature by taking a specific look at how cultural values, gender roles, and relational adaptation are impacted when intercultural couples move between their individual cultures. Furthermore, how
culture specific values and family culture play into these factors will be examined. The current research will provide a qualitative, exploratory approach in an attempt to answer the proposed research questions. The interpretive methodology chosen for this study will serve to bring about some more in-depth understanding of the unique issues intercultural couples experience in the face of cross-cultural transition.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This study explored women's experiences of how moving across cultures with their partners impacted their relationships. Since the research purpose was to increase understanding of what happens on a relational level during this type of transition, a qualitative research method was employed. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), "qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables" (p. 12). Qualitative interviewing allowed the participants' transition and relationship processes to be unveiled in the research process. Furthermore, a strengths-based approach was followed to help participants become reflective and self-aware in positive ways in order to improve their well-being and their outlook on their relationship. Overall, this intercultural research took on a constructivist approach: "Concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 10). This study attempted to gather data precisely in this way.

Research Participants

Participants were selected from a social networking group called Chilesouses, of which I am a member. At the time the study was conducted, the group was composed of
about 750 international English-speaking women whose spouses/partners were Chilean, most of whom resided in Chile currently. In a related study in 2011, I distributed an online survey to the same population group in order to find out about the important issues women experienced as a result of moving abroad with their partners. In this study, written agreement was gathered from volunteer participants who were willing to participate in an in-depth interview on the same subject matter.

Female volunteer interviewees were narrowed down by the following criteria: (1) she was a fluent English speaker, (2) she identified her home country/culture as outside of Chile, (3) she identified her male partner’s home country/culture as Chile, (4) she was in a current committed relationship (either married or cohabiting) with this person for at least the past five years, (5) she had lived together with him in her home country for at least one year, (6) she had lived together with him in Chile for at least one year, and (7) they live together currently in Chile.

Fourteen total participants from my prior study (2011) were pre-screened according to the above criteria and sent an informational letter by email regarding the study (see Appendix A), which included a reminder that they had already volunteered to be interviewed. This email included the participant criteria list and encouraged respondents to forward the information to other women they might know who would qualify and be willing to participate. After email distribution, I followed up with phone calls and scheduled various times and places to meet with individual participants. Of these 14, 11 followed through and completed interviews. No volunteers ended up participating in this study as a result of word of mouth.
Originally, I had hoped to find enough women to interview who lived together with their partners in each home country for at least two years. I thought this might be an important factor for providing a minimal picture of the couple’s experience in each culture. However, most of the women I spoke with regarding the research had come to Chile on their own for study abroad or travel reasons, had met their partner, and stayed in Chile without experiencing living together in her country. Also, many others reported that they had only either lived in their home country with their partner for 1.5 years, or in Chile for 1.5 years. For these reasons, I was forced to revise my criteria and move forward with just a one-year requirement of living in each home country. Once I sent out a final email to the entire Chilespsouse group announcing a last chance to participate with revised criteria, four additional volunteers came forward to be interviewed. Therefore, I was able to meet my minimum research participant goal. Final participant demographic information will be introduced in the results section.

Rationale for Choosing the Semi-Structured Interview

Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the methodology most appropriate for the current study since exploring subjective experiences is at the heart of this research. Kvale (1996) argued that “the sensitivity of the interview and its closeness to the subjects’ lived world can lead to knowledge that can be used to enhance the human condition” (p. 11). For these reasons, the interview was used to help elicit increased understanding about the lived experiences of women moving across cultures with their partners.

According to Bailey (1994), an advantage of the interview method is the flexibility allowed to both the researcher and respondent by utilizing the open-ended
question format. For example, questions could be repeated and clarified to the respondent, and the researcher would be able to carefully probe for more specific answers to elicit more in-depth discussion. Since this study provided very specific and in-depth questions, I rarely used probing methods to get more specific responses. The question content I used was fixed in advance in order to remain focused on the topic areas and research questions at hand.

Since the research examined participants' subjective experiences, it was important that I establish a safe atmosphere where women felt free to openly express themselves, a guideline from Kvale (1996) that I followed throughout interview interactions. I also found that face-to-face interviews helped me build trust and rapport with the participants. Engaging in personal eye contact and observing nonverbal communication was a valuable factor in this study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews have typically been the research method used in similar studies, and that is why I chose it as the most appropriate methodology for this research. This methodology allowed me to hear about women's experiences first hand and gave me the opportunity to tell their stories.

It is important to note that investigators who choose what they consider an easy research method that comes naturally to them are more likely to generate biases in their research. As an investigator, I realized that I felt less comfortable with interviews as a methodology than with something that provided greater distance from participant interaction such as surveys. In the past, I have carried out quantitative research since I appreciate the objective, concrete, hypothesis testing research paradigm. It was a stretch in my comfort level to use this type of methodology, which I have learned now, was an effective way to decrease my own biases about doing this kind of research. This helped
me engage ambiguity and be more open to the fluid, evolving nature of this methodology and analysis, which, in turn, provided a challenging learning curve and made me grow as a researcher.

Preparing for the Interviews

Before scheduling interviews for this thesis project, I performed a total of three pilot interviews on women who very nearly fit the criteria for this study. According to Kvale (1996), “an interviewer’s self-confidence is acquired through practice; conducting several pilot interviews before the actual project interviews will increase his or her ability to create safe and stimulating interactions” (p. 147). As a researcher, I learned a great deal as a result of these trial runs.

First, I found it was absolutely necessary to provide a copy of the interview questions for the participant to be able to refer to or read from if desired. Second, I simplified some of the introductions to topics following the suggestions of these women since they experienced some confusion during my explanation. Furthermore, I became aware that my facial expressions and non-verbal cues inadvertently changed when I related on a personal level to the answers the interviewees were giving. Due to this realization, I made sure to maintain more neutral non-verbal expressions during the actual interviews regardless of the respondents’ answers. Finally, one of the pilot interviewees provided such thorough answers, that she inadvertently responded to parts of the questions that followed. In this case, I remarked that she had addressed the following question in some ways, but repeated the question anyway, and asked if there was anything further she would like to add. This served as ample practice for knowing when to be flexible with question content.
Question Preparation

In an earlier study (2011), I uncovered specific topic areas that participants themselves identified as significant in their cross-cultural transition experiences with their partners. Topics such as shifts in shared values and gender role expectations, and the impact of family commitments were revealed in survey findings. As a result, I created question content for this thesis that would delve deeper into the very issues participants themselves identified in order to further explore these lived experiences.

In addition, participants themselves used certain terms and vocabulary in describing their unique experiences in the aforementioned study. This terminology was used intentionally in formatting appropriate interview questions for the current thesis (see Appendix D for specific interview questions). In this way, I maintained my commitment as an ethical researcher by practicing mindfulness and being respectful of participants by giving them their own voice in their experience rather than labelling it for them. Overall, it was extremely difficult for me to narrow the focus for the current study and limit the interview questions since there is an enormous amount of rich information within this topic area.

Employing a Strengths-Based Approach

One of the goals of this research was to help the participants feel empowered by giving them a positive outlet to share their distinctive experiences and “by opening up a more radical consciousness” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 31). Interviewing as a methodology alone can offer benefits to the participants who are listened to for an extended period of time in an open and intimate way (Kvale, 1996). Since the very
nature of cross-cultural transition is stressful and often comes with immense challenges, it can easily become a venting session that focuses on negative aspects. For this reason, I decided I wanted to approach the questions in a positive way with a focus on the benefits and strengths. Due to human nature, it is often easier to make negative judgments or generate criticism than it is to find the benefits or advantages in unique interactions. Employing a strengths-based approach also helped keep the dialogue from becoming a therapeutic-type interview that would have strayed greatly from the proposed research.

Strength-based approaches in human interaction are becoming more and more popular in current models of therapeutic counseling (Corcoran, 2005; Sharry, 2004) and social work (Saleeb, 1996). A similar type of strengths-focused and solution-based thinking is becoming popular in organizational consultancy, an approach coined by Cooperrider (1986) called Appreciative Inquiry. Saleeb (1996) concluded that “more recently, there have been developments in strengths-based practice with other client groups and the emergence of strengths orientations in work with communities” (p. 296).

Essentially, a strengths-based approach to any kind of interaction encompasses a focus on positive changes rather than on what needs fixing. It includes a focus on the unique strengths in a person’s story rather than concentrating on the problems. Focusing on adaptive skills, personal development, constructive coping mechanisms, and positive transformation are at the foundation of employing a strengths-based approach in communication interactions. Utilizing this approach within the interview question content helped bring about useful information in how women’s relationships benefited from cross-cultural transition instead of what was most problematic. It was also used to raise awareness so women would think about the positive side to the equation, and how
they made their relationships work throughout intense transition. In turn, I hope that the findings of this study will help other couples in similar circumstances to be more aware and open to the positive aspects of their situation rather than focusing on the negative ones.

According to Kellner (2009), “when differences that emerge from cross-cultural perspectives are brought openly into the couple’s awareness, there is possibility for enriched learning and growth, fostering further bonding” (p. 229). After participating in a strengths-based interview, the hope is that the female will bring back an increased awareness to share with her partner, which in turn, could allow for cultural learning and growth which could further benefit their relationship. My hope is that the findings of this study will provide ideas for other couples on how to manage the challenges in constructive ways. The current thesis is original in that no other intercultural studies in this topic area were found that employed this specific approach in its methodology or at least did not identify it as such.

**Conducting Face-to-Face Interviews**

First, I sent out an informational letter and then coordinated individually with each participant by phone to find a date and time for the interviews. Following, I sent confirmation emails or made phone calls to remind participants the day before the scheduled interview. I encouraged participants to choose a convenient location that was quiet and private to help maximize participant trust and openness. After the initial briefing, participants signed two copies of the informed consent form (see Appendix B), one of which I kept, and one of which they kept. They were asked to fill out the demographic information, which also helped serve to break the ice up front (see Table 1
for specific demographics of each participant). The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

Since the participants knew that I am in an intercultural marriage myself with a Chilean, this factor helped build positive rapport. A common in-group identity between the respondents and myself was formed, which is a strength of this study. However, it was also very important that I maintained a professional distance at the same time so that counter-transference did not become an issue where I too closely identified with participants. In addition, I used caution in letting my own assumptions influence the interview process. For these reasons an interview script was followed that provided a briefing and debriefing where my words and descriptions were more or less the same during each individual interaction, a technique suggested by Kvale (1996). I also explained to subjects at the beginning that they could ask me personal questions if they wanted or we could talk more informally together, but only after the recorded interview portion had ended.

In addition, I provided a glossary to participants that defined central terms I was using in the question content for them to refer to if needed (see Appendix E). This glossary was made available to clarify terminology, especially for those interviewees who were not native English speakers. During the interview portion, not one participant ended up referring to it. The one participant who was not a native English speaker spoke fluently enough that she seemed to understand fully the topics of discussion throughout the interview, and did not need more explicit instructions or explanations of terminology.

Due to my experience and realization in the pre-test interviews, I was able to be more aware of my own verbal and non-verbal reactions for the final interviews. Nagata
(2002) referred to somatic mindfulness as a state of heightened awareness useful for the researcher since it connects the realms of the visible and invisible, the audible and inaudible, and the bodymind and physical reactions experienced either by the researcher, the subject, or both simultaneously. I tried to practice this level of awareness mostly with my own eye contact, non-verbal gestures, facial expressions, verbal cues, perceptions, and unexpressed thoughts as I listened to participants’ personal experiences. In addition, I took notes regarding anything I observed about my own reactions or the reactions of the participant that a digital recorder could not document.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) accurately portrayed one of the challenges in doing research: “One of the most difficult aspects of interviewing for beginning researchers is facing periods of silence in the interview” (p. 28). On different occasions, participants became emotional when sharing their experiences and a long silence followed. Although in the beginning this made me uncomfortable, I learned the importance of respecting this silence and reading the participants’ cues surrounding their readiness to resume.

**Plan for Data Analysis**

The data collection for this study took place in various stages. During the interviews, I used a digital voice recorder to record the dialogue and to facilitate the process of analyzing the data. In this way, I was able to monitor recorded dictations with ease, which ensured greater accuracy. I also included my written notes in data analysis, which contributed to the data that were gathered from recorded dictations. In both the recordings and notes, participants were labeled: Respondent #1, Respondent #2, and so forth to ensure anonymity. The goal of the data analysis process was to determine where conceptual similarities existed among the responses of the participants, discover evidence
that either supported or contradicted existing theories, and reveal new patterns and emerging themes.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) asserted that grounded theory is a useful methodology for generating theoretical concepts from qualitative analysis of data. This technique goes beyond just providing rich descriptions and delineating basic themes. In contrast to traditional research methods and approaches to data analysis, grounded theory provided the basis for which data were coded, conceptualized, and categorized in order to generate theoretical constructs for the current research.

First, I listened to digital recordings and partially transcribed them in order to fully analyze the conversation. Portions of the interview recordings that appeared to be themes were transcribed fully and literally whereas portions that moved off topic were paraphrased only. Specific quotes were highlighted that either provided new and different outlooks from other respondents, or that seemed to capture a concept in a concise way that could provide concrete examples of key topic areas. Kvale (1996) suggested that “verbatim descriptions are necessary for linguistic analyses... [and] transforming the conversation into a literary style facilitates communication of the meaning of the subject’s stories to readers” (p. 166). I found this to be a poignant way to report the findings.

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984), in data analysis there will be an ongoing discovery phase in which emerging themes and patterns come up; these will include recurring feelings, conversation topics, and/or specific vocabulary. The second phase, coding the data, they said, will help the researcher refine his or her understanding of the topic of study. Finally, they concluded that the researcher must learn to “understand the
data in the context in which they were collected” (p. 130). This was the process by which I analyzed the data.

Once I unraveled the basic themes and patterns using Corbin and Strauss’s (2008) grounded theory approach, I coded the text according to those particular categories and counted how many times the same type of answer occurred. In addition, I compiled a summary list of themes stated by each participant that reflected the specific research questions. I grouped these summaries into five groups of three and analyzed similarities and differences amongst them. Next, I also compared and contrasted the following group of three to the previous group of three. By looking at the data in this way and cross-checking it both between groups as well as across groups ensured that no pertinent data was left out. It also served as a means for checking reliability as suggested by Kvale (1996). Throughout this process, I was watchful for any themes or patterns that were not related to the specific categories in order to truly refine the dataset into succinct results.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) argued that “we have to have some background, either through immersion in the data or through personal experience, in order to know what we are ‘seeing’ in data is significant and to be able to discern important connections between concepts” (p. 34). Due to my personal experience as a Chilespouse who has moved across cultures with my husband, I was better able to “see” this data and recognize concepts accordingly as a researcher. Since I have lived through similar circumstances, it was easier for me to generate a number of possibilities for the meanings that participants conveyed. However, this also meant I needed to be extra careful of bias and not let my own assumptions affect the data analysis process in any way.
As suggested by Nagata (2002), during the interview I tried to remain aware of all of my own verbal and non-verbal behaviors, as well as the participant’s. What I became most aware of were my verbal and non-verbal cues. I found that using active listening skills was a helpful tool for remaining neutral. I created a comfortable way to acknowledge the speaker by nodding, and using the word “sure.” In this way I was able to indicate to them that I was listening without necessarily indicating approval or disapproval for what they were saying. Furthermore, I used clarifying questions or recapped what was said to ensure I understood their response in the way that they conveyed it. Since I am a very animated person by nature when it comes to facial expressions, I made an extra effort to limit this kind of non-verbal reaction. In the notes that I wrote for each participant, I found that it was difficult to document specific non-verbal behaviors beyond the more obvious emotional reactions some conveyed in their interviews.

In analyzing the research, I was forced to think outside of the box in an attempt to increase knowledge and understanding from raw data. Conveying how the participants gave meaning to their experiences, and the fact that the same word can have different meanings to each individual was the most difficult aspect of analysis and conceptualization. It was crucial that I took the time to consider all possible meanings to check and recheck my own assumptions and interpretations of the data. Furthermore, I watched for important findings that were unexpected that lead me beyond my own experience and the limitations of this thesis research.
Conclusions

One of the strengths of this study is that I had completed and gained approval for the first three chapters of the thesis before embarking on the actual research and gathering of data. I believe this provided a less biased approach rather than writing the initial chapters more thoroughly after data collection. Fortunately, my research went mostly as planned, and I did not need to switch methods or diverge from the original research questions.

In the sections that follow, Chapter IV unveils all of the themes and concepts discovered throughout the interviews, and Chapter V interprets the meaning in the data that was gathered. The limitations to this research and areas for future study are also presented.
Chapter 4: Results

**Introduction**

This study set out to examine the ways in which women felt that cross-cultural transition impacted their relationship with regards to cultural values and male-female role-taking. The research also utilized a strengths-based approach and explored what kinds of benefits women experienced in their relationships as a result of moving across cultures with their partner. The next section will report the research findings through individual participant summaries followed by a group summary linking the results to the research questions this study put forward.

**Participant Demographics**

A total of 15 female participants completed the interview. Females identified their home country (where they spent their formative years) as follows: 11 from the United States, two from the United Kingdom, one from Australia, and one from Germany. All of the participants identified their partner’s home country as Chile.

All of 15 participants were married at the time the study was conducted. I felt it was important to do research that included a variety of couples whether or not they were married. I had expected to interview more women in long-term co-habiting relationships, which was why I chose to use the neutral term of partner rather than spouse. To my surprise, all participants in this sample ended up being in married relationships.
The following table introduces the participants by providing the female’s home country, years in relationship with Chilean partner, years they lived together in the female’s country, and years they lived together in Chile. Participants had an average relationship length of 16 years ranging from 5 to 36 years. Average length of time couples had lived together in the female’s home country was 6 years with a range from 1.5 to 20 years. Average length of time couples had lived together in Chile was 9 years with a range from 1.5 to 20 years. Please note that the data presented in this chapter on length of relationship did not examine time spent in a third country. Also, it did not account for time the couple may have been in the relationship before actually living together. Eight women also reported they had been in intercultural relationships prior to their current one, and seven women reported this was their first intercultural relationship.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Female’s home country</th>
<th>Years in relationship</th>
<th>Years couple lived in her country</th>
<th>Years couple lived in Chile</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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Respondents tended to be well educated (nine women had partially completed or completed undergraduate education and six women had graduate level education).

Individual Participant Summaries

In this section, each participant is introduced and their specific experiences surrounding their relationship and cross-cultural transition are revealed. The purpose of hearing each participant’s story before discussing the results as a group was to allow their unique voice to be heard. My commitment as an intercultural researcher was to examine the thesis topics in a mindful, respectful, and ethnorelative way. This approach required a heightened sensitivity and an appreciation of different worldviews beyond my own.

Since I considered myself to be very similar to the women studied, I needed to be especially cautious about how my own experience might affect the way in which I interpreted and reported the results of the interviews. It was important I maintained an acute awareness that each of the participant’s experiences were unique, and that contextual factors played a large role in their stories. In order to understand their communication or behavior according to their own interpretations, I relied on the ethical research approach suggested by Houston (1992): “We must earn the right to speak about them, by learning who they are as they communicate in their own ethnic cultural contexts, their world, not simply in ours” (p. 55). Following this principle helped me remain responsible throughout the research process where I was able to stay focused instead of being influenced by my own assumptions and preconceived interpretations of the data. Highlighting the individual stories in the following section allowed me to respectfully give voice to each of the women’s separate experiences. In the summaries of
their interviews, I discussed their responses to questions in the same sequence as I asked them, avoiding extraneous interpretation by using the very words and terms they used.

**Participant 1.** The first interview participant was from the U.S. and had been together with her Chilean partner for a total of 26 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 4 years and in Chile for 19 years.

In our conversation on cultural values, she stated that her husband became familiar with the cultural values she grew up with since he observed American attitudes and beliefs while they lived in the U.S. Both her and her husband came from very multicultural environments raised by immigrant families. She explained that since living in Chile, her cultural values were expressed more through child rearing than the partnership. In adopting Chilean cultural values, this participant said she learned to become quieter in her communication style, and to interrupt more often, which she experienced as the norm in Chile. She also became more competitive with other women maintaining a more sensual appearance and caring more about keeping a good weight and going to the gym. She felt the ways in which she changed after moving to Chile did not make her feel more connected to her partner.

However, this participant felt that perhaps her family values were positively influenced by Chilean culture. She and her husband decided they wanted to raise their children in Chile precisely to spend more time with them. Although her children were grown at the time of the study, they continued to eat meals together on the weekends. Finally, Participant 1 expressed that participating in Chilean extended family gatherings helped her learn more about communication styles and cultural norms of making fun of each other and insulting one another. She learned more about the richness of second-
generation immigrant culture, and how her German extended family adapted to Chile, not necessarily Chilean culture.

In our discussion on male-female role taking, this participant expressed a change in gender roles inside of the home after moving to Chile, which was due in part to the availability of domestic help. She described how neither she nor her husband had the domestic roles in Chile that they had in the U.S., which tended to be shared. She discussed the pressure she felt trying to fit into her female role in Chile:

When I first got here [Chile] I cared a great deal because I was trying to fit in and also trying to conform to that ideal that my husband had about what was proper, what was middle class, what was ordered, what was not ordered.

Participant 1 also talked about how her life changed outside of the home in career aspects. She had to sacrifice a top-level senior executive career and find her way professionally in Chile, which took a long time. She stated she had more freedom in Chile to not work, and pick her way through. She discussed how her husband's career as a professor benefited where he became “top dog” in Chile. As for her roles as mother, she felt that having two nanas in the home allowed her to spend more quality time with the children by being present and there for them. As a wife, she never pressured her husband about money, though she experienced that as the norm for Chilean women with their husbands. She described a decision-making process of choosing to adopt or leave behind mother roles, either taking societal expectations in Chile into account or not.

In our discussion of relational adaptation, Participant 1 used the term third culture to describe the dynamic she and her husband created while getting to know each other in the U.S. They had created a unique culture that was not representative of either of their
individual cultures. She then described a change in their relationship dynamic after moving to Chile that had created a new and different kind of third culture. She stated:

When we moved here [Chile], one person went subterranean, and that was me. . . . I had to go on hold for a very long time . . . in myself, which of course would affect the couple if he had paid attention, but he didn’t notice. . . . Then we also had to go back and start building that whole third culture again . . . that had different aspects than the other third culture that we made first [in the U.S.].

Participant 1 discussed having to start over and learn all of the operational aspects of getting by in Chile without receiving any support from her husband. She had expected he would help guide her through the system, but instead they created separate activities and interests. She observed the culture and system independently and navigated everything on her own. She reported she did not feel her relationship was strengthened since they did everything separately. She learned not to depend on her husband, but only to depend on herself and described feeling lonely and misunderstood throughout the transition process. “Being patient with the solitude” and “subjugating myself to him” was how she described the skills she has learned in the relationship maintenance process.

Participant 2. The next interview participant was from Australia and had been in a relationship with a Chilean for a total of 10 years. They had lived together in Australia for 3 years and in Chile for 7 years.

In discussing cultural values, she reported that her husband had become very familiar with her cultural values while living together in Australia. She stated that it took him a while to understand the Australian expectation of personal space, distance, and how family obligatory relations did not exist in the way they did in Chile. She reported that he embraced the change and tried to adapt.
Participant 2 discussed incorporating her cultural values into their home life in Chile by cooking diverse Asian foods as they always did in Australia, participating in outdoor activities, and maintaining English as the primary language in the home. She felt they had adopted the Chilean custom of getting together with extended family on the weekends, and benefiting from domestic help and child-rearing assistance. She discussed that in Australia she had been judged for working full time and having the children in daycare whereas having a maid in Chile was affordable and allowed her to have a more active social life. She felt that due to home help, she was not so busy with cleaning and had more quality time with the children. She discussed the importance of maintaining a strict routine with the children teaching them polite manners that she felt contradicted Chilean practice. Participant 2 described her participation in Chilean extended family gatherings as helping her understand more about the culture in general.

In our conversation on male-female role taking, this respondent reported there were no changes in gender roles inside or outside of the home between her and her husband after moving to Chile. They made the decision together to move to Chile since his job as lawyer was less transportable, and together they decided intentionally how they would raise their children differently than was the norm in Chile, adhering to strict routines and teaching independence. Again, Participant 2 mentioned the extent to which her role as mother benefited in Chile due to home help. She stated she had the energy and capacity to be a wife and go out on dates, while also having an active social life with friends that she said would not be possible back in Australia.
Moving to the topic of relational adaptation, Participant 2 identified with creating a unique culture not necessarily representative of either partner’s individual culture in describing their relationship dynamic back in Australia. She commented:

“We’ve come to an understanding where we created an environment . . . that incorporates a lot of things that are not necessarily Australian or Chilean but that are informed by both cultures. . . . I think it’s just the way it is in our household.

She described the dynamic as feeling more equal after they moved to Chile, making more decisions together, and being respectful and transparent in their communication. She claimed she had the most difficult time adjusting to the idea of a maid and negotiated this by ensuring she and her husband would continue to play a large role in the children’s care and making sure they learned to clean up after themselves and be independent instead of allowing the maid to take full control of the household duties. Participant 2 described her relationship as being strengthened as a result of the experiences they shared in both countries and cultures:

“It think it makes us both more complete people, I don’t think there’s anything either one of us can’t do or doesn’t know how to do, even in social behavior, when you go out with people, and to accommodate other cultures and strangers and two language conversations . . . that’s huge. . . . As a couple I would say we’re fairer with each other than most . . . I think we’re fairer to my advantage . . . I think he would be quite comfortable keeping up the patterns and behaviors that are normal in Chilean households, but surprisingly he’s adjusted to me and what my requirements are really well.

The relationship maintenance skills Participant 2 stressed in importance to their process as a couple were language and communication skills and knowing the differences in words and tones between English and Spanish. She said listening was essential as was “trying to get your point across without being culturally imperialistic.”
Participant 3. The next interview participant was from the U.S. and had been together with her Chilean partner for a total of 25 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 8 years and in Chile for 17 years.

Participant 3 reported that her husband did not become very familiar with her own cultural values when they lived in the U.S. since they were more surrounded by Latino friends and lived more of a Latino lifestyle. His sister and parents from Chile also came to live with them for a time. Different from her husband, she felt that she incorporated her cultural values into her family once they lived in Chile since she spoke English to them in the home. Some of her own cultural values she felt she incorporated into her household and child-raising were the importance of taking care of the environment (she felt littering was an acceptable practice in Chile and would not allow her children to partake in it), and about tolerance and respect.

Participant 3 also discussed what Chilean cultural values she adopted:

I was very antisocial in the states, so I’ve definitely become more socialized, and learned how to have the social chitchat and attend to people. . . . I learned that here . . . Chileans love to get together. . . . I think it’s nice that you call all of your family and tell them to come celebrate your kids’ birthday.

She stated that the idea of the children taking care of the elderly in Chile had positively influenced her family values since in the states the elderly are forgotten about. She also said her participation in extended family gatherings deepened her understanding of Chilean culture by learning more about the value of friendships and how they tend to last a lifetime in Chile.

In discussing the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 3 reported how much the gender roles changed between her and her husband both inside and outside of the home after moving to Chile. She commented:
Our roles changed, because I was the breadwinner there [in the U.S.] and I went off to work every day and he took care of the kids, and then we came down here [Chile], and I stayed at home and took care of the kids, and he went off to work... We had our roles change, my husband was very happy about that...

One of the reasons he wanted to move here is that he wanted to work and he wanted to be a provider... I didn’t even know that in the states, I had no idea how important that was for him because he’s never actually said it to me, but you can see it in the way he’s changed as a person, because he became more masculine, he became more authoritative... he’s such a chauvinist now, he loves to put everything in categories: girls and boys, women and men, young and old. I’m like stop categorizing so much... lots of people can do lots of different things.

Participant 3 stated that she tried to teach her boys to help around the house but felt pressure from others who told her that it was women’s work. She reported that when friends and family saw her husband helping in the household, he was judged and called a “maricón” (derogatory term for homosexual man) so he therefore stopped helping.

Furthermore, in Chile she said it was expected of her to stay home with the children and not work. She did feel that as a result of her husband returning to work, he grew up and became more independent. Participant 3 reported that she became depressed and isolated after first moving to Chile. She said that her husband often compared their relationship to other Chilean couples, and so she tried to become more Chilean, which she reported was a disaster. She recognized the importance of learning who she was and what she was willing to sacrifice for the happiness of others. She stated that she did benefit from Chilean culture being more family friendly whereas she was unable to keep up the same pace in the U.S. both working and being a mother.

As far as relational adaptation, she reported that U.S. culture dominated the relationship when they were in the U.S. since they were part of a large Latino community who were all trying to assimilate. After moving to Chile, she felt their relationship dynamic changed where they made trade-offs between the two cultures. They celebrated
traditional American holidays like Thanksgiving and Halloween, and celebrated Christmas and New Year's Chilean style. Participant 3 reported that her relationship was not strengthened as a result of these experiences but, rather, that it separated. After returning to Chile, her husband started rejecting American culture and refused to speak English. She felt that her husband probably hated the fact that she was a domineering female and workaholic in the U.S. Participant 3 stated that she accepted Chilean culture instead of imposing her ideas on how things should be, which she later learned was wrong. She wished she had been more herself throughout the process.

**Participant 4.** Participant 4 was from the U.S. and in a relationship with her Chilean husband for a total of 12 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 6 years and in Chile for 5 years.

In discussing cultural values, Participant 4 felt that her husband became familiar with the values she grew up with since they spent a lot of time with her close-knit family. She noted that he had the experience of getting to know how close she was with both neutral and extended family members, which was not very different from Chilean close family units. She stated they had incorporated her cultural values into their family including the language, and wanted to raise their daughter more according to her family's way rather than the Chilean way. She noted further:

> We definitely try to bring the culture that I grew up from here to Chile with us, and we speak English at home. Both my husband and I speak English to my daughter . . . and I think him having lived there for such a long period of time for 6 years, he definitely had a lot of time to absorb the culture and understand how we grew up . . . some of it he appreciates; he likes it better than the way here . . . . He definitely has absorbed more of the U.S. culture, and that women can take different roles, it's not just the housewife.
Participant 4 noted that they had adopted some Chilean cultural values such as accepting domestic help, and they had cut down on the consumerism they were accustomed to in the states. She stated that she appreciated the close-knit community in Chile where friends and family all lived close by. She reported her family values had been positively influenced by not buying as much, and by having a smaller house in Chile. They had also benefited from all of the fresh fruits and vegetables accessible at the local markets.

Participant 4 stated that her participation in extended family gatherings provided her with good insight into how her husband was. In addition, she had been amazed at the philosophy he had compared to how his family was, which she stated had been insightful as well.

Moving to the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 4 mentioned their domestic roles had changed since they could not afford a house cleaner in the U.S. She reported that their roles were divided evenly while living there since they both worked, which she said was partly cultural, and partly their life situation. She reported that she was in charge of most things in the U.S due to the language barrier with her husband, and that he was in charge of most things there in Chile for the same reason. Big decisions were always made together.

Participant 4 also mentioned that the adjustment was difficult to become a stay-at-home mother although she felt a moral obligation to not have her daughter be raised by a nanny. She felt her husband might have lost some respect for her leaving the workforce since he thought they should both work. Furthermore, his work hours were longer in Chile so he did not have as much time to spend with the family. Participant 4 felt that they had less quality time together and as a family in the evenings. She felt that her roles
as wife and mother had benefited from the cleaning aspect and cheap hired help in general (pool cleaner, gardeners, etc). She had also benefited by having a mother figure in Chile (grandmother to her daughter) since her own mother passed away.

With regards to relational adaptation, Participant 4 felt that both in the U.S. and Chile, her and her husband’s dynamic was to incorporate elements of both cultures in relatively equal shares. She felt in both contexts, it had been a mix from both cultures with celebrating Chilean holidays while living in the U.S. and celebrating U.S. holidays while living in Chile. She reported:

We do what we can to bring U.S. holidays here . . . but it’s impossible to bring everything . . . Like Christmas I tried to put my foot down . . . I asked his mom not to give us presents from Santa on Christmas Eve, that was going to be something we were going to be doing as a family on Christmas morning . . . it totally blew up in my face . . . I know there are some things I’m just going to have to give up the battle on . . . We’ve adapted . . . now that we’re here, we’re probably doing more Chilean stuff . . . a lot of it is because of Grandma, because Grandma dictates what’s going to happen and we get together mostly at their house.

Participant 4 felt that her and her husband’s relationship had been strengthened by getting to know each other in different ways, both in good times and in bad times. Through all of the experiences they had shared, they knew each more deeply, and she felt she could better predict his behavior. As for relationship maintenance skills, she was not sure if there were skills she had learned, but just that she knew how to read him better and understand where he was coming from by having the ability to sit back and look at things from his perspective.

Participant 5. The next interview participant was from the U.S. and had been together with her Chilean husband for a total of 36 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 20 years and in Chile for 16 years.
On the topic of cultural values, Participant 5 stated that her husband had become very familiar with American cultural values before she had met him since he had been married to an American woman previously. They incorporated these cultural values into their family after moving to Chile by encouraging their daughters to play soccer since they felt it should not be looked at as a male-only sport. Participant 5 felt she had adopted Chilean cultural values such as the physical warmth of meeting and greeting rituals (incorporating hugs and kisses on the cheeks) and teaching their daughters to always acknowledge adults. She also learned how to socialize first, asking about family, before jumping right into a conversation. She also felt it was the norm to teach kids how to manage alcohol, which was quite different than in the U.S. where the tendency was for parents to avoid this. Participant 5 stated that her social life had benefited from living in Chile where they participated in more frequent social gatherings than in the states. She also recognized that the pace in Chile was different which she felt was a positive aspect for the relationship. Since her husband’s family was so small, she did not feel that extended family gatherings had been very influential since they were more made up of surface socializing. She stated that her husband bonded more with her own family back in the states.

In discussing the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 5 reported their gender roles did not change much inside or outside of the home after moving to Chile. She stated that her husband always helped around the house no matter in which country they were living. She did receive hired help a couple of days a week but set boundaries with the nana so she would not wait on anyone. It was essential her daughters learn to be independent and put away their own laundry, for example. Participant 5 said that she had
a much easier time with daycare in Chile than in the U.S., and that life in the U.S. was more difficult juggling both work and motherhood. She stated:

My life in that sense, as a mom and as a wife, improved being here [in Chile] because it was just so much less stressful because you could get the help here . . . I think that's a huge benefit of living in Chilean culture, that you can have someone come in and help.

Turning to the topic of relational adaptation, Participant 5 reported that as a couple, they assimilated the best of both cultures, mixing the best of both worlds while they lived together in the U.S. She stated they celebrated more of her family's holidays and traditions since he was so assimilated into American culture. After moving to Chile, she saw her husband's Chilean side come out more, especially with language. She felt that U.S. culture dominated more in their relationship dynamic after moving to Chile since they celebrated more European/U.S. cultural holidays and traditions. When asked about relationship maintenance skills, Participant 5 stated that they decided to move to Chile to save their marriage since his business commutes in the U.S. were very hard on their relationship. She emphasized their decision to stay together, put family first, and start a new adventure. She commented:

He recognized that we had done a good job of finding our place down here [in Chile]. I think he recognized as much as I recognized that it was a sacrifice for us, but I think that was a bond even more for us, even though marriage has its ups and down . . . all that we've gone through, all of our experiences here I think has really bonded us, more than I think if we had stayed in the states.

Participant 5 reported that being diplomatic, not being accusatory, and thinking before speaking were relationship maintenance skills she had learned with her husband but also felt were closely connected to age and seniority. She stated that the cultural issues present in the relationship surrounded his own lack of understanding of his own culture, being more puzzled than she was at times. She reminded him of the importance of letting
things go when he was frustrated or puzzled by Chilean culture and encouraged him to accept differences and be more flexible.

Participant 6. This participant was from the U.S. and had been in a relationship with a Chilean for a total of 21 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 1.5 years and in Chile for 20 years.

When asked about whether her partner became familiar with her cultural values, she said yes, and that her condition for marrying him was that their children be raised Lutheran since that was very important to her. She felt that they incorporated those values into their family after moving to Chile, and insisted on raising the children with strict routines. She said:

You have to be really determined to raise your kids here [in Chile] because it's so different. . . . I always insisted on a routine, and they have to brush their teeth before they go to bed . . . here I don’t see that so much . . . and a certain amount of respect for your parents . . . That’s a big part of our marriage to each other . . . we respect each other . . . and respect our children too.

She reported that it was hard to maintain a strict, disciplined household, especially when everyone else commented on how strict she was. She stated that it helped that she and her husband always worked together to get through things, instead of one against the other, and they relied on this while living both in the U.S. and in Chile.

Participant 6 felt that she has adopted some aspects of Chilean culture in that she is “less fanatical about being on time than I used to be.” Also adopting the strong value of family, and the importance of family gatherings, and how children attend many more functions in general than in the U.S. She felt that she is more connected to her husband now that she is more relaxed about things although it was tense at the beginning.

Participant 6 reported that their family has benefited most by the warmth and affection of
Chilean culture in contrast to her own father who did not tell her he loved her until she was 16. She felt her participation in extended family gatherings helped her understand why her husband is so easy-going, which helped her become less uptight and adopt a more go-with-the-flow attitude.

On the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 6 felt that their gender roles changed after moving to Chile, but primarily due to the fact that they started a family. In the U.S., she would have had to be the primary wage earner which is why they decided to move to Chile so she could be a stay at home mom. She felt that family life in Chile was safer and more affordable than in the U.S., and felt that having a family in the U.S. in general would have been much harder. She also described the benefit of being a part of an extended family:

I saw the plus sides of having an extended family... I could benefit from all of that... We used to go a lot to his parent’s house on the weekends... and talk all the way through till tea time [from lunchtime]... That was good for the kids being with their extended family, and for me too to learn all of these things because it was just my little nuclear family where I grew up so you didn’t learn too much from anyone about how to be a good parent... I think I tried to incorporate all the best of them into what I was doing with my kids.

She reported that small conflicts existed with the in-laws who pressured her to raise the children a certain way. She would agree with them when they discussed these matters, but would do it her own way in the end.

In discussing relational adaptation, Participant 6 stated that she and her husband incorporated elements of both their cultures, but also created a unique culture together. In Chile they have tried to make compromises surrounding holidays celebrating both U.S. and Chilean festivities. She felt that the experiences they have shared as a couple has brought them closer and made them stronger and more protective of their relationship.
She reported that listening and patience are the skills she has learned to maintain their relationship. Especially due to language barriers where misunderstandings lead to arguments, she has found that listening intently first has always helped.

**Participant 7.** The following interview participant was from the U.S. and had been in a relationship with her Chilean husband for a total of 17 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 8 years and in Chile for 8 years.

On the topic of cultural values, this participant reported that her husband definitely became familiar with the values she grew up with since they visited her family often while living in the U.S. where he was exposed to what she considered as normal. She stated that they incorporate more of her values into raising their children in Chile by maintaining healthy eating habits, placing limits—on candy, soda, fast food, TV—and promoting outdoor activities similar to the way in which she was raised. She reported:

I’m a mother of two children so even though we’re in Chile, it seems as though my cultural values, my upbringing experience rings louder than his even though our setting is Chile.

She also felt that in their daily existence there is overlapping of cultural values and that she has also yielded to certain things. Participant 7 also discussed the Chilean cultural values she has adopted of being more laid back, not so focused on clock-based time, and noticing a blur of the concept of personal space. She commented:

That lack of personal space, which is common in Chilean families, was always within me, it just grew because of his influence. Had I married an American, that might have been different, who knows?

In addition, she has felt more connected with her husband since there is give and take and each of them has their own sphere of influence.
Participant 7 reported that her family values have been positively influenced by Chilean culture since she finds herself more participatory, more open, more affectionate, and more physically present, doting and kissing her children much more than her own mother was with her. Also, she felt that participating in extended family gatherings has helped her learn about her husband’s individual family culture dynamic such as learning not to take things so literally, especially around scheduling.

Moving to the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 7 stated her and her husband’s gender roles changed after moving to Chile. She felt that gender roles are much more traditional in Chile than in the U.S. and that the domestic help allows the husband to be “off the hook.” However, she noted that Chile’s longer work hours have caused his participation in childrearing to diminish and her daily decision making to increase.

Participant 7 described their relationship as being more of a partnership in the U.S. whereas in Chile it is more focused around gender lines:

I’m very independent and was brought up to be an independent woman and I think that side of me maybe has been slightly quashed not because I haven’t tried to remain independent, just because of the forces at work. Gender roles are very clear here and it’s hard to be the one who stands out, but in the states we’re much more equal, at least from my experience.

Outside of the home, she discussed having to take a significant pay reduction by working in Chile, although her husband has moved up to the top of his game in comparison to feeling handicapped in the U.S. working for an American company and speaking English with an accent. Participant 7 mentioned that she has felt like much more of a woman in Chile than in the U.S. She described benefiting from the domestic help which has allowed her to socialize more, have more personal freedom doing things she enjoys,
while also having quality time with her children instead of feeling the constant pressure of having to cook every night.

In our discussion of relational adaptation, Participant 7 stated she could not separate out the options to describe her relationship dynamic. She felt the outer world is dominated by the culture you live in, whereas in the home world a unique culture is created and sacrifices are made. She used the example of adapting to the cultural ways of her husband’s family when she has been invited there in the same way that they have to adapt to the way she does things in her household when they have come over to visit.

She described a change in her relationship dynamic with her husband. In the U.S. she felt they acted as a tight unit in comparison to Chile where she felt it has been diluted. She mentioned how her husband did not integrate well after returning to Chile, whereas she benefited from a decrease in parenting demands due to the domestic help. When asked about maintenance skills, Participant 7 stated that going light on the cultural criticisms is important, that her husband learned that in the U.S., and she learned that in Chile. She also discussed the cultural issues surrounding family:

Family is a big bone of contention for us. The way I was brought up . . . my nuclear family is the end all be all. I don’t get that here in this country. I think the extended family . . . are a priority and everyone is dragged along, that’s the way it’s been for me at least . . . that’s been a cultural clash for us and as a woman you want to be number one.

She discussed the inevitability of cultural bias, and the importance of trying not to generalize too much, and remain considerate in dealing with cultural issues in the relationship.
Participant 8. Participant 8 was from the U.S. and had been in a relationship with her Chilean husband for a total of 16 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 10 years and in Chile for 1.5 years.

In the discussion on cultural values, Participant 8 had difficulty answering the first question since she lived as an adult in the U.S. in a very different way than she grew up. She rebelled against religion and tradition after being raised Mormon, which she said caused some tension in her relationship since her husband was raised Catholic. She reported that he did well adapting to life in the U.S. and being exposed to her values around raising children. She felt she has incorporated values of independence and responsibility with her children in comparison to her husband and father-in-law who tend to baby them more. For example, Grandpa likes to continue to hand feed her 5-year old daughter although she has specifically taught her to eat by herself.

Participant 8 was not sure if she had adopted Chilean cultural values, but recognized she tries to be more flexible regarding timelines of how and when things happen instead of having specific expectations of time. She has also tried to balance everyone’s needs especially when thinking about extended family members. She reported that trying to become less rigid has decreased the tension in the relationship but not necessarily made her feel more connected to her husband.

Participant 8 stated that she likes the sense of family in Chilean culture, especially the sense of obligation in terms of helping one another, which she distinguished as different from the U.S. where one is expected to figure things out on one’s own without relying on family members. She stated that she feels more comfortable with her
husband’s family than her own family and discussed how her family life has been positively influenced by being a part of extended family networks. She said:

One of the reasons we decided to move down here [Chile] was precisely that, to give our kids more of a sense of extended family so that they know what it’s like to have a grandparent, aunts and uncles, cousins, ‘cause really with my family they had very little contact . . . of course it’s kind of a balancing act because sometime the family life here is very intense, sometimes the amount of time spent together can be kind of intense, but I would say it has been positively influenced.

Participant 8 reported that participating in Chilean extended family gatherings has helped her understand her husband’s history and hearing personal stories of family members’ lives before the dictatorship has been valuable.

Moving to the topic of male-female role taking, she mentioned that gender roles have changed some, but that she was not sure it was a result of moving to Chile but more so a change in life circumstances. While living in the U.S., she managed the finances, made appointments, and she had expected her husband to do more of this in Chile without having to ask him and felt frustrated it has not been that way. She reported that domestic chores have been a source of tension in the relationship, and that gender fairness was always a big issue for her growing up. Outside of the home, she felt their gender roles flipped since his schedule was fixed and her schedule was more flexible when they lived in the U.S. In Chile, she has had a full time job and a fixed schedule whereas her husband felt as though he had to start from zero again. Since she felt that in Chilean culture the gender roles are clearer cut, she has been concerned her husband has felt some level of failure for not being the male breadwinner. Participant 8 reported that she has had to become more flexible in parenting which she does not necessarily see as a benefit.
In the conversation on relational adaptation, Participant 8 described her relationship dynamic with her husband as dominated by U.S. culture when they lived in the U.S., and now dominated by Chilean culture since moving to Chile. She stated that they celebrated holidays and followed child raising practices more the U.S. way while living there, and have followed more the Chilean way now that they live in Chile though still incorporating U.S. childrearing values. She recognized she has had to sacrifice some of her ways and adapt especially due to the pressures of extended family.

Participant 8 stated that the transition has been very difficult for their relationship, but feels more relaxed now than before. She hopes that the experience will make them stronger. She said the skills she has learned is being more flexible and discovering what both of their non-negotiables are. Giving and taking with one another is the most important thing she felt they have figured out as a couple throughout the transition. She stated that the transition in Chile has been much harder on her husband than it has been on her, which she said she did not foresee.

Participant 9. This next interview participant was from the U.S. and had been together with her Chilean for a total of 5 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 2 years and in Chile for 1.5 years.

When asked about cultural values, this participant commented that her husband became familiar with her cultural values and adapted well to living in the U.S. and getting to know her family. She did not think that he had different cultural values until they moved to Chile. She felt that in part, they had incorporated some of her cultural values into their relationship in Chile by respecting other people’s space, which she stated was something his family had little awareness of.
Participant 9 made an observation of a change in her husband’s behavior after moving to Chile. She stated:

The amount of classism I see here, and I notice it in my husband. And it’s not something that he ever really showed when we were living in the states. So I was really surprised to hear him or see him act certain ways here.

She felt that she has not adopted any Chilean cultural values since the societal values she has been exposed to have not been ones she has wanted to incorporate into her life. These conservative, religious values were at odds with what she was taught when she was young. She did not feel that her family values have been positively influenced since she finds the concept of family in Chile as overreaching and superficial. Participant 9 also stated that extended family gatherings have impacted her in negative ways since they question her about why she works in the field that she does instead of teaching English part time and having babies.

In our discussion of male-female role taking, she described the gender roles changing in the home between her and her husband after moving to Chile. She stated she became more domestic since she took some time off from working. She reported that he had taken on more domestic responsibilities in the states after being laid off although they had split chores evenly when they both worked. Once she started working in Chile, they hired a maid and split cooking responsibilities. She stated that she has been emphatic about feeling like she is not taking on a traditional wife role in the relationship and told her husband early on that he should not expect her to do his laundry. Participant 9 stated she has benefited from the domestic help available in Chile, and also benefited by observing what societal attitudes or behaviors she does not want to practice in her own
life. She felt she has benefited as a foreigner by not having to participate or perform to other people’s standards.

Moving to the topic of relational adaptation, Participant 9 reported that her culture dominated when they were living as a couple in the U.S. since he did not carve his own niche. They celebrated some holidays with her family while also celebrating the Chilean holiday he tended to miss (September 18th, Independence Day). She described how the relationship dynamic changed after moving to Chile:

I guess when I came . . . I guess his culture did dominate when I first arrived, and I kind of just went along with it, and then I had a rebellion and we had to figure out how to do things . . . now if I want to go, I go, but I skip a lot of things.

Participant 9 stated it has been difficult getting used to the class of people she is surrounded by in Chile which is drastically different than the middle-class family in the U.S. This is why she has chosen not to participate in certain gatherings.

She commented that she and her husband had to work through a lot of things after moving to Chile, and that things are better which makes her feel like their relationship has strengthened. She stated that ideally these situations are supposed to make people more tolerant by learning to live with some things and learning to negotiate other things, but reported that she still does not feel very tolerant. When asked about relationship skills, she stated that communicating and working through issues was what they have relied on as a couple. However, she felt that she has become less tolerant the longer she has lived in Chile as well as less willing to incorporate Chilean values into her life.

Participant 10. The following interview participant was from the U.S. and had been in a relationship with her Chilean husband for a total of 8.5 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 3 years and in Chile for 5.5 years.
In discussing cultural values, Participant 10 stated that her husband became familiar with her cultural values although he did not know them well. While living in the U.S., all of their friends were Latinos although they lived with her family for 8 months. She reported that they have incorporated her cultural values into their relationship living in Chile since her husband has not expected her to take on all of the household responsibilities just because she is the woman. He learned that it has to be give and take, and she has appreciated this since it continued in Chile where he has helped with everything like cooking and cleaning.

She also said they have adopted the Chilean cultural values of being more social, hospitable, and helping people more than in the states. She discussed the way in which she changed after moving to Chile. She reported:

With us, to survive in Chile in general I had to become more submissive and more feminine. . . . In the states I did the corporate world thing and you have to be a strong woman . . . and then coming here, for me to get along with Chilean men in general . . . I had to make myself more the feminine role, the submissive where in the states, I would never handle a man if I asked him a question him responding to my husband, ever, but here it’s something very common . . . and so I have to deal with that, and instead of being unhappy about it, I’ve just decided it’s a survival technique. . . . My husband has made me less fiery and volatile, he’s taught me to be calmer, and little bit more reserved, more toned down. I am not as loud as I used to be. My personality from 1-5, 5 normally, but more like 2.7 in Chile, it’s a survival technique to be here and to be happy.

Participant 10 stated that her family values have been positively influenced since Chilean families integrate people into the household and invite a person to stay as long as they want. She commented, however, that she has not necessarily felt as though her in-laws have integrated her into the household and still has felt more like a visitor instead of the daughter-in-law. Participant 10 reported that her participation in extended family gatherings has helped her learn more about her husband and his non-confrontational style.
and reticence about sharing his opinion. She observed how he is as a result of his family, and their non-confrontational style.

Switching to the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 10 reported that her and her husband’s gender roles did not change, and that they have remained the same in both countries. She felt that since she has always made more money than he has, he never had the machismo attitude that she should also do all of the housework. She observed that his mother doted on him, which he accepts, but that he changes back to being helpful in the kitchen when they are in their own household. Participant 10 stated that neither of them had to make career sacrifices, and that they both have had good jobs in Chile. She felt that Chile has been a better place for her, has made her more feminine, and has been a place her husband can take better care of her. She felt she has benefited by becoming more easy-going. She commented:

Being here helped me be more . . . easy-going and in the states I am more strong willed . . . that in itself has made me actually a better wife to him and a better partner . . . because I’m not so gung-ho on getting it done right now and being done my way. We work as a team.

In our discussion of relational adaptation, she felt that her relationship dynamic both in the U.S. and Chile could be described as a unique culture not representative of either of their individual cultures. She described that neither of them loved how their own households functioned growing up and that they have taken what made each of them happiest and made it work for them as a couple. She discussed their tendency to give and take on certain things, and the importance of spending a lot of time together.

Participant 10 felt that everything they have gone through together has made them closer. She felt that these kinds of transitions a couple goes through either makes their relationship stronger or breaks it. She felt fortunate that for their case, it made them
stronger. She discussed how opposite they are when it comes to dealing with disagreements and confrontation but they have learned to function and get through those times. As far as maintenance skills, Participant 10 stated that being more relaxed, comprehensive, and able to let some things go have been key in managing their main issues which have had to do with extended family. Also, remembering there are cultural reasons behind his behavior has helped her to understand why he might react in a certain way.

**Participant 11.** Participant 11 was from the UK and together with her Chilean husband for a total of 13 years. They had lived together in the UK for 7 years and in Chile for 5.5 years.

In our discussion on cultural values, Participant 11 reported her husband’s experience after moving to the UK. She commented:

Right from the first day when he arrived to the country, he was very surprised that the whole family didn’t go and visit him at the airport, and it took probably another two or three weeks before he met my parents which is something very different to here where the families are far more integrated.

She stated that it took her husband about two years to become familiar with her cultural values, especially surrounding her relationship with her family of whom she did not see very often. Participant 11 felt she has adapted well to the cultural values in Chile rather than bringing much of her own values with her. She reported one of the values she holds onto is her preference to having a dusty house over hiring a maid since has felt strongly about the issue of maids and how they are treated in Chile.

One of the Chilean cultural values she felt she has adopted is becoming more physically affectionate. She said that by becoming used to hugs and kisses as a part of
her husband's culture and form of expression, she started to hug and kiss her own parents more and felt they became closer as a result. She has appreciated this aspect since she described the English as very hands off and concerned with private space. Participant 11 reported she has felt more connected to her partner by adapting to living in Chile. She felt that a person has to change and accept the culture in which they are living to be able to fit in which is why she felt they have worked so well as a couple.

Participant 11 described her family values as positively influenced by Chilean culture. She grew up in a small traditional family, and explained the advantages of being a part of a large family network in Chile:

Having the large families here, with the brothers and the sisters and the cousins, it's nice, people share things. There is a lot of help, if you are in trouble you have people that you can call upon. In the UK, we are very independent but we end up being a little bit isolated or alone, whereas here you seem to have a backup network, so it's nice.

She also reported that at first, she was overwhelmed by the number of family gatherings she was expected to attend, and did not feel she had much choice in the matter. However, she commented that those family gatherings also helped her understand where her husband comes from.

In discussing male-female role taking, Participant 11 reported that their gender roles did not change in the home after moving to Chile. She explained that when they lived together in the UK, she taught him how to do the laundry and work the oven for cooking. This was very different than how he had grown up with a nana doing everything for him such as folding his socks. She explained that he became very independent and able to look after himself, and they split the chores 50/50 when they both were working.
After moving back to Chile, she insisted that the household chore sharing stay the same between them. He tried to convince her to get a maid, and she reported she has still won the battle. Participant 11 observed how her husband’s mother doted on him. She described that after 15 years, his mother still cannot believe that she does not iron her husband’s shirts for him. Outside of the home in the work sphere, she reported that neither one of them has had to make major career sacrifices in either country. Although it took a long time for her husband to be able to work legally in the UK, he eventually became successful. In Chile, she has made a career change, but has also been successful.

Participant 11 discussed how her role as extended family member has benefited from living in Chile by becoming an aunt and spending a great deal of time with nieces and nephews. She noticed how, contrary to the norm of spouses becoming jealous if one goes out without the other, in her own relationship they allow each other to go out separately with friends and have fun. She reported that her friendships have also developed in a way that she shares more with them and has found a level of trust and openness instead of remaining such a private person.

As far as relational adaptation, Participant 11 described that while living in the UK, that culture dominated their relationship since they were getting to know each other there. She explained that they also made trade-offs incorporating each other’s ways and accepting each other’s points of view since she became familiar with Chilean culture when they would visit. After moving to Chile together, she described their relationship saying they have created their own unique culture taking into account both habits and beliefs and making them work together.
Participant 11 stated that living in one another’s country caused each one of them to have to make sacrifices, each having different problems and suffering through the adaptation process. She commented:

Everything we’ve passed through from him adapting to the UK and from me adapting to Chile, we can understand each other because both of us has passed through that particular stage. I think if only one partner has lived in the country, than they can never really fully understand what it’s like from the other person’s point of view.

She also explained the difference in adapting between herself and her spouse when they moved to Chile together. She said:

My husband took nearly 6 months to a year to re-accustom himself back to the Chilean ways, especially in the work environment and the family environment. It took him a long time to adapt to living back in Chile which was quite surprising for me. So that shows that there must be quite a lot of differences.

When asked about maintenance skills, Participant 11 claimed: “Patience has to be number 1 for living in a mixed partner’s relationship.” She stated that everyone, especially the in-laws, have strong opinions about what one’s role as wife should be, and so being patient with these issues is the biggest thing. Also, she suggested that being open and honest with your partner would help you overcome the difficulties.

Participant 12. The next interview participant was from the U.S. and had been together with her Chilean for a total of 9 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 5 years and in Chile for 2.5 years.

In the discussion of cultural values, Participant 12 stated that a big reason why as a couple they decided to live in the U.S. was so her partner would become familiar with the cultural values she grew up with which was important to her. She stated that he learned about her family traditions and cultural references, and that he learned to love
most of it. She felt that they have definitely incorporated her cultural values into their relationship and family in Chile speaking in English, celebrating American holidays and traditions, and eating more international foods. Participant 12 described the cultural dynamic in raising her daughter:

Most of what we do is more American than Chilean in part because I’m the one who is always researching and talking to people and reading books . . . and so I present my ideas and my husband is pretty flexible in terms of the way that we do things. There are a lot of Chilean beliefs in terms of raising a child, especially a baby that I’ve really kind of rebelled against to be perfectly honest with you, and stood my ground. I didn’t want to pierce her ears or have her head shaved when she was born. She never wears shoes or socks and Chileans think that she’s therefore going to die of the flu. So I think with respect to her [daughter], it’s probably more American than Chilean.

Participant 12 reported that she has adopted the Chilean cultural value of being more spontaneous without always planning things ahead of time. She compared it to the norm of her own culture where she described people always being in a rush, and needing to schedule things a month in advance. She commented that a negative thing she has adapted to is worrying about safety, as she has felt Chileans are very paranoid about safety. Participant 12 did not feel as though these aspects she has adapted to have helped her connect more with her husband, but rather helped her better understand cultural differences in general.

She explained that her family values have been positively influenced by Chilean culture in terms of spending more time together. She has noticed they have spent more time with her husband’s family than they did with her family when they lived in the U.S. She also felt that participating in family gatherings with his mother and sister has deepened her understanding of her husband’s background, and how he was raised with certain traditions, celebrations, and foods.
Turning to the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 12 claimed that her husband had very traditional ideas of gender roles when they were first together, whereas she felt they should be more equal partners. She explained how her mother-in-law was very upset to learn she was not ironing her son’s shirts for him when they first started dating. While living in the U.S., they shared roles and divided the cooking and cleaning, and she felt he learned about the need to share household roles and that there were not just man’s roles or woman’s roles. Participant 12 reported that there was a change in gender roles inside of the home after they moved to Chile. Since she started working from home, she has taken on more of the chores and they have hired a full time nana.

As far as gender roles outside of the home, she reported that they both made large career sacrifices to live in each other’s country. He left a good job to move to the U.S., and now she feels that her job is a lot less fulfilling in Chile than it would be if she were living in the U.S. Participant 12 felt that her roles have benefited from being in Chile but not necessarily from the culture and society. She has appreciated how family friendly Chile is. She stated:

In some ways, my role as mother has benefited because I feel that Chilean society bends over backwards for pregnant women and new moms, and is very child focused. . . . I feel like I’ve been really taken care of and pampered. People and places are very accepting of babies, so our social lives haven’t been very adversely impacted because we’ve been able to take our daughter with us everywhere and we’ve never gotten a dirty look or a negative comment and I think maybe that happens more in the US.

In our discussion on relational adaptation, Participant 12 felt that they have made trade-offs between their two cultures, and adapted rather than made sacrifices. She felt her culture dominated while they lived in the U.S. and that he learned about different ways of doing things. She discussed how their dynamic changed after moving to Chile,
but not necessarily as a result of cultural differences. She explained how they are happier as a couple in Chile since her husband is happier professionally, and being in his element more able to express his big personality which she felt was harder for him in the U.S.

She discussed that it has been difficult for her to not be able to celebrate American holidays in Chile in the way she has wanted.

Participant 12 discussed how the experiences they have shared as a couple have impacted their relationship. She said:

I think it's been strengthened tremendously because . . . if he had never have lived in the U.S., I think our relationship would not be what it is today, because he wouldn't be able to really understand me, like the depth of me, what it is that makes me tick, what is my rationale for doing things . . . I feel like that was crucially important for us . . . I honestly can't imagine our relationship without having lived in both countries, I think it was crucial for us, and also for our daughter. And also him learning to speak English was huge . . . him speaking English means everything to me, because it means that I can express myself differently than I used to be able to, that he can have a relationship with my family and friends.

She also discussed how conservative her husband was when she first met him, and how he became more open and liberal in his beliefs after living in the U.S. which was important for her. Participant 12 stated that patience is the skill she has learned in managing their relationship. She said in the beginning they used to fight mostly due to language and cultural misunderstandings and so she has learned to be patient, try to understand exactly what is going on, and react slower. She said that she had trouble with some of the interview questions because she felt a lot of their cultural issues have been erased.
Participant 13. Participant 13 was from the UK and had been in a relationship with her Chilean husband for a total of 8 years. They had lived together in the UK for 4.5 years and in Chile for 2 years.

In our discussion on cultural values, Participant 13 stated that her partner did become familiar with her cultural values when they lived in her country although they were not that different from her own. They were brought up in similar ways both having strong links to European culture since his family were German descendants. They also shared Latin roots since her mother was Argentinean. Participant 13 felt they have incorporated more European values into the way they raise the children (such as strict routines, and bedtime schedules) which was something they agreed upon before having kids. She explained how as parents they have been stricter and more structured than their Chilean friends who allow their children to stay up late. She also stated she has tried to promote male help in the kitchen which is how she was raised as opposed to her husband’s family that believes the boys get their hands dirty outside while the girls work in the kitchen. Participant 13 said she has not adopted Chilean cultural values since they were not so different than how she was raised.

She discussed what she loves about Chilean culture and how her family values have been positively influenced. She commented:

I’ve never ever seen a more child friendly society than Chile, ever, they’re incredibly tolerant of crying babies, and loud, getting splashed in the pool. People are so kind and interested . . . they have a natural affinity, loving and warm, holding children, being interested in them. . . . I’m happy to have that . . . that’s something that in the UK does not exist at that level. Everyone loves their kids, they just don’t show it in the same way.

Participant 13 believed that meeting her husband’s extended family helped her better understand what he was like as a child, and why he reacts to certain things. She noticed
his mother and father’s influence on his way of thinking and the affectionate behavior he picked up on from his mother.

Moving to our discussion on male-female role taking, Participant 13 stated that the gender roles between her and her husband changed drastically after moving to Chile. They both worked as young professionals while living in the UK, and she became a stay at home mother after moving to Chile. She commented that the nanny has contributed to her becoming lazy, and that her husband does not have to worry about anything although he continues to do the household repairs.

Outside of the home environment, she stated that she thinks her husband would like her to be on more equal footing with him and return to the workforce. Participant 13 described her enthusiasm about returning to work although she has felt pressure from her mother-in-law to stay home with the children. She also mentioned that her husband had sacrificed his career in London but has now benefited professionally from returning to Chile. Participant 13 commented that she has felt safer living in a child friendly society and has benefited from the help that friends offer in comparison to the UK where she felt people are not as ready to lend a hand.

In our discussion on relational adaptation, Participant 13 described their relationship dynamic as incorporating elements of both cultures in relatively equal shares. She described how in the UK they celebrated both Chilean and European holidays and traditions. She reported that her husband made trade-offs by living in the UK and had to become accustomed to ironing his own shirts or doing the shopping which his mother and nana would normally do for him in Chile. Participant 13 felt that their relationship dynamics changed after moving to Chile but in circumstantial ways since they moved and
she became a mother and wanted to spend time at home with the kids. She felt she has had to make more trade-offs and sacrifices in this way. Also, she stated they have taken turns spending time with each side of the family during Christmas so that the grandparents on both sides each get that time with them.

Participant 13 felt that her relationship with her husband was strengthened since he got a taste of what she grew up with, and now she has a taste of Chilean culture and what he experienced as a kid. She stated:

I think that the fact that we lived together in the UK as a married couple was helpful in putting the relationship on an equal footing right from the start. If we’d got married and then moved to Chile, I think gender differences would have been more accentuated.

Participant 13 felt that living in the UK influenced her husband’s opinion about women’s roles and learned that women can work and manage the household successfully. She also recognized that she and her husband have divided tasks according to what they are good at. The skills she has learned in maintaining her relationship is tolerance. She explained that “if you live in somebody’s country, you just get them, you understand that person better, and why they are the way they are.”

**Participant 14.** The next interview participant was from Germany and had been together with her Chilean husband for a total of 10 years. They had lived together in Germany for 7 years and in Chile for 3 years.

Discussing cultural values, Participant 14 stated that her partner became familiar with her cultural values when they lived in Germany, although it was difficult and strange for him at first. She explained how she has incorporated some of her German values into her family now living in Chile such as limiting television and sweets and spending
quality time together at dinner. She reported that she has adopted the Chilean practice of
being more relaxed with certain things instead of having a strict schedule. However, she
did not believe that this aspect has helped her feel more connected to her husband.
Participant 14 felt that her family values have been somewhat influenced by Chilean
culture since it is much more common practice to go out in the evening with the children
in comparison to Germany. She also discussed that they have not gotten together with
her husband’s extended-family-very-much, but that when her mother-in-law has visited
for a few months, it has not been easy.

Turning to the topic of male-female role taking, Participant 14 stated that there
was a change in gender roles inside of the home after moving to Chile. In Germany they
both worked and tried to share the household stuff although she did most of it. She
explained that it has always been an issue for them as a couple and continues to be now
that they live in Chile. She had stayed home with her daughter at first and recognized
that she spent more time at home than she ever did in Germany. After she returned to the
workforce holding down two jobs, she has still continued to do most of the household
chores. She explained how it has been easy to let that happen in Chile, and difficult to go
back and tell her husband to do various things around the house. She felt that it has been
too much to have to work, be a mother, and manage the household. She also felt her
career would be better off if she was back in Germany. Participant 14 did not feel as
though her roles as wife and mother benefitted, rather that they have suffered. She
described how they have no support network in Santiago, and no money to afford a nana
in comparison to having easier access to childcare and good working washing machines
in Germany.
As far as relational adaptation, Participant 14 felt that back in Germany they incorporated elements of both cultures by creating a unique culture together. They celebrated both kinds of holiday traditions and continue to do the same now living in Chile. She felt they have been able to maintain German traditions since they are not pressurized by Chilean extended family members to celebrate things a certain way. Participant 14 felt that her husband understands her better since he lived in Germany and in fact misses living there. She commented:

It’s easier to understand the other person, his problems, I think so. And now, looking back, I understand him better. You can say I’m sorry I didn’t support you in this way; I know it was difficult for you, and in that moment I didn’t see it.

She described the importance of talking a lot with one another and being careful of misunderstandings to manage the cultural issues in the relationship. She also explained some other maintenance skills:

The kind of humor it’s so different, there are so many things that are different, you have to listen to the other person very carefully, what you want to say and express... It’s patience, and trying to talk, and trying to learn the other language. And it’s definitely easier if you’ve lived in both countries.

**Participant 15.** The last interview participant was from the U.S. and had been in a relationship with her Chilean for a total of 20 years. They had lived together in the U.S. for 1.5 years and in Chile for 17 years.

On cultural values, this participant said that her husband had become familiar with her values growing up and had no problem adapting to life in the U.S. She stated that his German roots affected this since she felt German values and U.S. values are similar. She described him as open minded, and that she would not have married a traditional Chilean since she felt it would not have worked. Participant 15 reported that
they have incorporated a mix of cultural values into their family living in Chile and continue to celebrate American holidays and traditions. She reported that they have many multicultural influences in their family and have also exposed their daughter to a mix of religions. She felt her daughter will be open-minded and is advantaged by having so much multicultural exposure.

Participant 15 felt that she has not adopted Chilean cultural values partly because it was very hard for her to adapt to living in Chile and making friends. She felt that they have not integrated much into the culture since she does not like the snobbish attitudes where people are primarily concerned with status and appearance. She described her in-laws as having a different mentality as humble immigrants. Participant 15 felt that her family values have been positively influenced by Chilean culture due to the attachment to the elders, which she feels is stronger than in the U.S. She discussed how talking with her Chilean in-laws influenced her to take care of her own mother from home when she became ill. She also felt Chilean culture influenced her to care for her daughter herself without placing her in daycare as opposed to how it is done in the U.S. She stated that with help from the nanny and mother-in-law, her daughter is always in someone’s care in contrast to how she remembers growing up watching TV alone all day after school.

Participant 15 stated she would rather her daughter grow up in an environment where people are warm, personable, and less materialistic. She felt that participating in extended family gatherings has benefited her family since there are a lot different opinions and ways of thinking that are absorbed. She has experienced the richness and appreciated the positive aspects.
In our discussion on male-female role taking, Participant 15 felt that there was not a change in gender roles in the home with her husband after moving to Chile. She felt this was influenced by the fact that he is part German and has always helped with household chores no matter where they live. She explained that her husband grew up with a nanny but that his mother also taught him how to be independent and care for himself, teaching him to clean up, vacuum, and make his bed. Participant 15 reported she has done the same thing with her own nanny, ensuring she give her daughter chores so she learn to clean up after herself as well.

As for roles outside of the home, it was difficult for her to find a good job as a female electrical engineer in Chile, and her husband has remained the primary breadwinner. Participant 15 felt her roles as wife and mother have benefited from living in Chile. She felt she has a better quality family life having a nanny since she does not have to spend the whole weekend cleaning and doing laundry. She felt that families in the U.S. do not have the time to be with each other and that children live in their own worlds in their own rooms. She also reported that church has been an important aspect in their life in Chile, which has created more family time and a nice community for them to be a part of.

Onto the topic of relational adaptation, Participant 15 felt that she and her husband created a unique culture together when they lived in the U.S. since he adapted so easily. After moving to Chile, she felt she had to give up a lot and had difficulty in the adaptation process. She reported:

In Chile, it was very hard for me to adapt... His culture sort of became more dominant I guess, because I was so vulnerable... I had to find the way for me to be happy to value my husband a lot in order to give up the great opportunities the United States would have given me. Sometimes when we have a fight... I was
like, I gave up all of that, the U.S., for you? So I have to compensate that, being successful in my career. . . . When I was unsuccessful and out of a job [in Chile] . . . my anxiety levels went up, I wasn't happy. So it was hard, that's why it took me 10 years to adapt.

Participant 15 felt that the greatest strength in their relationship has been the ability to be more objective because of all the different influences they have had. She believed that inheriting different points of view has helped them look at situations more objectively. She reported that remaining open-minded has been a maintenance skill she has learned in this process, and felt her husband became more open-minded as a result of the American influence he was exposed to living in the U.S. She felt that cultural maintenance skills they have not needed as much as regular daily maintenance skills in managing their relationship.

**Group Summary**

As a whole there were many similarities between individual experiences, as well as differences. This was not surprising since there was a diverse range of women interviewed, several new to their cultural transition with their partners, and many who had experienced the transition numerous years ago. Also, some women were in more recent relationships with their Chileans, while others were celebrating 25+ years together. Participants themselves addressed cultural differences throughout the entire interview and had a great deal to share about their experiences. The following section will highlight the research findings per question as a whole and describe group trends.

**Values across cultures.** A total of 13 out of 15 women answered affirmatively for the first interview question, responding that their partner became familiar with their cultural values when living in her home country. Some reported that their partners
adapted easily and well while others reported it was a challenge for them and took a few years to become accustomed to the cultural differences. For the second question, all 15 participants stated that, in one way or another, they have incorporated their own cultural values into the relationship and/or family now that they live in Chile. This factor seemed to be directly influenced by the male’s familiarity with and level of acceptance regarding the female’s cultural values.

Ten participants with children discussed the importance of maintaining their own cultural values surrounding child-rearing practices while living in Chile. They stated that their values tended to dominate in raising the kids, and six women discussed that they had decided intentionally as a couple what values they would adhere to as far as raising children regardless of the country in which they were living. Some of these participants also talked about the strong opinions they received from Chilean friends or family who tended to criticize their more stringent parenting styles. Although these couples were raising children in ways that went against Chilean cultural norms while living in Chile, they adhered to practices such as following rigid routines and bedtime schedules, limiting sugar intake and television watching, and teaching their children independence and responsibility by giving them household chores. They identified these parenting expectations as valued in their cultures rather than in Chile and something they were not willing to give up regardless of societal pressure.

There were three participants in this study that did not have children. Still, they reported that they maintained their own cultural values within their relationship after moving to Chile. Examples provided were maintaining a respect for personal space as a
couple, sharing household work equitably, and maintaining a level of independence in the relationship allowing each other nights out alone with friends.

When asked about whether they have adopted any Chilean cultural values since moving to Chile, 11 of 15 participants answered affirmatively. The most common responses the women gave for this question were: adopting a more relaxed, flexible, easy-going attitude and being less fanatical about clock time (eight responses), becoming a warmer and more affectionate person using hugs and kisses more often with less of a need for personal space (four responses), espousing a more social and hospitable nature (three responses), and taking on a greater concern for appearance with increased awareness of feminine sensuality (three responses). Only four participants reported feeling a greater connection to their husbands as a result of adopting Chilean cultural values. Seven women did not answer the question, and four reported they did not feel more connected to their husbands as a result. However, the majority of the participants reported that their roles as women or their family in general benefited from these Chilean values they had taken on in their lives.

For the fourth interview question, 14 out of 15 participants felt that their family values had been positively influenced by Chilean culture. Ten women reported that they liked living in a more family oriented culture and child friendly society. In addition, nine participants stated that they benefited from spending more quality time with not only their own nuclear family, but with extended family members. Several women reported that their own family benefited from the increase in physical affection as well as the societal expectation of regular weekend family gatherings, and increased social life in
general. Four women stated that they felt pride for the multicultural family environment in which they were a part.

One woman reported that her participation in Chilean extended family gatherings had negatively impacted her experience. The remaining 14 women felt that their interactions with extended family members to some extent had helped them gain knowledge about either their husbands' familial, historical, or cultural background. Finally, eight participants commented that their husbands were not "typical" Chileans and so it was interesting to observe his individual similarities or differences within the context of his own family culture.

**Gender role issues.** On the topic of male-female role taking in the sixth question, nine women reported a change in gender roles between themselves and their spouses inside of the home after moving to Chile. Some women felt this change was circumstantial rather than cultural since they had also started a family simultaneously. In contrast, other women felt there was an intentional shift due to a change in societal expectations surrounding more traditional gender role differentiation. Seven participants made observations about Chile exhibiting more sexist or chauvinistic attitudes and behaviors, valuing more traditional and clear-cut gender role ideologies. One participant stated that upon moving to Chile her husband was negatively judged by his family and friends because he shared in the housework. He stopped sharing that role entirely as a result.

A total of seven participants reported feeling pressure from in-laws, particularly their mother-in-law, surrounding their role expectations as wife or mother. These women reported that their mothers-in-law expressed strong opinions with them about what they
should and should not be doing inside and outside of the home. Five women described how their mother-in-law was opposed to the fact that they did not iron their husbands’ shirts. Furthermore, two women were repeatedly told by their mothers-in-law to stay at home with the children or to have babies instead of working outside of the home.

Several women discussed that Chilean mothers tend to dote on their grown sons, making sure they have enough to eat and doing their laundry for them or ironing their shirts. This factor clashed with their own beliefs about encouraging their husbands to be independent and to take care of their own needs. These women discussed the challenges of household dynamics and role expectations between how they grew up, and how their husbands grew up. However, in most cases, women reported their husbands acted very differently in their own household (more equitably) as opposed to in their mother’s household (less equitably).

Five participants discussed how the household chores were more shared while living in her country than while living in Chile since they could not afford hired help. They commented that having a maid (a nana) in Chile blurred the domestic roles between them. Five women stated that although they enjoyed the domestic help in Chile, it was important for them to set limits with the nana so that their children would continue to learn to clean up and care for themselves independently. A few women stated that their Chilean nana was surprised by their parenting practice of enforcing rules so the children would carry out their own household chores. Five women reported an equal share in household chores with their husband that did not change as a result of moving across cultures, or was not influenced by the presence or absence of domestic help.
As for male-female role taking outside of the home, nine women reported they felt that their roles had changed after moving to Chile. Eight participants reported that they were forced to make career sacrifices since their education or skills were not as marketable in Chile as they were in their home countries. They also recognized that their husbands had made these kinds of career sacrifices by living outside of their own home country, which were mostly due to language barriers and legal work requirements.

Finally, 12 women felt that their roles as female, wife, mother, or extended family member had benefited from living in Chilean culture. Eight participants commented about the advantages of having affordable domestic help or accessible childcare. They felt they were more present as mothers and had more quality time with their families instead of having to constantly stress about cooking and cleaning. Others felt this allowed them more personal freedom and time to socialize with friends which made them feel more fulfilled as women. Ten mothers reported that family outings were easier due to the child friendly culture. Finally, six women reported that it was easier to be a stay-at-home mother in Chile rather than in their own home country, and that there was more freedom not to work in Chile.

**Relational adaptation.** Participants described their relationship dynamics in unique ways. Three women chose multiple options to describe their relationship for question 9, and often used their own words to more fully describe the dynamic while living in her home country. The most common answer supplied by seven women was that they felt that as a couple they had created a unique culture together not representative of either of their individual cultures while they lived in her country. Some of these women used the term third culture to describe their unique relationship dynamics. Five
women felt that their own culture tended to dominate in the relationship while they lived with their partner in her home country. In contrast, two women felt that in their relationship they made trade-offs between their two cultures, and five women stated that they incorporated both cultures in relatively equal shares.

As far as whether they experienced a change in their relationship dynamics after moving to their partner’s home country of Chile, a variety of answers were given. One woman chose multiple answers to describe her relational adaptation in Chile with regards to values, beliefs, behaviors, and decision-making. Four women described feeling a part of a unique culture they and their husbands had built that was not representative of either individual culture. Furthermore, four participants felt that either their partner’s culture or their own culture began to dominate more in the relationship after moving to Chile; three described Chilean culture dominating, and one described her own U.S. culture dominating. Two participants felt that they made trade-offs between their culture and their spouse’s culture sacrificing their way to make room for the other’s way. Furthermore, two women reported that they incorporated elements of both cultures in relatively equal shares.

When they brought up specific examples of changes in relationship dynamics after moving to Chile, there was much variation surrounding experiences. Six women described a mixed bag of celebrating holidays and traditions after moving to Chile, and in part felt pressure from the in-laws to celebrate their way instead of the female’s way. Three women commented they felt their husbands’ Chilean side of him came out more after the transition. In addition, four participants described their relationship as being more unified in her home country, and more separated or diluted in Chile. Another two women felt that moving to Chile caused their own personalities to become quieter and
more subdued which affected their relationship. Finally, two other women described their relationship dynamic as changing as a result of becoming stay at home mothers after moving to Chile. They thought their husbands felt a loss by no longer being on equal footing as a couple, since only he worked and they had very little time to go out together. Five women also reported that language dependency on their husbands was challenging after the initial transition to Chile.

For the second to last question, 11 participants reported that their relationship had been strengthened in one way or another. Seven participants reported they felt closer with their husband and understood him better as a result of all the experiences they shared together living in both countries. Three women stated that the transition had been very difficult for them and three women felt their relationship had not been strengthened. Three participants also described having difficulty in the adaptation process after moving to Chile and the subsequent changes that took place in the relationship.

The most common answer eight participants gave was that their relationship had been strengthened as a result of their partner becoming more open-minded due to living in her home country. They felt his belief systems and perspectives were broadened and that he learned to value less strict notions of gender roles that were the societal norms in her home culture. Seven women reported that living in both cultures made them, as a couple, clearer on what values to maintain or adopt versus what beliefs or practices they would not follow in their own lives. Five participants described an ability to read their husband better or predict his behavior better now that they lived in his country and culture. In addition, two women stated that they had to learn to sacrifice many things for
the happiness of others, and place more emphasis on the love for their husbands than on what they had left behind in their country.

Finally, 11 participants responded affirmatively to the last question by citing a number of different maintenance skills they felt they learned as far as managing cultural issues with their partners. Some of the skills women listed were: communication/language and semantics (six responses), the practice of give and take, and knowing what is negotiable vs. non-negotiable (five responses), patience (four responses), listening (three responses), and acceptance of and adaptation to culture (three responses). Other skills mentioned were: looking at things from the other’s perspective (three responses), avoiding being culturally imperialistic or overly critical (two responses), remaining open and honest (two responses), and maintaining an easy-going and relaxed attitude (two responses). Four women were unsure about the question, and did not report any new skills learned.

**Unexpected Findings**

The interview data in this study also revealed some unexpected results. Four women discussed that their husbands had a difficult time re-adapting to life in Chile. They discussed this experience in contrast to their own time adapting with greater ease. These women stated that their husbands observed the difference and made comments to them that they felt surprised their wives had adapted so easily or done so well professionally so soon after the transition.

Another unexpected finding was that some participants had a hard time articulating notions of culture or differentiating cultural influences. Some women had a difficult time answering certain questions and for the last question, three participants
described their cultural issues as having been erased. Due to the intercultural and multicultural nature of the couples in the study, I expected that complex layers would exist in the context of the relationship, but I did not expect that they would have trouble responding to some of the interview questions as a result.

Finally, my initial goal of this research was to capture the couple experience throughout cross-cultural transition. I had not expected the findings to become so focused on the family experience though it is not surprising. Although the interview questions were mostly focused on relationship aspects, women's answers were very centered around the causes and effects of their relationship dynamics on their nuclear and extended families. This demonstrates the truly complex nature of not just intercultural relationships, but multicultural families in cross-cultural transition and warrants further research.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Overview

This research helped elicit further understanding surrounding the complex issues women face in the context of their intercultural relationships as a result of moving across cultures. By posing questions using a strengths-based format, it also demonstrated the positive influences and benefits experienced in the face of a challenging life transition. The unique stories of 15 women will be interpreted in this chapter.

Two complex research questions were proposed for this thesis. First, I wanted to understand more about the ways women felt that cross-cultural transition impacted their relationship with regards to cultural values and male-female role taking. In addition I was curious about whether they would report a change in relationship dynamics as a result of moving from the female’s home country to the male’s home country. Second, I wanted to understand more about the types of relationship benefits women reported as a result of moving across cultures with their partner. Furthermore, I was interested in learning how these unique experiences helped prepare women for managing ongoing intercultural relationship issues. The following section will provide an in-depth discussion of the research findings taking into account the theoretical contexts addressed in the literature review.
The Impact of Evolving Values and Family on Relational Culture

This research attempted to expose some of the ways in which a couple's cultural values either remain the same or evolve as a result of moving across cultures together. More specifically, how might this process develop when the couple is moving from her home culture to his home culture? Hofstede's (2001) differentiation between individualism and collectivism provided a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how societal values differ regionally and can help us interpret the findings of this study. His research highlighted that the U.S., Australia, the UK, and Germany are countries that tend to adhere to individualistic cultural values. On the other hand, Chile was rated as significantly lower in this category, closer to the collectivistic dimension. This can help explain some of the issues couples coming from these cultures and backgrounds faced when confronted with diverging values and behaviors representative of the society in which they were living.

Most of the intercultural couples in this research continued to adhere to the female's individualistic values surrounding raising children and egalitarian values of sharing household responsibilities after moving to Chile. Women identified that their own cultural values dominated in the household, and that their husbands followed this parenting approach as well, even though it was in opposition with mainstream societal parenting norms in Chile. For example, mothers insisted on maintaining a structured schedule surrounding bedtime routines of which they identified individually as highly valued in their European, Australian or U.S. American cultures as far as raising children. They actively chose to maintain this parenting style even while living in a culture where flexibility and spontaneity are highly valued. Furthermore, it was important for them to
limit television and sweets although these practices are emphasized daily in the traditional Chilean lifestyle in a child’s formative years. Perhaps there is merit to Stephenson's (2003) description of South American culture as representing a hidden matriarchy. If mothers in Chile tend to have substantial influence over family matters, perhaps this explains why some of these husbands remained more acquiescent, allowing the wife/mother to maintain certain rules.

As for class and societal status, fewer women discussed the differences between their culture and Chile than was expected. One participant did feel that she saw a side to her husband she had not seen while living together in the U.S. since class and status was not as pronounced there. In Chile, she noticed different attitudes and behaviors of his come out as a result of the cultural context of living in a more classist society, which she did not like. Other women made brief observation of this difference, but did not talk about it affecting their relationship per se.

The most poignant societal/cultural difference women experienced after moving to Chile was the divergent role of family in day-to-day interactions. The current study provided similar findings to those of Lorig (1997) who discovered that non-Chilean women in relationships with Chilean men either benefited from the extended family culture while living in Chile, or felt smothered by it. Several participants in my study did talk about feeling overwhelmed by the amount of family gatherings, especially at first. Some participants also discussed the need to set boundaries with in-laws which became a coping strategy throughout their adjustment process. However, the majority of participants also discussed the benefits of being a part of extended family networks, and became accustomed to the cultural difference eventually. Many more benefits than
downsides were reported overall in this study which provided a unique contribution to Lorig’s prior research.

Moving from an individualistic society where they experienced family gatherings less frequently to an extremely family-oriented culture where gatherings occurred at least weekly was a culture clash they confronted. Interestingly, the women who were new in their transition to Chile reported more current challenges with regards to this aspect. In contrast, the women who had lived in Chile much longer had become accustomed to the change, and were able to better appreciate social familial commitments and their role as extended family members. This is not surprising considering the complexity of cross-cultural adaptation and how individual variables and societal variables affect this process differently for each person. In turn, the relational culture of the couple was impacted as a result.

Stephenson (2003) highlighted the importance of extended family kinships in Chile while Newbold (1985) described a tendency in the U.S. where grandparents maintain independent lives from their children. In their own discussions, some of the participants identified this specific cultural difference of an emphasis placed on the nuclear family in their home country versus the emphasis placed on the extended family in Chile. Every participant but one felt that her family values were positively influenced by Chilean culture. Being a part of a family friendly society that caters to children benefited most of the women in this study.

Many participants stated that they would have had a much more difficult time starting their own family living in their home country. They enjoyed being a part of extended family networks for parenting support, childcare access, and social gatherings.
Furthermore, they felt that extended family members were there to help no matter what, feeling less isolated than in their own country due to the expectation of solving one’s own problems without relying on others. These were some of the benefits women described as becoming a part of extended family networks in Chile. They also reported that they understood their partner more seeing him in his family context although it did not necessarily make them feel more connected to him. Overall, women seemed to feel enriched by moving from a society that values independence to a society that values family and personal relationships. This factor positively impacted their relationship, their bonds within their own nuclear family, as well as their rapport and connection to extended family members. Future research should explore these findings in greater depth.

The Impact of Gender Role Expectations on Relational Culture

Beyond the topic of family, male-female role taking was another noteworthy subject matter that female participants had a great deal to discuss. Many women commented that gender roles were always an issue in their relationship both when living in her country and now living in his country. One participant experienced blatant machismo with her partner only after they moved to Chile. Due to feeling external pressure whereby his masculinity was questioned, he simply stopped helping with the domestic chores he had participated in before. This factor contributed to a great deal of tension in the relationship that had not existed prior to moving to Chile as a couple.

Although most women did not have such an extreme experience, they did report noticing the cultural differences in societal expectations with regards to gender role ideology in Chile in comparison to their home countries. This research supported
Romano (2008) who suggested that couples in cross-cultural transition might experience gender role expectations of the surrounding culture in one country and then experience very different ones as they move to another country. Women moving across cultures in this study were made aware that the Chilean cultural norm tended to maintain more rigid standards of male-female role taking which they identified as more rooted in traditional values than in comparison to their own cultures. Most women found this difference troubling, just as Kohls (2001) had discovered in his examination of Americans’ adaptation to living abroad.

Most participants commented that their own expectations around sharing household chores did not change, and that they expected their husbands to continue to help around the house as much as they had when they lived elsewhere. They reported they felt pressure from their mother-in-law in Chile to take care of and serve their husbands in more pronounced ways than they were accustomed. Women found ways to set boundaries and maintain their own practices regarding what they were willing to continue to do for their partners versus what they were unwilling to take on. Patience was a skill several women reported was necessary to get past the pressure or strong opinions from others surrounding gender role expectations in Chile. As a result of moving from less conservative and traditional cultures to a more conventional one, women tended to cope by holding strong in their convictions with their partners despite societal pressures.

Some participants commented that by living in her home country near the beginning of the relationship, a precedent was set and their men learned about how important equity and equality was for her. In most cases, women felt very strongly about
continuing this dynamic in their relational culture, and their partners gave way in this aspect as well. For those that experienced this differently, their partners either rebelled against their prior role of sharing in household duties, or with hired domestic help no longer felt the need to continue certain duties. These findings are similar to those of Lorig (1997) who discovered that the roles of North American wives and Chilean husbands changed dramatically after moving to Chile. Her participants described their husbands’ domestic behavior as shifting from an egalitarian approach to suddenly being influenced by traditional norms and expectations of female versus male roles in the home. In the current study, a few women reported this same kind of experience, and the relational culture of the couple clearly shifted as a result.

This research supported Barbara’s (1989) theory that the female or male’s bond that she/he each holds to their original culture might have profound impacts on how they play out their gender roles within their relationship. Furthermore, this research contributed to his theory by examining it in the context of the couple’s experience moving between their two cultures. It is apparent that in these certain cases, the males’ attachment with their original culture with regards to gender roles prevailed after returning to live in Chile. In turn, a new dynamic developed between the couple that was different than before. Women either adjusted to this change, or became unsatisfied with the outcome. A few participants reported that it never would have worked with their own husband if he had reverted back to engendering more strict beliefs with regards to gender roles. Other women felt that they had made small accommodations in their roles to fit in more with Chilean societal expectations, which seemed to happen inevitably.
In support of Kellner’s (2009) findings, this thesis demonstrated that to a certain extent couples do redefine their identity and gender perspectives due to family influences and the cultural community in which they live. Family pressure and cultural expectations with regards to gender roles both had enormous impacts on the majority of the women in the contexts of their relationships. Even if the female’s behavior did not change, she became acutely aware of the issue, which further highlighted value differences that she was then forced to manage in the context of her relationship. Although some participants complained about the more apparent differentiation in treatment of men and women in Chile and discussed the presence of chauvinistic attitudes, others benefited from an increased sense they felt of both female sensuality and submissiveness. This demonstrated the unique experiences and reactions of women in similar cultural contexts and circumstances.

The current study contributed further to Kellner’s (2009) research by examining how a couple’s relational culture was impacted moving from an individualistic society to more of a collectivistic one. Moving from a culture that tends to value equality and the balance of power to a culture that tends to value power distribution between the sexes to the extent that women are often defined by their male counterparts is a noteworthy difference. Although alluded to by other participants, one woman specifically discussed her experience of being constantly defined by her male partner after moving to Chile. For example, she reported that on separate occasions when she asked a question, a male would respond to her husband instead of her directly. She herself chose to not let it bother her but rather accept it as different. This same participant commented that Chilean
culture made her more quiet and submissive, which benefited her relationship with her husband.

Other women seemed to be more put off by this cultural difference and unwilling to accept it. Participants recognized and appreciated their husbands who held less rigid gender role standards and allowed for a balance of power in the household, even after moving to Chile. Most women felt strongly about not redefining their gender roles in their new cultural context, but rather holding onto the ways in which they had already become accustomed as a couple. If their male-female role taking had changed as a result of moving to Chile, it was either due to starting a family, changes in who was employed or not, or third party influences such as the nana.

**Intercultural Relationship Adjustment Patterns and Marital Models**

In conjunction with Tseng’s (1977) theory of intercultural adjustment within relationships, the current study demonstrated the scope to which non-Chilean women reported relationship adjustments after moving to Chile with their Chilean partners. As shown in the results, eight women described themselves as mixing both their values and traditions and their husbands’ values and traditions depending on the context. This supported Tseng’s findings that mixing tends to be the most common adjustment pattern amongst intercultural relationships. One participant reported giving up the majority of her own cultural values to adapt to Chilean culture and society which Tseng would describe as following the one-way adjustment tactic. Furthermore, four participants described their relationship dynamics after moving to Chile as distinct from either of their individual cultures that Tseng would categorize as creative adjustment. Finally, two women described their unwillingness to adapt to certain cultural differences or attitudes
they faced in the new cultural context in which they were living. By not giving up their individual ways or mixing their ways with their partners, Tseng would argue they followed the alternative adjustment pattern.

The women in the current study that reported adopting some Chilean cultural values discussed how either their relationship or their family benefited as a result. Other participants talked about making the cultural values that were most important to them fit into the new cultural context even if it meant going against societal norms. Still others described having to make sacrifices and give way to certain things that were important to them prior to moving to Chile. A popular skill several participants mentioned was the give-and-take approach, deciding what they were willing to negotiate with their spouses versus what they were unwilling to negotiate. Tseng (1977) did suggest that achieving a healthy balance between the two cultures is what helps make an intercultural marriage succeed. Since the majority of participants reported allowing a mix of cultural influences, and a give-and-take approach, perhaps this was how they were achieving a healthy balance and thus able to stay together through a stressful transition.

This thesis also served to take Romano’s (2008) research further by examining whether moving from the female’s home country to the male’s home country impacted the ways in which couples managed their differences. According to her theory breaking down intercultural marital models, the women in this study could be described as using a number of different approaches. It is important to note here that participants often chose more than one option in question 9 to describe their relationship dynamics living in each country together.
Nonetheless, the current research findings showed that three participants discussed their cultural issues being erased with their partners, what Romano would categorize as obliteration. Since seven total women described one of the two cultures dominating in the relationship either while living in her home country or his home country, Romano would identify this approach as submission-immersion. A total of three women described their relationship as making trade-offs, which Romano would characterize as the compromise technique in which each partner gives up some of their own important cultural values or beliefs to include some of the other partner’s cultural values or beliefs. Finally, five women explained that they incorporated important elements of each of the two cultures, which Romano would describe as the consensus method.

These findings demonstrated how moving across cultures did impact the relationship dynamics of the couple, and that women reported changes in how they managed different cultural influences depending on the country and culture in which they were living. Clearly, these couples’ experiences were both diverse and unique. Five women, however, reported that the methods they used in managing cultural influences remained the same regardless of the country in which they were living.

In the current thesis, women discussed adopting certain Chilean cultural values that they liked and/or chose to include in their own lives. It is apparent that the dominant society to which they moved influenced some of their attitudes and behaviors that, in turn, impacted their relationship as well as their family dynamics. In line with the research of Evanoff (2006) and Dodd and Baldwin (1998), some of these participants themselves used the term third culture to describe the dynamic created in their
relationship, whereby a different third culture needed to be recreated once their cultural context changed by moving to Chile.

Cross-Cultural Transition and the Evolution of Couple Culture

In an attempt to understand women’s coping strategies during cross-cultural adjustment, Bridges’ (2004) model of transition can be applied to the current research findings. Bridges emphasized the importance of letting go of certain assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews to cope with transition. Essentially, this is what women discussed in their specific experiences through give-and-take negotiation. For instance, a few participants talked about having to give-in to participating regularly in social familial obligations even if they did not want to at first. The value of this interaction was so strong within Chile’s cultural context, it was important to negotiate this for the sake of their relationship and their family.

Another participant talked about letting go of her original assumption that it was rude to be ignored when she asked a man a question in front of her husband. Instead, she chose to take on more submissive roles as female and wife in Chile in comparison to the way in which she was socialized as a strong-willed, independent person in the U.S. This individual change in her behavior positively impacted her relationship as well as her interpersonal interactions in general. Still other women discussed the benefit of becoming more flexible with time and schedules due to living in Chile, letting go of prior beliefs about planning in advance and being on time. Some of the participants in this study who discussed adopting and practicing some of the Chilean values they became fond of seemed to adapt well in Chile, which contributed to a strengthening of their relationship.
All of these examples demonstrated the power of both individual and societal level variables in how these women dealt with their transitions, and in turn how it impacted the couple’s experience. These findings support Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) who asserted that these two types of variables could not exist independently from each other. In certain cases, moving across cultures forced these women to manage cultural differences in new ways with their husbands’ since new situations and varying cultural contexts also brought about unique issues they had not faced before. One woman commented that she was not aware of the extent of the cultural differences that existed between her and her partner until they moved to Chile. Many of the females’ stories demonstrated that new situations created distinct dynamics that they had to navigate together with their partners. Patience was just one of several skills mentioned by participants on numerous occasions for handling challenges and problem solving these kinds of issues.

Although women reported changes in their relationship dynamics as a result of cross-cultural transition, couples seemed to sustain their relationships by maintaining a certain amount of continuity in many of the shared values they developed together. By the time they had moved to Chile, they had already formed a solid foundation within their relationship. Few women reported unexpected surprises with regards to how, as a couple, they adjusted to living in a new cultural context together. The women who had visited Chile, and of those who actively participated in Chilean holiday festivities while living in her country seemed to have clearer expectations of what life would be like living in Chile. These same women discussed less difficulty in their adaptation process after moving. Berry (1990) argued that prior intercultural experience helps individuals cope
better as well as have more realistic expectations. This theory could help explain why some participants adjusted more easily than others during the cross-cultural adjustment process they experienced with their partners.

In contrast, a few women reported having enormous difficulty adapting to the cultural differences once actually living in Chile, which created a lot of strain on their relationship. Furthermore, four participants reported that their husband had a great deal of difficulty readapting to life in Chile, which also created strain on the relationship. In some cases, these men felt surprised that their wives were able to adapt easier than they were after the transition. An easier or more difficult individual adaptation process either seemed to facilitate or complicate the relational adaptation process between the couple.

Some women reported making small adaptations within the relationship due to cultural influences or a change in societal expectations. They discussed changes in celebrating certain holidays and traditions, identifying with the term trade-offs in navigating whether to celebrate the female’s traditions, the male’s traditions, a combination of both, or neither. Most women felt pressured to celebrate the Chilean way due to the societal practices in which they were living.

Barbara (1989), Kim (2002), and Pascoe (1992) argued that aspects of the relationship prior might need to be destructured, deculturated, and that new spousal expectations may occur as the couple moves across cultures. A few of the participants experienced this phenomenon and either adapted to the changes or did not. In many instances, personal experiences demonstrated a constant negotiation and mutual accommodation amongst the couple. Romano (2008) used the term *mutual clarification* to describe this process.
As demonstrated by Ataca and Berry’s study (2002), the current research showed that relational adaptation is an important process in how couples negotiate, accommodate, and clarify changes they experience together after moving abroad. One of my goals in doing this research was to increase awareness for women as to how they have been impacted by these circumstances, and demonstrate the ways in which they have preserved their relationship. Even though they have likely experienced the transition differently from their spouse, as Dimitrov (2002) suggested in her research, they have been able to maintain stable intercultural relationships in the midst of considerable change.

Skills Learned for Managing Ongoing Cultural Issues

In this study, women reported that in their relationships they mostly maintained shared values throughout their cross-cultural transition experiences. They also reported that they adopted some of the Chilean values that they liked and appreciated that helped enrich their lives and their families. When cultural values and gender role patterns in the couple shifted dramatically as a result of moving to Chile, greater tension was experienced in the relationship. During the initial development stages of a relationship, each individual in the partnership exposes his/her values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. If one of those individuals is living in a place that is not his/her own native country, that person either consciously or subconsciously accepts or rejects the different beliefs or practices as valued by that particular culture. In turn, this has dramatic effects on the relational culture of the couple.

The current research demonstrated that couples made a significant number of adjustments and accommodations to successfully manage their relationship whilst moving between their two cultures. Each of their stories was unique, and their
experiences complex. Language dependency, making trade-offs with regards to holiday customs and traditions, family commitments, cultural differences, and societal expectations around gender all made their situations challenging. However, 11 of the women interviewed felt their relationships had been strengthened by experiencing cross-cultural transition together as a couple. Women felt that their partners benefited enormously by living in her home country and being exposed to different cultural values and perspectives.

Women reported on a number of skills that helped them maintain their relationships in these circumstances. Since the individual living outside of his/her native country is at a disadvantage when it comes to language, it is no surprise that participants reported this as an important skill they were forced to learn. Trying to avoid misunderstandings due to semantics and listening carefully throughout communication were important in their language learning that directly affected their relationship after moving across cultures. Also the less language dependent they became on their husband, the more confident they felt in themselves and in their lives in Chile.

Approaching the relationship with a give and take attitude, and being aware that everything needs to be negotiated especially when an enormous transition takes place was a skill many women relied on. Having the capacity to understand that her husband had to make the same kinds of trade-offs and sacrifices when he lived in her country as she had to in Chile was another way in which participants discussed relational success. Practicing patience and being open and willing to accept and adapt to living in the other’s country were also very important factors for several participants. They felt their partners adapted well to living in their country, and thus it was their responsibility now to make every
effort to accept Chile and its cultural idiosyncrasies. This included having the ability to see things from the perspective of the other person, and refrain from making cultural criticisms. Learning to maintain an open and honest attitude and easy-going nature also helped women during challenging moments in their relationship.

**Relationship Benefits and Marital Stability Amidst Transition**

One of the benefits women reported from living in Chilean culture and society was having access to domestic help—the nana. This directly impacted their roles as females. The majority of participants reported that they were better wives, better mothers, and better friends since they could spread their time and energy in meaningful directions besides being constantly preoccupied with household duties. Several women made comparisons with their home country and felt they lived better lives in Chile as a result of receiving domestic help. A few women in this study did not have hired help in the home either due to financial strains or to a strong ethical dilemma. Some other women never mentioned the topic of domestic help yet commented on other benefits such as the family-oriented and child friendly nature of Chilean culture, or the richness of social and familial gatherings.

A total of 14 participants reported direct benefits in their own families from living in a highly family-oriented culture. They also felt they benefited from greater warmth and affection by living in a culture where hugs and kisses are the norm for greeting rituals. They felt their families benefited from the increased physical warmth characteristic of Chilean culture. Women also felt that their own relationships had directly benefited from the fact that their partners lived in her country becoming more open-minded in their worldviews. In fact, some women made strong statements about
feeling as though their marriage would have never worked if they each had not had the experience of living in the other's country and culture.

According to Gaines and Agnew (2003), few empirical studies have looked at marital stability amongst intercultural couples who move across cultures. The current thesis revealed some important findings in this regard. Results demonstrated that marital stability can exist throughout cross-cultural transition despite the enormous stress it can cause. The majority of the participants reported a strengthening of the relationship and discussed relationship maintenance skills they have learned throughout the process.

The current thesis supported Hess and Linderman's (2002) theory for keeping a marriage strong throughout cross-cultural transition. It supported the findings of Donovan (2004) and Reiter and Gee (2008) in that women reported a reliance on skills of communication, and learning about one another's culture to maintain their intercultural relationships. Furthermore, the current study demonstrated additional skills for managing cultural issues in circumstances of cross-cultural transition such as using the give-and-take approach, relying on patience and listening, and accepting and adapting to cultural differences. The person living in their own country of origin always holds the advantage, and the other must be willing to meet the challenge that language barriers, cultural differences, and living far from family create.

Due to the fact that the average relationship length in this study was 16 years, clearly these skills the women reported helped contribute to having strong, long-lasting marriages. Eleven women reported that their relationships became closer as a result of experiencing the complexity of living in each partner's home country. Enduring the
unique difficulties provoked by moving across cultures as a couple strengthened their relationship in most cases.

**Limitations of the Study**

Although this thesis provided an essential contribution to current research, I must also draw attention to the study's weaknesses. The main limitation of this research is that it is not statistically generalizable to larger populations since the sample size is small and from a very specific demographic group meeting distinctive criteria. For example, since most women discussed having access to domestic help in Chile, it seems that the majority were living middle to middle-upper class lifestyles. In addition, all participants had more than a high school degree and most had graduate educations. These results cannot be statistically generalized to groups that do not meet this description.

However, analytical generalizations can be made by using this study's findings as a potential guide for what could occur in similar situations. This research could be useful for other couples in intercultural relationships who are moving from one partner's home country to the other partner's home country. However, I do not mean to downplay the fact that the personal and subjective experiences of the participants in this thesis are unique and complex.

Another limitation to this research is that women were only interviewed once, not over a period of time, which could have elicited different results. Due to the fact that some women were new in their cross-cultural transition while others were years beyond their transition may have been a weakness. It is possible that the women who relied on the more distant memories of their transition had a different outlook since their perspective may have changed from when the transition was fresher in their minds.
Furthermore, this study only examined the female’s viewpoint instead of both relationship partners. I chose to only interview women since I thought it would elicit a more in-depth discussion of the topics at hand. If I had also interviewed their partners, this could have created some tension or less of a willingness to be as open and honest in sharing relationship experiences. However, there are also added benefits to hearing both sides of the story and by only gathering the female viewpoint, the findings remain limited.

Another weakness of this study is that women were so forthcoming about discussing their experience and highlighting cultural differences, it was easy for them to move off track from the relationship oriented focus of the questions. The topics proved to be a subject area in which they had a great deal to share, and it may have been interesting to provide a less structured interview format. During the interview, I found that the third question had two parts that did not flow well and I did not always remember to ask the second part, which elicited weak findings. Question 9 also posed a challenge since it essentially asked a multiple-choice question. Consequently, some participants had difficulty picking one option that led to more ambiguous results.

Finally, using a strengths-based approach in the interview format may not have felt inclusive for the women that had primarily negative experiences to share. The question format was set up in such a way that I wanted to elicit brainstorming on what had been positive throughout the challenging moments. A few participants had trouble answering questions set up in this context and were unable to think about any potential benefits they had experienced as a result. I tried to offset this dynamic by encouraging
participants to answer the question according to what they felt, even if that meant focusing on aspects other than positive outcomes or benefits.

Idea for Future Research

Future research in this area is crucial to elicit more in-depth understanding surrounding the issues intercultural couples face as a result of experiencing cross-cultural transition together. First, additional studies should investigate the male’s perspective on these topics. It would be intriguing to examine Bystydzienski and Resnik’s (1995) theory and find out if women do actually experience cultural changes in more pronounced ways than men. Perhaps the stories of the men who experienced more difficulty in adapting to living in Chile than their female counterparts would disprove this theory. Interviewing both relationship partners would be very insightful in order to investigate whether men and women perceive experiences of moving across cultures similarly or differently. Further study should also take into consideration the experience of living together not just in each of their cultures, but also in a third culture.

In addition, a longitudinal study would be fascinating that could capture the experience both shortly after the transition, and then again several years later to see how the issues have developed over time. Future research should not only examine relationship development in connection to the length of time spent in each partner’s home country, but also how the relationship might be impacted by living in a third country. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate whether intercultural relationships are impacted by experiencing a change in social economic status directly as a result of moving from one culture to another.
In proposing this research study, I felt it was important to include a variety of people who were partnered whether or not they were actually married. To my surprise, the fifteen women that ended up following through with interviews for this thesis were all married. Future research might unveil some interesting findings looking at a more diverse set of intercultural couples to see how results may vary as related to different cultural idiosyncrasies. Research should also look at these topics within same-sex intercultural relationships.

Conclusions

After interviews were completed and the informal debriefing occurred, several participants made comments about how they had never thought about “x” experience in that way, or how they were not aware of “y” until they spoke of their experiences out loud. This observation supported my goal of the current research that the interview interaction serve as a positive awareness-raising experience for the participants where some personal development and cultural learning could take place.

Women were eager to talk about these topics and were open about sharing their experiences. This study provided a fascinating basis for understanding some of the issues 15 women faced in moving to their husband’s home country. Gender roles and cultural values were very relevant topics to examine in the context of their relationships, and interesting findings were presented. This research demonstrated that intercultural couples could sustain strong, long-lasting relationships leading transitional lifestyles. Some of these couples had moved numerous times between their two countries and made considerable adaptations on both ends to make it work.
This thesis presented some of the ways in which an intercultural couple’s relational culture continually evolves especially when cross-cultural transition is a factor. According to the 15 women in this study, patience, good communication and listening skills, give and take negotiating abilities, and accepting and adapting to cultural differences are all vital in maintaining a relationship that moves between cultures. Highlighting the benefits and growth women experienced in these circumstances rather than the struggles provided an important contribution to the literature. It is my hope that this research can be used as a resource for couples to focus on the enriching aspects of these experiences. Perhaps practicing the skills these 15 women themselves relied on can help create a positive impact for other intercultural couples experiencing cross-cultural transition together.
References


Hello there,

I hope this email finds you and your loved ones doing well in the New Year.

As you recall, I first connected with you in October when you completed an online survey I sent around for an initial Chilespospe research project. At that time you indicated you would be willing to participate in a follow up interview on intercultural relationships and cross-cultural transition. In the upcoming weeks, I'll be interviewing about 15 Chilesouples to address these topics in greater depth for my thesis. Essentially, I am interested in hearing about women's relationship experiences as a result of moving from their country/culture to their partner's country/culture.

The interviewee criteria are as follows:
1. You must be a native or fluent English speaker
2. You must be a non-Chilean in a romantic relationship with a Chilean
3. You must have been together in this relationship for at least 5 years (either married or co-habiting)
4. You must have lived together with this person in your home country, for at least two years
5. You must live together in Chile currently, for at least two years

My goal is to provide in person interviews which is why participants living in the Santiago area are most ideal. Interviews will take about 1 hour only, will be digitally recorded, and will remain strictly confidential. Your participation will help make a difference by building greater awareness surrounding the unique issues diverse couples experience as a result of international transition.

Thank you again for your willingness to help a fellow Chilespospe in need! I will be calling you soon to set up the best mutual time for us to meet. Due to my work schedule, weekend times would be best, and some week nights after work are possible. I will be setting appointments starting February 1st and completing interviews by March 18th. I can come to your home if that is easiest, or we can meet in a neutral, quiet, private setting.

Again, I will be releasing results, as promised, as soon as the study is completed.

Saludos,
Kristen Calderon

PS- If you know someone that meets this criteria that may be interested in being interviewed, please forward this to them- I’d be happy to be in touch with them to see if they qualify. It’s not necessary that they filled out the initial survey, they can still participate now since this is a separate project. Thank you!
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Title of Project: The impact of cross-cultural transition on intercultural relationships using a strengths-based approach

You are invited to participate in a research study that will ask you about your unique relationship experiences as a result of moving across cultures. My name is Kristen Calderon, and I am a student of the Masters in Intercultural Relations Program at the University of the Pacific, School of International Studies. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a member of Chilesouples, you speak fluent English, you are a participant in an intercultural relationship, and you have lived together with your partner in your home country as well as in Chile.

The purpose of this research is to examine how cross-cultural transition and adaptation are experienced in the context of intercultural relationships, especially when a couple moves from one partner’s home country to the other partner’s home country. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in a personal face-to-face interview scheduled at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately 75 minutes. If you give permission, all or part of the interview will be audiorecorded. You may request a copy of the interview transcript at any time.

Although the risks involved for participants in this study are minimal, it is possible that you may feel some emotionally charged reactions as you talk about your experiences. This research is intended to benefit Chilesouple members, and other couples experiencing cross-cultural transition with their partners. The findings of this study will be submitted to the Families in Global Transition research track, a non-profit organization providing support and resources to couples and families moving abroad.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me by email at knaylor76@hotmail.com or by cell phone: +56 9 66310377. You may also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Kent Warren, The Intercultural Communication Institute (Portland, Oregon) tel: +1 503 297 4622, or email: kwarren@intercultural.org. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or other concerns about the research, please call the Research & Graduate Studies Office, University of the Pacific (Stockton, California) tel: +1 209 946 7356.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The information collected during interviews will be used to write a thesis. The findings from
the study will be reported without using individuals' names. The Families in Global Transition research track will receive a copy of the final report. Measures to ensure your confidentiality include the separation of names from the interview data and the restriction of access to the data. The data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked location and with password protected files. Data will be destroyed following a period of three years after the study is completed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect you negatively in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

You will be offered a copy of this signed form to keep.

Signature ___________________________ Date ______________________
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (provided hard copy for participants to fill out):

1. In which country were you born?
2. In which country did you spend your childhood and adolescence?
3. In which country was your partner born?
4. In which country did your partner spend his childhood and adolescence?
5. How many years have you been together with your partner?
6. How many years have you lived together as a couple in your home country?
7. How many years have you lived together as a couple in Chile?
8. Are you married or cohabiting (living together)?
9. Was this your first intercultural romantic relationship?
10. What is your highest education level?
11. What is your native language?
12. What is your partner’s native language?

Oral interview began with these questions:

CULTURAL VALUES:
I am going to ask you some questions about cultural values and assumptions. I am interested in knowing what’s considered appropriate or inappropriate with regards to certain practices, beliefs or attitudes in your culture or your partner’s culture (e.g. family values, child raising practices, work ethics, behavioral/social expectations, social status, etc.)

1. When living together in your home country, did your partner become familiar with the cultural values you grew up with?

2. How have you incorporated your cultural values into your relationship/family now that you live in Chile?

3. In comparison to the cultural values you were socialized with, over time, have you adopted any Chilean cultural values since you moved to Chile? If so, did this make you feel more connected to your partner?

4. Have any of your family values been positively influenced by Chilean culture? Please explain.
5. Has your participation in Chilean extended family gatherings deepened your understanding of your partner’s cultural background? If so, in what ways?

**MALE - FEMALE ROLE TAKING:**
I am going to ask you some questions about gender roles. By this I mean the societal norms and expectations held by a culture for what is considered desirable behavior and/or attitudes for males versus females (i.e. domestic chores, wage-earning, care-taking, decision-making, etc).

6. In comparison to when you lived together in your home country, did you and your partner’s gender roles or gender role related behaviors change inside of the home after moving to Chile? If so, how?

7. In comparison to when you lived together in your home country, did you and your partner’s gender roles or gender role related behaviors change outside of the home after moving to Chile? If so, how?

8. Have any of your roles as woman, wife, mother, extended family member, etc. benefited from living in Chilean culture and society? If so, in what ways?

**RELATIONAL ADAPTATION:**
Lastly, I am going to ask you some questions about how you have dealt with the influences from each of your cultures, and whether your relationship dynamics have changed or made adjustments as a result of moving across cultures together.

9. When thinking about how you deal with values, beliefs, behaviors, and decision-making in your relationship, please pick the option that best describes how you managed as a couple when you lived in your home country:
   a. one of your cultures tended to dominate more than the other (if so, which one),
   b. you made trade-offs between your two cultures where one person would have to sacrifice their way to make room for the other’s way,
   c. you incorporated elements of both cultures in relatively equal shares,
   d. you created a unique culture together that wasn’t representative of either of your individual cultures

10. Did the relationship dynamics you identified with in the previous question change after moving to Chile? If so, how?

11. Looking back, in what ways has your relationship been strengthened as a result of all these experiences you’ve shared as a couple?

12. What relationship maintenance skills have you learned in this process that helps you manage ongoing cultural issues with your partner?
APPENDIX D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Culture**: the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group

**Intercultural**: pertaining to or taking place between two or more cultures

**Behavior**: manner of behaving or acting

**Belief**: something believed; an opinion or conviction

**Value**: the ideals, customs, institutions, etc., of a society toward which the people of the group have an affective regard.

**Assumption**: something taken for granted; a supposition.

**Attitude**: manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind.

**Practice**: habit; custom

**Influence**: the capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others.

**Socialized**: to be prepared for life in society

**Trade-off**: the exchange of one thing for another of more or less equal value, especially to effect a compromise.

**Relationship dynamics**: a basic or dynamic force, especially one that motivates or affects development or stability within the relationship.