

EXPLORING THE HORIZONTAL ACQUISITION OF TRANSNATIONAL  
IDENTITY IN INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS IN TORONTO

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# **EXPLORING THE HORIZONTAL ACQUISITION OF TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY IN INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS IN TORONTO**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While identity shift in the context of migration has been studied in depth, questions of identity in those who have close, love-based relationships with international migrants or descendants of migrants remain underrepresented in the literature. Theoretically framing the research in a cultural studies and constructivist perspective, this study explores the extent to which individuals in intercultural relationships take on components of their partners' transnational identities and how this process occurs. Interviews were conducted with seven individuals in intercultural relationships with first or second-generation immigrant partners. They explored how an individual's identity shifts in the context of their relationship to reflect their partner's transnational identity. The findings demonstrate that individuals embrace components of their partner's transnational identity through discussion and interaction with both their partner and their partner's family, suggesting that non-migrant individuals with no familial ties to another region in the world can also engage in transnationalism.

Keywords: intermarriage, intercultural relationships, transnationalism, identity, culture, transnational identity

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## DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother, Barbara Macdiarmid, who always embraced people for who they were and welcomed my own intercultural relationship to the family.

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## **Introduction**

Intermarriage in Canada has steadily increased over the past century, especially in the last thirty years (Kalbach, 2002). With an average of 250,000 immigrants entering Canada each year and 2012 targets reaching 265,000 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012), it is not surprising that intermarriage is on the rise. In addition to high national immigration averages, approximately half of the population of Toronto is made up of foreign-born individuals and 45% of second-generation immigrants in the Greater Toronto Area are married to or in common law relationships with individuals of a different ethnicity (City of Toronto, n.d). This represents the highest rate of mixed unions in the country.

Identity shift in the context of migration has been studied in depth; however, questions of identity in those who have close, love-based relationships with international migrants or descendants of migrants remain underrepresented in the literature. Furthermore, while intercultural couples may fall under the intermarriage category depending on the way in which the term is defined, there is considerably less research on this specific sub-sect of intermarried individuals. Due to these gaps within the intermarriage literature, both in terms of the lack of research on specifically intercultural couples and the unique identities that can surface within the context of this type of relationship, the following research questions have been deduced and are the basis for this study. To what extent do individuals in intercultural relationships acquire components of their partner's transnational identity? How does this process occur?

Through one-on-one interviews with individuals ages 20 to 35 in intercultural relationships in Toronto, I explore questions of transnational identity acquisition in the

context of their relationship. Acquiring components of a partner's transnational identity can be understood as engaging in cultural activities, practices and/or events that foster a connection with their partner's country of origin or ancestry. These may include learning the language spoken among that person's family or in their homeland, participating in cultural events, learning more about or converting to another religion, becoming active in diasporic politics, cooking food from the partner's or parents' country of origin, among others. Taking a constructivist and cultural studies approach, my research investigates questions of identity shift and culture among intercultural couples. It also speaks to the significance of these relationships in issues of immigration and settlement, specifically through their ability to bring diverse groups of people together.

While an intercultural relationship only comprises the couple itself, the union of two people from different cultural backgrounds and its significance goes beyond just those two individuals. It also extends to their families and friends. This makes it a dynamic means of introducing unfamiliar cultural practices, events and norms to people who may not have come into contact with a culture different from their own otherwise. In this regard, intercultural relationships can represent a small-scale means of facilitating settlement and integration as they can bring together first and second-generation immigrants and multigenerational Canadians. In addition to speaking to the phenomenon of reaching individuals beyond the boundaries of the mixed union, participants' voices will contribute rich and valuable information to the intermarriage and transnationalism literature. This study represents a starting point for further research in this area and begins to fill the gap on how individuals can horizontally acquire (meaning through an

individual who is not part of one's family) components of their partner's transnational identity.

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

Exploring the extent to which an individual in an intercultural relationship takes on components of his or her partner's transnational identity represents a significant gap in the literature. This review explores several pertinent concepts that arise when investigating this issue, namely, intermarriage, transnationalism in the context of intermarriage, identity and culture. The objective of this review is to firstly, explore how intermarriage has been understood in the literature and secondly, to theoretically situate questions of identity and identity acquisition in social constructivism and cultural studies perspectives while exploring how culture is understood in existing intermarriage research. Finally, it aims to investigate how transnationalism is understood in the context of intermarriage.

### **Intermarriage**

Intermarriage and other similar terms are defined in many different ways depending on the scope of the research they are associated with. Fitt-Ajewole (2008) uses the term intermarriage in her research that looks to better understand the everyday lived experiences of intermarried couples, consisting of white Canadian wives and their racialized immigrant husbands. She cites Gopalkrishnan and Babacan (2007 as cited in Fitt-Ajewole, 2008, p.1) and defines intermarriage as, "...marriage that takes place outside tradition, religion, caste and geographic origins". Kalbach (2002) also uses the term intermarriage in her historical data analysis of patterns of ethnic intermarriage in Canada. She defines it as the, "...crossing of some well-defined line such as ethnic origin

or religion in mate selection” (p.1). Although Kalbach consistently uses the term intermarriage in her article, her definition does not explicitly reflect the marriage component of the term as she instead includes ‘mate selection’ in her definition. This is problematic as her research explores patterns of intermarriage in Canada since the late 1800s and uses available census data to deduce these patterns. While her article adds greatly to the literature as unlike the others, it has a quantitative focus, the use of this data in her research implies that the couples are legally married when they may not be married. This makes Kalbach’s definition of intermarriage inconsistent with what her article actually explores; however, her approach remains justified as data on common law couples has only been recently been collected.

While intermarriage is used in the title of Rodríguez-García’s (2006b) article on exploring what intermarriage means, he also uses the terms mixed unions and exogamy throughout. He does not explicitly define intermarriage or mixed unions; however he does explain exogamy in-depth, stating that it is, “...a space where differences and identities of ethnic origin, class and gender intersect and are contested and which, in turn, usually brings about positive processes of social integration and interethnic understanding” (Rodríguez-García, 2006b, p.1). His idea of intermarriage as creating a unique ‘space’ where various identities come together can be understood as consistent with his article on mixed marriages and transnational families (2006a). It is also supported by the space created through interactions in symbolic interactionism and Bhahba’s ‘in-between’ space, which will be discussed in-depth in a subsequent section.

Bustamente, Nelson, Henriksen and Monakes (2011) present the only article in the consulted literature that uses the term put forth by the research question, intercultural

couple. The use of this term and intercultural relationship are consistent throughout the article. Bustamente et al. (2011) use Ho's (1999) definition and explain intercultural relationships as, "...committed, loving relationships between two people who identify with different cultural groups because they represent at least two nationalities, races or religions" (p. 154). This definition is particularly strong in the context of the intent of my study because it indicates that couples are not necessarily married, but are in committed, long-term relationships. The use of this term may allow for the inclusion of younger, more progressive intercultural couples that have not yet married or do not wish to marry. The inclusion of this demographic may serve to make the results of studies more diverse and consequentially, make the literature richer by acknowledging more groups of people and their perspectives. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use this term in my study. The following section discusses the role of theory in my research, particularly social constructivism and cultural studies, and expands on questions of identity and culture as understood by these theories in existing literature.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social constructivism and symbolic interactionism.**

Constructivism focuses on 'knowing' and 'coming to know' (von Glasersfeld, 1996). The theory deems that knowledge is created in a subjective manner, is relative and stems from interaction with others. This suggests that, "Knowledge [ ] arises from actions and the agent's reflection on them" (Piaget as cited in von Glasersfeld, 1996, p. 4). It is important to note that in constructivism, knowledge is not described as a truth. Instead, knowledge is described as a constructed explanation of occurrences and interactions to which an individual gives meaning (von Glasersfeld, 2005). Thus, constructivism enables

participants to reflect on and give meaning to their interactions with others. In turn, this allows them to significantly shape research by sharing the experiences and interactions they deem most meaningful.

Within constructivism, there are various sub-theories that speak to the significance of human relationships, one of which is symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism assumes that humans are constructs who develop through social interactions with others (Blumer, 1969 as cited in Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011). Consequentially, these interactions provide a space in which individuals can come to define themselves based on the meanings they attribute to specific interactions (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011). Upon applying these principles to questions of identity, an intercultural relationship provides a specific space in which an individual can reflect on, derive meaning from and interpret their interactions with their partner as a means to socially constructing and defining themselves. As social constructivism recognizes that meanings are neither universal nor essential, but fluid entities that are created through human interaction (Seidler, 2010), individuals have the power to perpetually redefine and reevaluate how they understand and interpret their interactions with others. This supports the idea that the way individuals see themselves and construct their identities can shift or change numerous times over the course of their life. Influenced by identity studies and post-colonialism, cultural studies also argues for the legitimacy of micro-level analysis and the need to recognize multiple representations of identity.

### **Cultural studies.**

Cultural studies grounds itself in critically examining dominant culture, in addition to ideologies and values that are embedded in society. As an interdisciplinary

perspective, it also, "...aims to enhance and celebrate cultural experiences" while recognizing culture as an inherent part of daily life (During, 2005, p.1). Cultural studies suggests that continuous reflection on knowledge and power enables 'breaks' in tradition, which can be understood as rethinking and regrouping 'old lines of thought' around different themes and premises (Hall, 1980, p. 57). Breaks in tradition are thus, a crucial means to analyzing dominant notions of culture as they allow new understandings of culture to emerge. This is important as deconstructing why individuals understand culture in a certain way allows them to recognize how their perspectives, ideas and thoughts have been influenced by dominant ideologies. While breaks in tradition provide a ground for analysis, Williams (1961) suggests that the purpose of analysis is to understand how interactions between different entities are lived and experienced, thus attributing great value to subjectivity. As a result of recognizing new premises, lived experience and multiple understandings of culture, cultural studies attributes great significance to the representation of many voices.

In addition to criticizing dominant culture, cultural studies also reflects on how one comes to define oneself. Generally, the concept of identity is affiliated with sameness and difference, as well as the personal and the social (Barker, 2003; Barker, 2004). Barker (2003) suggests that identities within cultural studies can be understood as 'discursive-performative'; this means that identity is a way of understanding oneself through bringing together the emotional, more personal inside of an individual with the conventions and norms that one is confronted with externally (p. 94). Giddens (1991) recognizes two sub-concepts within identity: self-identity and social identity. Self-identity can be understood as a continuous, biographical narrative that unites a person's

perceptions of their past, present and future (Barker, 2003). Giddens (1991) suggests that self-identity is thus the way in which people understand themselves by reflecting on their self-constructed biographies. Therefore, as reflection is performed and stems from the thought and meaning one attributes to experience and interactions (Barker & Galasinski, 2001), self-identity is a crucial concept in understanding how an individual has the power to construct his or her own identity.

While self-identity speaks more to the performative sense of understanding one's self through internal reflection, the sub-concept of social identity focuses primarily on discursive elements that influence identity externally. Barker (2003) supports the notion of external influence by recognizing that humans live their lives in the context of relationships with others. Socializing with others is an inherent part of daily life. Therefore, forming and maintaining relationships is an important means to influencing the way in which individuals view themselves because identity is often understood through notions of difference (Hall, 1996). Without others as a basis for comparison, the concept, 'different', would lack meaning and thus could not be used as grounds for understanding identity. Consequentially, human relationships are essential in understanding how one's identity is externally influenced. However, if the way in which people identify themselves is connected to a community and their identity does not reflect that community's conceptions of their identity, conflict may arise. This suggests that there is a great divide in identity as defined by self and as defined by others as individuals have little control over the features others will use to identify them (During, 2005). As a result, the way in which individuals understand their identity may not always be accepted

and can be rejected by others, potentially leading to exclusion from a group or community.

Even though cultural studies recognizes that it is important to acknowledge everyone's voice, who or what someone wishes to represent is also an equally important matter to consider. In cultural studies, the term 'politics of representation' has its basis in questioning who is able to speak for whom, in addition to, "...the way that power is implicated in the construction and regulation of cultural classifications" (Barker, 2004, p. 146). Hall, Morely and Chen (1996) explain that the politics of representation was originally conceptualized as a theoretical encounter between black cultural politics and Eurocentric discourse with the intent of deconstructing essentialist conceptions of identity (p. 444). They suggest that notions of essentialism have come to represent groups or communities externally. This greatly affects the way that different communities are understood; moreover, it takes the power away from a community by not allowing it to define and represent itself on its own terms. Hall, Morely and Chen (1996) suggest that instead of perpetuating inaccurate representations of cultures and communities, we must go beyond these pre-conceived notions and recognize the diversity, subjectivity, lived experiences and various identities that come to compose a certain category, community or culture. This notion is particularly important when investigating the acquisition of components of a partner's transnational identity through an intercultural relationship as it enables the boundaries of a community or group to expand. Nonetheless, exclusion from that group is still a possible outcome depending on the way the community asserts its power in terms of representation. While individuals may feel like they represent their

partner's transnational identity as a result of their experiences, others may not perceive them as representative of that particular identity.

The politics of representation inherently raise the question of insiders and outsiders (Barker, 2003). Both cultural studies and symbolic interactionism recognize that some aspects of an individual's identity may either contest or complement each other in specific situations and thus, determine their status as either an insider or an outsider. However, as Kusow (2003) suggests, an individual can never be attributed one single status; the role one takes on as an insider or an outsider is strictly situational and dependent solely on social context. Furthermore, the criteria on which one is determined to be an insider or outsider is often based on collective, generalized socio-demographic and racial attributes; however, these attributes do not guarantee or necessarily warrant inclusion or exclusion in a specific group (Kusow, 2003).

Kusow's recognition of the significance of social context in relation to an individual's identities speaks to how identity can be fractured in many ways. Hall (1992) supports Kusow's notions of the convergence of identities through the identification of the 'postmodern' or 'de-centred' subject. He explains,

The [de-centred] subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling us in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about (Hall, 1992, p. 277).

The identity of the self is thus rooted in context and the way in which people come to define themselves is characterized by complexities and often, contradictions. While individuals can take on different identities at different times, the way a community comes to define itself is not as subjective and less prone to contextual change. Notions of community or group identity are often essentialist and derived through history and place

(Grossberg, 1996). However, through highlighting specific traits attributed to a group identity, individuals can manifest and reinforce their sense of belonging to that community. This is an important component of transnationalism. Based on the perception that a group of people from a certain region of the world with a common language and culture share some aspects of a common identity (Vertovec, 2001), individuals who acknowledge the same traits can consciously recognize and reinforce them if they desire to belong to that community.

In her 2008 study, Fitt-Ajewole explores questions of identity acquisition, belonging and multiple identities among intermarried partners. She reports that when asking the participants of her study if they believe intermarriage has had an effect on their identity, most husbands said no while the majority of the wives believed it did. This may simply suggest gender differences or might highlight how patriarchy functions in intercultural relationships. Upon compiling the participants' opinions on identity shift, Fitt-Ajewole (2008) discovered that although the immigrant husbands believed their identity had remained the same regardless of their relationship, they relayed information such as changing eating habits for their wives and speaking slower to their wives' families so they could understand their accent to the researcher when interviewed. These cultural accommodations, representative of components of identity shift in the context of an intercultural relationship, may represent an attempt to belong to a specific community and are reminiscent of the 'de-centred' subject that assumes different identities at different times. They are furthered in an idea presented in Rodríguez-García's (2006b) article on the meaning of intermarriage.

Rodríguez-García (2006b) states that the behavior and identity processes of immigrants, "...are neither static nor singular, but rather constantly negotiated and multi-directional" (p.1). In addition to one's status as a migrant or non-migrant, Fitt-Ajewole (2008) also deduces that the men and women speak about their identities in different ways. Through the men's lived experiences and the women's acknowledged identity shift, both husbands and wives' identity did change in the context of their relationship. However, while identities did shift, Fitt-Ajewole does not explicitly indicate if these changes are representative of taking on components of their partner's identity. This conscious or unconscious identity shift may be attributed to the, "...genuine intent to become familiar and have the ability to 'manoeuvre' within each other's culture without any discomfort" (Fitt-Ajewole, 2008, p. 27), which is common in intercultural couples. In order to put the question of identity shift in intercultural couples into perspective, the meaning of identity must also be explored.

Hall, in addition to the other cultural studies academics mentioned, take a post-modern, non-essentialist approach to analyzing the meaning of identity. This approach is particularly strong in terms of this study; however, it is not without its weaknesses. One main drawback of non-essentialism is the very fact that entities cannot be defined by specific attributes or values. Without being classified through values and characteristics, an entity, in this case, identity, cannot come to be defined as that entity. In turn, this does not allow it to take on meaning, as it has no concrete definition. This leaves the entity to struggle to gain recognition (Holliday, 2000), which is detrimental in substantiating its existence. However, by valuing subjectivity and recognizing the importance of breaking away from tradition and dominant ideologies, the non-essential approach taken in cultural

studies allows people to take on fluid, dynamic identities that are characterized by reflection and experience, rather than ascription and ignorance. By supporting the idea that different identities emerge in different contexts and at different times, the acquisition of components of a partner's transnational identity through an intercultural relationship becomes theoretically supported. The following section addresses questions of culture with the intent of understanding the meaning and role of culture in identity acquisition in intermarriage.

## **Culture**

Culture is a highly contested word. It has a multitude of different meanings, definitions and purposes. Cultural studies deems that no conception of culture is wrong; however, some understandings of culture may be more or less applicable depending on context (Barker, 2004). Even though the cultural studies discipline recognizes that there is no one correct definition of culture, the perspective generally understands culture as a concept that, "...stresses the intersection of power and meaning with a view to promoting social change and improving the human condition" (Barker, 2004, p. 44). While this definition is fairly abstract and open to interpretation, the way in which culture is understood in the intermarriage literature is more concrete, group-based and often characterized by commonality.

Fitt-Ajewole (2008) uses a simplistic definition and deems culture, "...learned and shared values, beliefs and behaviours common to a particular group of people...[that] forges a group's identity and assists in survival" (Orbe & Harris, 2001, p. 13). Bustamente et al. (2011) include many of the same principles as Fitt-Ajewole; however, they add a few different dimensions. Culture is defined as, "...a learned meaning system

of shared beliefs, values, norms, symbols, customs, behaviours and artifacts that members of a group utilize to make sense of their world and one another, as well as foster a sense of shared identity and community” (Gudykunst, 1994; Hall, 1976; Samovar & Porter, 1995; Triandis, 1994 as cited in Bustamante et al., 2011, p. 155). Both definitions explore many different dimensions of culture and suggest that culture can intersect with and/or play a role in determining identity.

The premise of an intercultural couple is that people from two different cultural, national, religious and/or ethnic backgrounds, thus having two different identities that are somewhat derived from these determinants, have engaged in daily interaction and exchange through their relationship. Bustamante et al. (2011) suggest that the cultural differences at play in an intercultural relationship can lead to stress and problems in the union, causing conflict and miscommunication; however, Rodríguez-García (2006b) states otherwise. He believes that mixed unions and transnational families are able to integrate, “...multiple localisations and cultural backgrounds rather than experiencing a clash between two cultures” (as cited in Fitt-Ajewole, 2008, p. 29). Rather, if couples can negotiate and accommodate each other’s cultural practices and identities, they can transform them on their own terms (Rodríguez-García, 2006a).

The bi or multi-negotiation of identity through cultural practices or connections in the context of intermarriage suggests the presence of a dynamic, hybrid space where the intersection between culture and identity can be experienced, analyzed and potentially understood. The negotiation among and between the couple solidifies the idea that while culture is often conceived as something that is passed on generation to generation, “...most of culture is not taught as is unconsciously experienced” (Lustig & Koester,

2002 as cited in Bustamente et al., 2011, p. 155). This understanding of culture pertains more to the cultural studies perspective of culture, as it is not group-based or exclusive. Again, the idea that transnational identity can be transmitted horizontally and does not necessarily need to be passed on through origins and ancestors surfaces through the application of the literature to intermarriage. The application of the unconscious experience of culture to the context of a mixed union presents an important and interesting dimension that could explain some factors behind components of identity acquisition within intercultural relationships. The following section situates transnationalism in the context of intermarriage and explores intermarriage as a tangible transnational practice or event.

### **Transnationalism in the context of intermarriage**

As I take a primarily micro-level focus in this study, addressing many of the structural issues of transnationalism falls outside of the scope of this review. I have taken a micro-level approach in order to highlight the occurrence and importance of small-scale transnationalism in everyday life through interaction and relationships. Intermarriage becomes a tangible form of transnationalism as it represents the union of two culturally different individuals who have ties to two or more regions of the world through origin or ancestry. However, the conception of intermarriage as a transnational practice remains underrepresented in the literature even though it is theoretically supported by the principles of transnationalism. As micro level approaches focus on individuals and their interactions, understanding and analyzing transnationalism in the context of intermarriage is done most appropriately on this level. I briefly begin this section by defining transnationalism generally, then focus on how it is understood and experienced in

intermarriage and conclude by exploring some key implications of intermarriage for immigration and settlement.

Transnationalism is an academic concept derived from a phenomenon that was coined as a term by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton. They suggest that immigrants are no longer just migrants, but ‘transmigrants’. Glick Schiller et al. (1994) introduce the idea that the majority of migrants engage in transnationalism, a means of developing and maintaining multiple relations with family, religion, politics, organizations, etc. that goes beyond the borders of the country in which they have settled. They state, “Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously” (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, pp. 1-2).

Fitt-Ajewole (2008) uses Glick Schiller et al.’s (1994) work to theoretically ground her section on transnationalism in her research that looks to better understand the everyday lived experiences of intermarried couples. Similar to Fitt-Ajewole, Rodríguez-García also sources Glick Schiller et al. when discussing mixed marriages and transnational families in Spain (2006a) and transnational kinship in a European context (Rodríguez-García, 2010). This demonstrates a trend in understanding transnationalism in regards to intermarriage. Through the analysis of the concept, Rodríguez-García (2010) suggests that transnationalism is a collective phenomenon in which many different people can engage simultaneously through interaction. This idea is critical in exploring the possibility that someone who is not considered transnational because of their lack of direct national or ancestral connection to another country may become an active participant in the phenomenon. In the case of an intercultural relationship, the application

of this idea suggests that through interaction with the partner who has strong ties to another nation, the other partner may consciously or unconsciously take on components of their transnational identity.

Unlike Fitt-Ajewole (2008) and Rodríguez-García (2006a; 2010), Roudometof (2005) does not use Glick Schiller et al. to theoretically ground his article that explores cosmopolitanism, globalization and transnationalism. While he implicitly recognizes the original principles of the concept put forth by Glick Schiller et al., he also speaks to the evolution of transnationalism by adding a very important dimension to the concept. Roudometof (2005) suggests that, “Transnationalism was originally connected to recent immigrant cohorts, although the concept has been expanded to include other groups of people” (p.113). This suggests that transnationalism can now extend to include non-migrants and thus, overcomes the migrant-exclusive nature that is characteristic of Glick Schiller et al.’s definition of the phenomenon. Roudometof’s (2005) added non-immigrant dimension to transnationalism is important in understanding how the identity of an individual in an intercultural relationship may shift as a result of their partner’s simultaneous connection to two or more societies. This dimension allows the possibility of the non-traditionally transnational partner to actively engage in transnationalism. Furthermore, it recognizes that although one partner may have a strong sense of transnational identity, they do not necessarily have to be migrants themselves in order to be considered transnationals; they could be children of migrants, generation 1.5, second generation or multi generation immigrants.

While widening the theoretical and empirical scope of transnationalism to this extent is useful and necessary in the context of my research, Vertovec (2001) believes

that transnationalism is becoming widely over-used and in some cases, does not reflect the phenomenon that is being described. The increasingly open parameters of transnationalism may cause the original meaning of the phenomenon to become lost. Vertovec (2001) suggests that in order to overcome the over-usage of transnationalism, scholars should move from the single theory approach to recognizing various types of transnationalism and the conditions that affect them. While Roudometof (2005) uses transnationalism generally, he explores the conditions that affect it in an in-depth manner.

Roudometof suggests that transnationalism can be a result of internal globalization. He defines this term as, "...the process of creating the room or the space for these [transnational] interactions; that is, internal globalization provides the preconditions, the material and non-material infrastructure, for the emerging spaces of human interaction" (Roudometof, 2005, p. 119). This idea of an emerging space of human interaction provides an imagined, emotional realm that is necessary in order to explore the transnational nature of intermarriage and corresponding identity acquisition. Intercultural relationships create an imagined 'space of human interaction' in which identity can be re-negotiated and re-defined based on the partners' connections to other parts of the world. Rodríguez-García (2006a) supports this idea through his direct application of the context and dynamics of intermarriage to the creation of a unique space. Rodríguez-García, quoting Bhabha, suggests that, "...an active and complex socio-cultural hybrid space, or an 'in-between space' (Bhabha, 1994) which encompasses both the local and the global and in which the differences and identities of ethnic origin, class and gender intersect and are contested" is created by a mixed union (Rodríguez-García, 2006a, p. 419).

This quotation is particularly significant as it suggests that an intermarriage can be understood as an ‘in-between’ space. Similar to transnationalism, an ‘in-between’ or ‘third’ space is not bound by geography, but instead, transcends borders and is defined by its uniqueness and hybridity (Grossberg, 1996). Hybridity can be understood as a concept that is characterized by creating new meanings and identities through the collaboration of different elements of culture, and seeks to further blur established cultural boundaries (Barker, 2004, p. 89). Therefore, the classification of intermarriage as hybrid is an essential means to theoretically supporting identity shift in the context of a mixed union. Furthermore, it places intermarriage in the realm of transnational practices and behaviours, giving it its own space to be acknowledged and understood.

While intermarriage as a transnational practice that can be characterized as a unique space in which multiple identities become interwoven may be celebrated in the literature, it may not be received in the same way in the real world. Intermarriage as a transnational practice may have both positive and negative consequences in terms of settlement and integration. Cobb-Clark and Connolly (2002) and Merali (2009) highlight intermarriage as a means to integration as the native born and first-generation immigrant spouses in their studies act as settlement brokers by helping their newcomer spouses find work and improve language skills. However, their discussions of integration focus on the positive settlement outcomes of intermarriage and neither speak to identity nor address the potential detrimental impact of an intercultural relationship on the settlement experience. If intermarriage, as conceived above, is a space where the identities of both partners are dynamic and become perpetually re-negotiated, it may become a threat to integration and settlement. If the identity stemming from another region in the world

becomes more prevalent than the national Canadian identity, the settlement and integration process may be disrupted or become compromised.

With the intention of improving Canada's internal social relations and recognizing all groups (Padolsky, 2000, p. 139), Pierre Elliot Trudeau declared an official policy of multiculturalism in 1971. Since the implementation of this policy, Canada has prided itself on its rich diversity, however, Kymlicka (1995) highlights that diversity and national identity may not go hand in hand. He suggests that shared civic identity is a requirement to maintain Canada as a stable, liberal democracy as it ensures uniform national unity and identity. While intercultural couples are a tangible form of multiculturalism and the intention of multiculturalism lies in rejecting assimilation (Douglas & Yancey, 2004), Kymlicka implies that aspects of assimilation, namely adhering to a specific identity, are a necessary means to identifying with Canada and as a Canadian. While the growing numbers of intermarriage in Canada contribute greatly to the country's diversity and are positively conceptualized by many as an 'engine of social change' (Douglas & Yancey, 2004), others see these unions in a different light. Through the perpetual renegotiation of culture and identity in intercultural couples, Padolsky (2000) fears that Canadian cultural loss is imminent as there is a less of a need for first and second-generation immigrants to integrate into mainstream Canadian culture. While what defines Canadian national identity and what comprises Canadian culture continue to be contentious and debated issues, it is certain that intercultural couples have an impact on multiculturalism and diversity and vice versa. However, depending on one's perspective, intercultural relationships may positively contribute to or negatively affect conceptions of Canadian national identity.

The contents of this section suggest that while transnationalism has been an academic concept derived from a phenomenon for almost thirty years, the literature that applies transnationalism to intermarriage pays little attention to the evolution of the concept. This demonstrates some weakness in the application of the term to intermarriage because the original definitions deem that only immigrants or migrants participate in this phenomenon. This suggests that transnationalism begins and ends with the migrant's own ties and emotional connections to his or her country of origin. Only through the application of Roudometof's added dimension of non-migrants to bodies that can participate in transnationalism to the context of intermarriage does the idea of the acquisition of components of a partner's transnational identity through intercultural relationships become academically supported. This is representative of a more horizontally- based transmission of components of a transnational identity. What is missing from the literature on transnationalism in the context of intermarriage, therefore, is the acknowledgement that although one partner may be considered transnational because of his or her national or ancestral origins, the other partner can also actively participate or engage in transnationalism by taking on components of a transnational identity through their relationship with their partner. This participation in transnationalism is justified by the unique, hybrid space created by an intercultural relationship that can thus, lead to identity shift or change.

### **Concluding remarks**

While Rodríguez-García (2006a; 2006b), Fitt-Ajewole (2008) and Bustamente et al. (2011) do not focus their research on the extent to which individuals take on components of their partner's transnational identity or how this process occurs, they all

acknowledge that both partners' cultures come together in the context of intermarriage in different ways. They also recognize that identity does or can shift as a result of a relationship, which is representative of a horizontal transmission of transnationalism. Through his interviews with a Spanish and a Senegalese or Gambian individual comprising a mixed union with children, Rodríguez-García (2006a) finds that intermarriages create a unique hybrid space where the different identities of the couple come together. This is an important finding as the idea of intermarriage as a 'space' where different identities are represented and new identities can surface as a result of interaction is theoretically grounded in constructivism.

The selection of consulted literature provides a strong theoretical framework in constructivism and cultural studies. It also offers a clear explanation of who makes up a mixed union, how transnationalism is experienced in intermarriage and how individuals come to understand themselves. This literature review acts a starting point for understanding the intersection of identity and culture in the context of intermarriage; however, does not dig so deep as to see if partners acquire parts of their spouse's transnational identity in the context of an intercultural relationship.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

Semi-structured interviews with individuals in intercultural relationships have been conducted as a result of the gap on transnational identity acquisition in the intermarriage literature. The interviews were conducted with seven individuals in intercultural relationships in Toronto with the intent of exploring the extent to which and how individuals take on components of their partner's transnational identity through their relationship. The following section outlines the methodology of this study.

## **Approach**

As this study focuses on micro-level perspectives and experiences by examining a social phenomenon that has resulted from love-based relationships between two individuals, a qualitative approach is taken. Qualitative research focuses on quality, detail and often studies smaller groups or cases (Archer & Berdahl, 2011), thus making it a suitable approach for studying a small sample. The primary objective of this research is to address and explore the extent to which an individual in an intercultural relationship takes on components of his or her partner's transnational identity. Furthermore, the intent of the study is to gather detail-rich information about the experiences and identities of these specific individuals, as opposed to being able to generalize the findings to a larger group. The proposed research questions are exploratory in nature and due to the lack of studies on this particular issue, have allowed me to dive into a relatively 'unexplored aspect' (Archer & Berdahl, 2011) of the intermarriage literature. A mixed methods approach with a quantitative component could prove useful if I had a larger sample as the research could be generalized to a larger group of people instead of just representing the experiences of the participants.

In addition to generalizing findings, some other advantages of quantitative research include that as it uses numerical data, yields objective results and creates statistics that can inform policy or other studies. One researcher that has already examined questions of intercultural couples in Canada using a quantitative method is Madeline Kalbach (2002), who analyzed intermarriage rates in Canada from 1871 to 1999 and their growth over the years. While Kalbach's study does mention the country of origin of the husband or wife, it does not discuss questions of identity or culture exchange

in the relationship. Despite the advantages of including a quantitative component in my research as there has been little quantitative research done in this area, a smaller sample has been chosen and is explored in-depth using only qualitative methodology. The decision to do a purely qualitative study lays primarily in time and funding constraints.

This study takes an inductive approach, which is common in qualitative studies. As opposed to a deductive research approach, which sets out to test theories or presumptions, an inductive approach allows theory to present itself in the findings, as the research is not restrained by a structured methodology (Thomas, 2006). Furthermore, an inductive approach deems that conclusions stem from empirical evidence (Archer & Berdahl, 2011); therefore, this approach adheres to the research design as the intent of the study is to draw conclusions based on the lived experiences of individuals interviewed.

### **Strategy**

A cultural studies perspective is implemented as the strategy in this research project. The purpose of cultural studies is to, "...aim to enhance and celebrate cultural experiences" while recognizing culture as an inherent part of daily life (During, 2005, p.1). This approach was chosen because of its emphasis on identity, both in terms of the meaning of identity and how individuals come to define themselves. Furthermore, it greatly values subjectivity and thus, sees people's identities as fluid entities that can be perpetually re-negotiated while simultaneously recognizing the impact of context on identity (Kusow, 2003). These premises are central to the study as the main intent is to explore how individuals' identities become shaped by their relationship and interactions with their partner.

In order to ensure that the findings of my study could be framed in a cultural studies perspective, I informed my interview questions with cultural studies premises, specifically the notion of identities as fluid entities. I also used a semi-structured interview method and encouraged participants to bring up any issues that had not been addressed that they deemed important or relevant. This allowed participants to freely engage in dialogue about and reflect on their identity without being constrained by the interview questions or style. Through one-on-one interviews with individuals in intercultural relationships, I allow participants to define their own identity as defined by their own words and experiences. Furthermore, by taking a cultural studies approach in my research, it is my intent that readers better understand what it is like to take on components of a transnational identity in the context of an intercultural relationship and how the process occurs.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Semi-structured interviews were used for this research project. The interviews were administered in a face-to-face, one-on-one setting in a location determined by the participant. One important benefit of a semi-structured interview is that it can let the interview flow as determined by the participant. This enables the information that the participant finds most relevant and important to share to be captured in the findings. Using this data collection tool also allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions based on ideas, experiences or feelings that the participant discloses that the researcher may not have considered when creating the interview questions (Institut National de Santé Public Quebec, n.d.). This facilitates a conversational environment, which may allow for the

interview to flow more freely and diminish stresses or nervousness the participant may experience in the interview.

### **Sampling**

The sample consisted of seven individuals who are in intercultural relationships. The main characteristic of the intercultural couples I sought was the need for one partner to have a strong sense of transnational identity due to his or her country of origin being somewhere other than Canada or through the vertical transmission of transnational identity from that person's parents. This suggests that the partner with a transnational identity may be a first or second-generation immigrant. In addition, the other partner must acknowledge not having any familial connection to their partner's country of origin or ancestry at the onset of their relationship as the intent of the study is to explore how components of a transnational identity can be acquired through a relationship. It is important to note that only the individual who deems that he or she did not have a sense of transnational identity before his or her relationship is interviewed as the research focuses on horizontal transnational identity acquisition. The selection of couples that fit this profile was based on their determination of their relationship as intercultural and their respective identities. This is to say that based on the couple's own interpretation of firstly, being representative of an intercultural relationship, and secondly, one partner having a strong transnational identity that their partner does not identify with by means of birth or ancestry, they determine their suitability to participate in the study. In order to ensure their understanding of a transnational identity and an intercultural relationship were consistent with the way these terms are used in the study, I defined these terms on both the recruitment email I sent and the consent form.

The primary means of recruitment was through personal contacts with key informants and secondarily, by using snowballing. Firstly, a recruitment email was sent to the 2011-2012 Immigration and Settlement Studies cohort. However, as the recruitment email did not supply me with as many participants as I needed and I wanted to vary my sample, I also used a snowballing method with the participants that I secured. Snowballing is a way to expand the sample size through asking participants to recommend others who may be interested in being a part of the study (Groenewald, 2004). In order to diminish coercion when using the snowballing technique, I supplied the secured participants with my contact information and asked them to pass it on to individuals they thought would like to be a part of the sample. By taking this approach, the potential participants' personal and contact information was protected by the 'gatekeepers', those who suggested the prospective participants (Groenewald, 2004), in the instance that they did not desire to be a part of the study. While both of these methods consisted of non-probability sampling and therefore, do not allow an equal opportunity for members of the public to be selected, nor ensure that the selection process is randomized (Trochim 2006), they were the most appropriate methods for the time and funding constraints of this study. They ensured an adequate number of eligible participants in the study and the ability to draw small-scale conclusions on transnational identity acquisition in the context of intercultural relationships.

### **Setting and Research Design**

Once participants were recruited, interviews were held in a place that the individual determined to be both comfortable for them and a neutral environment. This helped ensure that the power imbalance between the researcher and the participant was

diminished as much as possible. If a participant had no preference for the interview setting, I held the interview in a private group study room in the Ryerson University library to ensure auditory and visual privacy.

Both at initial contact with the participant and directly before the interview, I informed participants that if at any time, they did not feel comfortable answering a question or wanted to terminate the interview, they could do so. I also provided some sample questions on the consent form so participants were aware of the types of questions they would be asked. All participants signed a written informed consent form prior to the interview and I assured the participants that their real names would not be used and their confidentiality would be protected. I did this with the hopes of fostering a trusting atmosphere and lessening the imbalanced power dynamics between researcher and participant. I started the interview by welcoming the participant and reminding them of the objective of the research in order to encourage focused and relevant answers (Institut National de Santé Public Quebec, n.d.). I continued on to ask open questions about identity, culture and their experience in the relationship and concluded with specific demographic questions about the individual's gender, age and length of their relationship (see Appendix A for the interview guide). Once a participant completed the interview, I thanked them for their participation. I then informed them that if they wanted to withdraw their participation from the study, they had only a two-week time frame to do so, as the time restraints for the study were tight and I needed to ensure I had enough data in order to be able to draw meaningful conclusions in my research.

## **Ethical Issues**

Some ethical issues that arose in my recruitment method stemmed from the fact that I asked my colleagues from Ryerson University to participate in my research. In order to ensure that they did not feel coerced into participating, I emphasized that participating in my research project was fully voluntary. Furthermore, I chose to send an email as my method of recruitment as it is a more impersonal means of contact. People who received the email and did not wish to reply or participate were not put in the situation to do so. Any colleagues that did participate in my study were informed that while I made my best effort to keep them anonymous in the data, as faculty members who had previously taught them were evaluating my research, they may not be completely anonymous. In order to further retain their anonymity and protect the participants' confidentiality, there is no distinction made in the findings between those who were my colleagues and those who were recruited through snowballing. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used in both drafts and the final paper to ensure participants' anonymity.

## **Data Organization**

The data was digitally recorded and written notes were taken during the one-on-one interviews. Directly after the interview, I made follow up notes regarding body language and tone, as it may have been relevant to particular aspects of the interview. All interviews were transcribed and participants were given a pseudonym under which the written notes and the transcriptions were organized. After transcription, data sets were primarily organized by pseudonyms and subsequently, by the demographic information I collected to facilitate further analyses and comparisons across participants. This included

the participant's age, the partner's age, length of time in a cohabitating relationship, marital status, the partner's transnational identity and the partner's status as a first or second-generation immigrant. I determined that I had sufficient data by the presence of reoccurring themes among the participants, as this demonstrates some sense of commonality of experiences. Furthermore, the emergence of reoccurring themes determined that specific individuals' consensuses have lead to some common understandings of transnational identity acquisition in intercultural relationships.

### **Analysis**

The data set was analyzed by codes. Coding is used to systematically put various different components of communication into categories (Archer & Berdahl, 2011) and I began coding after reading each transcript numerous times to ensure I had an in-depth understanding of the content. Some of the codes identified consisted of ideas, directions, prominence, intensity and/or frequency (Archer & Berdahl, 2011). When extracting themes from the transcripts, I also consulted the written notes I made during the interviews regarding tone and body language. Coding from the transcripts while reflecting on my observations enabled an accurate reflection of the information transmitted by the participants, as I took into account both verbal and nonverbal communication. In order to ensure that the participants' voices and ideas were understood and reflected in the transcripts in the way they were intended, transcripts were available to the participants to verify prior to analyzing the content of the interviews. Participant verification can make the data both more reliable and trustworthy by ensuring the consistency of the intended meaning of the information given with how that information was recorded and transcribed.

### **Chapter Three: Findings**

After conducting the interviews and reading over participants' transcripts numerous times, I have realized that each individual has a unique narrative to tell that reflects their perspectives, interactions and relationship. While each participant's partner reflected a different transnational identity, stemming each from a different country of origin or ancestry, some important commonalities arose. Overwhelmingly, not only did all participants attest to embracing components of their partner's culture, but six of the seven participants felt that they did so primarily as a result of their own curiosity and interest. Furthermore, cultural differences were mainly framed in a positive light and all participants outweighed the challenges associated with cultural differences in their relationship with the benefits stemming from culture. The remainder of this section is dedicated to briefly introducing the participants, followed by an in-depth exploration of common themes and experiences that arose in interviews.

#### **Overview of Participants**

A total of seven participants took part in this study. They ranged in age from 24 to 33 years old and consisted of five women and two men. All participants had been in a relationship with their current partner anywhere from a year and a half to seven years. Four participants reported their marital status as common law, while one was married and two were single, but in a committed relationship. Of the two single participants, one had moved in with her partner a month prior to the interview, while the other cited that she did not want to move in with her partner until they were married. Although it was not part of the eligibility criteria, none of the participants had children. Demographic data was collected by asking participants questions about their age, length of relationship and other

information just before concluding the interviews in order to be able to make comparisons between participants. For information on each participant, refer to Table 1, which serves solely as a summary of the participants' demographic details.

Table 1: Participant, Partner and Relationship Information

Name of Participant	Sex	Age	Partner's Age	Marital Status	Relationship Length	Length of Cohabitation	Partner's Birth Country	Partner's Transnational Identity
Stephanie	F	33	35	Married	7 years	4 years	Canada	Korean
Brent	M	26	23	C.L.*	1.5 years	10 months	Canada	Palestinian
Camille	F	24	27	C.L.*	5 years	2.5 years	Spain	Spanish
Hailey	F	25	27	Single	2 years	N/A	Canada	Greek
Jonathon	M	29	29	C.L.*	6 years	2 years	Canada	Iranian
Ariane	F	30	30	C.L.*	3 years	2.5 years	Brazil	Brazilian
Lauren	F	27	32	Single	2.5 years	1 month	Jamaica	Jamaican

\*C.L. is an abbreviation used for Common Law.

Regardless of the vast demographic differences of the participants and their partners, such as the partner's birth country and transnational identity, all participants adhered to a similar cultural identity; they culturally identified themselves as Canadian. While both Hailey and Stephanie identified as multi-generational Canadians with distant mixed European heritage, some participants identified more with a specific region or province in Canada. Both Ariane and Camille were born and raised in Quebec and had recently moved to Toronto. As a result, Ariane culturally identified primarily as a 'Quebecer' but also a Canadian, while Camille identified herself as a French Canadian. Lauren, who spent most of her life in rural Nova Scotia, identified as a Nova Scotian in a Canadian context, however, would identify herself as 'just a Canadian' when outside of Canada. In addition to regionally-influenced cultural identities, one participant's identity was also influenced by religion. Jonathon, while stating that he is not very religious, was culturally influenced by Judaism. As his parents were born and raised in Scotland, he also

secondarily culturally identified with Scotland. Brent also noted that he is of Scottish and Irish heritage; however, specified that his heritage did not strongly influence his cultural identity. Each participant contributed an interesting and informative narrative to the study and regardless the great diversity between the participants and their partners, many common themes arose in the interviews.

## **Themes**

### **Additional language acquisition.**

An interest in learning the language spoken by the partner or the partner's family was highlighted by almost all participants. While encountering a language barrier with their partner's non-English speaking family members was sometimes cited as a challenge, many participants took initiative and learned phrases and words in order to be able to communicate with those family members who did not speak English. Hailey remembers meeting Luke's grandparents, who she referred to as his *yiayia* (grandmother) and *papou* (grandfather), for the first time. Knowing that they did not speak English, she asked Luke for a few phrases before the visit, like how are you and please and thank you, in order to communicate with them in their own language. Brent also made an effort to learn some Arabic to be able to communicate with certain family members. He also highlighted the significance behind learning phrases in his partner's language and explained:

Well, [Dana] speaks a lot of Arabic with her parents, so I have picked up words here and there, just kind of like to show them that I'm interested in their culture as well. Her grandma also doesn't speak a lot of English so I try to communicate a bit with her in her own language. It makes me feel like a part of her life being able to demonstrate how much I care about her by taking on... and just embracing the culture (Brent, Interview, 28 June 2012).

In this instance, acquiring phrases and words in an additional language is a tool that the participant used to communicate but more importantly, to convey his feelings for Dana to

her family. Lauren also used language as a means to connecting with her partner's family. Recently, when she was in touch with her partner's sister for the first time on Facebook, she included a Patois phrase that Damon had taught her at the end of her note, highlighting that she wanted to connect with his sister.

Both Ariane and Camille attained fluency in their partner's first languages. Even though they both cited that learning different languages was something they were interested in, they noted necessity as one of the main reasons in becoming fluent. While Ariane and Camille are in relationships with first generation immigrants, they reported that both of their partners speak fluent English and/or French. As a result, they attributed their time spent in their partner's countries of origin to becoming fluent as they both worked when living abroad and needed to communicate with the people around them. Camille also cited that her partner's family influenced her language ability, saying "I did feel like I needed to improve my Spanish in order to be able to communicate with his family, like my in laws, and I guess that whole side of the family" (Camille, Interview, 10 July 2012).

The extent to which participants actually learned and were able to communicate in their partner's language varied greatly and was often dependent on need. On one hand, Hailey and Brent learned basic phrases in order to be able to communicate with family members who did not speak much English. Even though they did not expand on why they had only learned phrases, I suspect that it may be a result of their partner's parent's high levels of English. This made communicating with their in-laws in their first language unnecessary. On the other hand, Camille and Ariane became fluent in their partner's first languages as a result of living respectively in Spain and Brazil. In addition, neither of

their in-laws spoke English, which may have been another factor at play that influenced them to attain fluency.

### **The role of family.**

While many participants spoke to how their partners played an essential role in teaching them about culture and cultural practices, the partners' families also emerged as playing a significant role in this respect. Camille spoke about Javier's family's regular involvement in their lives when they lived in Madrid and reflected on their enthusiasm to teach her about different Spanish traditions, foods and celebrations. She also pointed out her own interest in the culture and explained,

I wanted to learn and they wanted to teach me about it. He and his family would talk to me about different things and teach me about the history of wine in Spain or the different traditions that they would do, or how in the south there were processions at Easter. So I learned a lot about [culture], but it's also because I wanted to (Camille, Interview, 10 July 2012).

Brent also felt that Dana's family's way of introducing him to new cultural practices meshed well with his desire to learn, expressing,

Her family is really easy going so it's more, they would just present me with different food or situations or topics or discussions. It's always been a very natural thing, allowing me to get eased into the culture instead of forcing anything directly on me (Brent, Interview, 28 June 2012).

Stephanie pointed out her interest in learning to cook Korean food. She highlighted her mother-in-law's role in incorporating new ways to cook and some domestic Korean practices in her life. However, Stephanie also acknowledged that her mother-in-law had some cultural expectations of her that she was not necessarily interested in embracing. She explained,

It's like when I do something wrong, my mother-in-law is like, "That's not the Korean way!" So for instance, when a guest departs at my home, you can't just say goodbye and shut the door behind them. You have to say goodbye and then let

the guests leave and then go outside and continue to wave until they drive off, right? (Stephanie, Interview, 27 June 2012).

Laughing, she explained that she does not always remember to carry out all steps of the departing procedure and added, “I’ll still shut the door behind [the guests] and be very polite, but she’ll say, ‘You have to come outside! It’s not the Korean way!’ And Chris and I are able to laugh about it later” (Stephanie, Interview, 27 June 2012).

Hailey and Jonathon highlighted the importance of family functions in learning new cultural practices. Both brought up traditional dances in particular. Hailey expressed her triumph at being able to master what she classified as the ‘easier Greek dances’ while Jonathon noted that dancing remained a challenge for him but still considered it a benefit of his relationship. Lauren had not taken part in any of her partner’s family functions as they live in Jamaica and has not yet had the opportunity to meet them. As a result, while she expressed interest in the culture and had learned certain aspects of it, she did not demonstrate as much embracement as some of the other participants. Therefore, family and geographic proximity are some factors that may play a role in the participant’s knowledge and embracement of cultural practices. Also, the willingness to take on and adapt cultural practices is another factor to be considered.

### **Identity as changing.**

Most participants recognized that their identity had changed as a result of their relationship. Whether the change was major or minor, many participants framed how their identity had shifted in terms of culture and their partner’s cultural influence. Hailey, who expressed that she does not think of Canadians, including herself, as having much of a cultural identity, stated that she has “more of an identity now” and “extra culture” (Hailey, Interview, 7 July 2012). As a result of developing a connection with people in

the Palestinian community and understanding and identifying with new perspectives, Brent describing himself as feeling “more Palestinian” and “a part of the culture” as he has become sympathetic to Palestinians and the Palestinian cause (Brent, Interview, 28 June 2012). While Hailey and Brent expressed that their relationship has allowed them to integrate their partner’s culture into their identity, Lauren expressed how her partner’s well-defined cultural identity made her want to emphasize her own. She explained,

I feel like I’ve had to prove more of my own heritage because he has, because Jamaica has a very distinct culture that is certainly well known and recognized. Being from Canada and Nova Scotia, I’ve had to sort of prove that I too come from something distinct (Lauren, Interview, 25 July 2012).

Jonathon mentioned aspects of culture when explaining how his identity had changed, but also focused on how being in a committed relationship affects his identity. Unlike other participants, Jonathon noted that identity was something that greatly interested him and something that he often reflected on. He stated first and foremost that his identity is constantly changing. He also framed his identity in terms of individuality. He expressed that he has always been an individual but now, recognizes that the decisions he makes do not just affect him, but also his partner and his relationship, stating,

Marjan tells me everything she’s feeling and I tell her everything I’m feeling so I feel like I really know this culture. You know, I understand that I will never be Iranian, nor do I aspire to be Iranian or Muslim or anything like that... I’m still a Scottish Jew who’s a Canadian, but in the context that I have an Iranian sidekick (Jonathon, Interview, 20 June 2012).

Therefore, while he mentioned culture when reflecting on his identity, he separated it from how his identity has changed, suggesting that culture and identity are not always converging entities. Camille also separated culture from identity. She characterized herself as shy and “maybe a bit uptight” at the beginning of her relationship but believed

that she had become more open as a result of her relationship through her experience living in Spain. She also recognized that she had become more knowledgeable and in turn, respectful, of other cultures.

In contrast to the rest of the participants, neither Stephanie nor Ariane believed their identity had changed as a result of their relationship. In her interview, Ariane reflected on the negative experience she had while living in Brazil and explained,

I had to move to Brazil for one year and I didn't really agree, I mean, I agreed because I didn't want to lose him. It was the best thing for us as a couple but yeah, I didn't want to go...I had very bad experiences [in Brazil]. There were a lot of different factors but one was the culture. Everything is very bureaucratic, you know, administration. It's really difficult for an immigrant there (Ariane, Interview, 5 July 2012).

While I suspected that some of the structural issues of Brazilian culture that she highlighted acted as resistance in terms of not experiencing a shift in identity, Ariane framed the issue of identity in a different lens. In a follow-up email I sent thanking participants for their participation and asking them if they wanted to add anything to their interviews, Ariane reflected on why she thought her identity did not change as a result of her relationship. She explained that before meeting Paulo, she had lived in South America for three years. As a result, she felt that she had already been influenced by South American culture and that is why her relationship with Paulo did not significantly influence her identity. Furthermore, Ariane also stated that she felt that her partner's connection to Brazil was distant as he left the country when he was 17 years old and had been living abroad since that time. Her partner's weak transnational connection may be another factor that contributed to her lack of identity change as a result of her relationship.

Stephanie also described her partner as not having very strong ties to South Korea. Explaining that he was born and raised in Manitoba, she said,

I get the sense, and I don't want to speak for him, that while not ashamed of his culture, he definitely, I don't know how to put this, was a very white Korean or a very Canadian Korean. And so his culture to me is a lot about, like in our relationship, it's mostly just that he looks a bit different from me because he's Asian. It doesn't tend to factor into a ton more things, except where his extended family is involved (Stephanie, Interview, 27 June 2012).

In addition to highlighting her husband's cultural background as not very influential in their relationship, Stephanie reflected on her and her husband's shared religious beliefs.

She explained,

Catholicism is a really big part of both of our lives and I'm not sure if the relationship would have worked without that, kind of, similarity in religion. In fact, it was great not to have to deal with that part of it (Stephanie, Interview, 27 June 2012).

Similar to Ariane, Stephanie appears to highlight more commonalities than differences in their respective relationships. As a result, perhaps those couples that have more in common, whether through religion, lived experiences or other means, do not experience as much identity shift or change.

### **Fighting negative stereotypes.**

Both Lauren and Jonathon expressed concern regarding how the media depicted their partner's country of ancestry or culture. As a result of being exposed to different perspectives through their relationship, they felt the need to not just defend the culture or the country that was being misrepresented, but also to expose the truth to others. When discussing the emotional connection he felt to Iran that he established through his partner, Jonathon brought up the 'firestorm' in the media with Iran. His passion for the matter was evident when he explained,

I feel like defending [Iran] when I hear the stuff that is said, you know, like, I feel like defending, this is something Marjan would say but, the rhetoric and the aggression and the war mongering. That's not the people of Iran, that's some idiots who are in charge. And we tend to forget the people in Iran. The rhetoric is coming from the other side, whether Canada or Israel or the States, and not just think about the Iranian people. It's ridiculous that [they are] not even mentioned. If we bomb this and bomb that... never mind that millions of innocent people who don't support what's going on are going to suffer (Jonathon, Interview, 20 June 2012).

Lauren feels similarly about how Jamaican culture has come to be represented in

Toronto. She expressed,

I feel like Jamaican culture is sort of, it's been tainted as far as the reputation that a lot of Jamaicans in Toronto have developed. There's this stereotype about them that they're violent, so I really feel quite, you know, quite passionate about the positives of Jamaican culture and not just the aspect of violence or these negative stereotypes. I'm quite angered when I hear of stories in the news where they've obviously targeted the Jamaican population so it's really important for me, you know, I'm not gonna be the spreader of Jamaican news but, I'm gonna see it and support it and promote positive influences of Jamaican culture, like the good food and the wonderful music and spirit (Lauren, Interview, 25 July 2012).

These participants' desire to stand up against the misrepresentation of their partner's culture or country of ancestry demonstrates a strong connection to both their partner and their partner's ancestral origins. Their passion to expose the truth to others regarding political or cultural misrepresentations indicates closeness to the culture or nation and in many respects, is similar to actions that the diaspora may take regarding the same issues.

### **Future children.**

Regardless of the fact that there were no specific questions about having children, four of the seven participants brought up children up in the interviews. One participant who spoke about having children in the future framed the issue in terms of cultural belonging. Stephanie said,

We don't have kids yet but like, I often feel that having many cultures also meant that I also kind of had no culture. So, I'm not able to pass on really anything

specific in terms of tradition beyond my religious tradition to children that we might want to have, so I think that's going to be valuable for them, for our future kids, to have a culture that they belong to because they'll be half Korean (Stephanie, Interview, 27 June 2012).

Stephanie's sense of not having a culture is similar to Hailey's conception of Canadian cultural identity. While not specifically referencing children, Hailey explained,

It's kind of depressing that Canadians don't have, like, I don't think of Canadians as having a cultural identity. Like, they are kind of forced to absorb other people's identities. It's kind of inevitable if you get together with someone that has culture or has something, you have nothing to contribute (Hailey, Interview, 7 July 2012).

Jonathon also spoke to the cultural identity of his potential future children, explaining, "We'd want elements of Marjan's culture and my culture, so I'd want the kids to be proud of having a Jewish-Scottish heritage and I'd also want them to be proud of being part Iranian and Muslim as well" (Jonathon, Interview, 20 June 2012). While implying that his future children will have a very hybrid identity, Jonathon also highlighted that religion will likely be a contentious issue in this area, stating,

Definitely the Iranian part is easier than the Muslim part for me, to be totally honest... It's gonna be hard and it's gonna be a struggle, for sure, but [religion] is something that we are thinking about and talking about and want to embrace the best we can as we grow (Jonathon, Interview, 20 June 2012).

Camille also echoed Jonathon's desire to incorporate both her and her partner's languages and cultures into their future children's upbringing, explaining,

If we ever had children, I would definitely want his culture to be a part of their upbringing, well, both of our cultures. No matter where we live, I want the kids to learn English and French and Spanish, they'll be trilingual (Camille, Interview, 7 July 2012).

Hailey also reflected on the importance of her and Luke's future children to be able to speak Greek. However, as Hailey has only learned basic Greek phrases and expressed that Luke can speak Greek, but is not fully fluent, Luke's parents have concerns about the attainability of their future grandchildren's language ability. As a result, Hailey informed

me that Luke's parents are willing to send both her and Luke to Greece for six months and take intensive Greek classes in order for Luke to become fully fluent and Hailey to become competent in the language.

#### **Chapter Four: Analysis**

While the participants introduced numerous ideas and reflections on identity change in the context of their relationship, their ideas were often not explored in the amount of depth that I desired. As a result, theory plays a crucial role in analyzing and conceptualizing the participants' ideas and experiences. This section is dedicated to discussing and theoretically framing the participants' experiences, in addition to linking the themes that arose in the interviews back to the existing literature on transnationalism and intermarriage.

#### **Culture**

When conducting my interviews, I wanted to ensure that the participants understood the key terms that I was using. In an effort to maintain a consistent understanding of culture, being one of the main components of my interviews, I began the interview by defining culture as understood in much of the intermarriage research I had consulted. I explained culture as, "...learned and shared values, beliefs and behaviours common to a particular group of people..." (Orbe & Harris, 2001, p.13). While cultural studies does not recognize one specific definition, it deems that culture should be understood as broad and suggests that no conception of culture is wrong (Barker, 2004). Culture as defined above suggests that it is a group-based phenomenon; however, cultural studies strives to go beyond this exclusive understanding of culture. Hall et al. (1996) suggest that pre-conceived, essentialist notions of culture specific to

certain groups or communities are detrimental because they neither allow groups to define themselves nor recognize the lived experiences and subjectivity that come to compose culture. Despite cultural studies' determination to move away from exclusivity in culture, many of the participants reinforced this conception. When asking participants about their cultural backgrounds, they framed them primarily in terms of nationality, regional influences and ancestry, thus specifying groups but not referring to values, beliefs or behaviours. While these elements may have been an implicit part of their cultural backgrounds, they were not considered significant when identifying themselves in terms of culture as they did not bring them up. However, when the participants spoke about their partners' cultures, which they similar framed in terms of nationality and ancestry, they explicitly spoke to values, beliefs and behaviours when they expanded on how their relationship with someone of a different cultural background has influenced their identity. Even though this is significant because it indicates an attempt to move beyond a group-specific conception of culture, the participants still connected the group-specific elements to the values, beliefs and behaviours they spoke about.

While Bustamante et al. (2011) suggest that cultural differences are often the causal factors for conflict and problems in an intercultural relationship, my findings suggest otherwise. Cultural differences between the participant and their partner, while sometimes seen as challenges, were overwhelmingly framed in a positive light, suggesting they were benefits of the relationship instead of hindrances. Even though some cultural differences were seen as challenging, none of the participants suggested anything that the couple was not able negotiate or overcome. Therefore, while the intercultural relationships I was exposed to through my interviews were not without some

minor cultural conflicts, cultural differences appeared to play a positive role. This notion adheres to Rodríguez-García's (2006b) understanding of mixed unions as having the capacity to integrate cultural differences instead of experiencing cultural clash. It also speaks to hybridity as some participants highlighted how both of their cultural backgrounds are coming together to create a new identity. This idea will be explored in depth in a subsequent section.

Throughout the interview, I asked participants to reflect on how their partner's transnational connection, that I primarily framed through culture, had influenced them, their identities and how the process occurred. If the participant believed that he or she had changed culturally as a result of their relationship, I asked them to explain how they believed the changes came about. Overwhelmingly, participants suggested that the changes were a part of a natural process that was heightened through their own interest or curiosity in the culture. Only one participant felt that her in-laws taught her aspects of her partner's culture, specifically when she had done something 'wrong', but none of the participants suggested that they were specifically instructed on cultural practices, norms or expectations. Therefore, this natural progression of, as one participant put it, being 'eased' into the partner's culture, supports the cultural studies perspective that most of culture is not taught, but experienced (Lustig & Koester, 2002 as cited in Bustamente et al., 2011). This finding supports the desire to push the boundaries on how culture is understood in a group-specific way into a more permeable understanding. It suggests that participants who framed their cultural background through static, unchanging factors, like ancestry, came to embrace elements of a different culture, thus merging previously differentiated groups together. The following sub-section also highlights the role culture

played in this study's findings and frames culture in terms of how many participants viewed it, though identity.

## **Identity**

Before beginning each interview, I also addressed the way that identity was understood in this study. While encouraging participants to understand the term based on their own interpretation of the meaning of identity, I also read them the following definition that is previously referenced in the literature review. I explained that identity can be understood as the way individuals understand themselves by, "...bringing together the emotional, personal inside [...] with the conventions and norms they are faced with externally" (Barker, 2003, p.94). By providing the participants with this specific definition, I attempted to highlight how identity is understood in cultural studies, specifically by Barker (2003) as 'discursive-performative' and through Giddens' (1991) sub-division of self-identity and social identity. While not all participants framed their identity or identity change in this way, I employ these understandings of identity to analyze the participants' changing perceptions of themselves.

As mentioned in the chapter three, five of the seven participants believed that their identity had changed as a result of their relationship. This supports the idea that Blumer (1969) and Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2011) present regarding the role of social interactions with others as a means to coming to define one's self as relationships consist of interaction, among other important elements. In addition, the significance of interactions with participants' partners with respect to affecting their identities highlight both Barker's (2003) discursive and Giddens' (1991) social sub-divide of identity. Upon being confronted with new conventions on a regular basis through their relationship,

consisting primarily of unfamiliar culturally based norms or practices, many participants believed that their identity shifted. These participants suggested that their identity change was a direct result of social interactions with their partner, their partner's family and other individuals belonging to that cultural background or community. This reinforces Aldiabat and Le Navenec's (2011) stance on interactions as providing a space in which individuals can come to define themselves as the majority of participants cited interactions as playing a crucial role in identity change.

Many of the participants framed their identity change in terms of culture and their partner's cultural influence. Even though I attempted to separate culture from identity when asking participants if their identity had changed as a result of their relationship, I anticipated that many participants would merge these two concepts regardless. As all participants culturally identified themselves as Canadian and all of their partner's had a transnational connection to a region or country in the world other than Canada, those who framed their identity shift in terms of culture may have come to this conclusion by understanding their identity through difference. Hall (1996) suggests that identity is often understood externally through notions of difference and many of the participants in this study support this idea. Change itself implies that something new or different has occurred and thus, refers to some sort of transformation or modification. Therefore, by participants recognizing that their identities had shifted as a result of their relationships, they are recognizing difference. This implies that they have come to identify themselves through the difference that exists between their partners and themselves. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of participants attest to their identity shifting supports the idea that identity can be re-negotiated and is a fluid entity. This idea was specifically highlighted

by Jonathon, who described his identity as “constantly changing”, thus supporting one of the most important premises of cultural studies in terms of identity.

In contrast, the two participants who did not believe their identity changed as a result of their relationship, Ariane and Stephanie, seemed to emphasize notions of sameness (Hall, 1996). As mentioned above, all participants self-identified as Canadian and all of their partners had some sort of transnational identity; however, these participants suggested that while their partners did culturally identify with Brazil and South Korea respectively, their connections were more distant and weak. They brought up their partners’ strong links to Canada, either through being born and raised or having spent a significant amount of time in Canada, thus emphasizing the cultural commonalities among them. Surprisingly, the amount of time that the participant had been in a relationship with their partner did not influence whether or not they believed their identity had changed through their relationship. The two participants who believed their identity had stayed the same had been in a relationship with their partner for seven and three years respectively. The seven-year relationship represents the longest relationship and the three-year relationship is just below the average relationship length in the study. This suggests that the amount of time spent in a relationship with a partner does not necessarily correlate with identity change. In addition, Fitt-Ajewole (2008) observed that gender was a factor that contributed to intermarried participants’ perceptions of their own identity change; however, my results do not demonstrate the same connection.

The intent of the study was to specifically highlight the way an individual’s relationship with their partner, being someone who held strong transnational connections

to another part of the world, influenced their identity. However, interactions with the individual's partner were not the only interactions at play in this matter. Even though the participants' partners often played an important role in exposing them to new things, whether different food, language, cultural customs or other situations, the partner's family, especially their parents, also contributed significantly in this respect. The role of family outside of the couple themselves as culturally influential was not considered in depth in studies done on intermarried couples by neither Rodríguez-García nor Fitt-Ajewole. However, I believe that the family may have been a significant factor in culturally influencing the 'Canadian' participant in this study because I did not require the transnational partner to be a first generation immigrant. The studies done on intercultural couples and transnationalism by Fitt-Ajewole and Rodríguez-García all included an immigrant partner in the intercultural couple. However, I extended to the eligibility to both first and second generation immigrants in my study to fulfill the requirement of being in an intercultural couple. While some differences did arise between participants with first and second-generation partners, they were not as dynamic as I anticipated. Participants with first-generation immigrant partners did not necessarily foster a stronger connection or have their identity more influenced than those with second-generation partners. This supports the idea that a strong transnational identity can span across generations without becoming diluted, and in turn, be horizontally passed on to another person.

The role of the family in influencing the participant's identity depended on two factors: geographic proximity and the partner's sense of their transnational connection. If the participant's partner's parents were close by or if the couple had spent significant

time with them, the in-laws often played an important role in exposing the participant to new cultural practices, norms and events. This influence was furthered if the partner had a weaker sense of a transnational identity, which was sometimes but not necessarily perceived through second generational status. As all of the participants' partners spoke English and/or French, but not all of their extended family did, additional language acquisition became a dynamic means to which family was able to influence how the participant took on components of their partner's transnational identity. Overall, family often played an important role in exposing the participants to new things that altered their identity. However, the partner was the most influential person in facilitating identity shift.

### **Transnationalism and Hybridity**

Regardless of the generational status of their partner, all participants suggested that they had taken on some component of their partner's transnational identity. The extent of transnational identity that the participant took on was influenced by many factors; however, it was ultimately dependent on the individual. As discussed above, language was a component that was embraced by many participants. Many other means of taking on part of their partner's transnational identity were discussed and include but were not limited to, new political perspectives and affiliations, learning cultural dances, embracing culturally influenced domestic customs and fighting negative stereotypes. As suggested by Glick Schiller et al. (1994), transmigrants are people that, among other things, take actions that connect them to two societies simultaneously. While Glick Schiller et al. included only individuals who had migrated in this definition of transnationalism, Roudemetof's (2006) non-immigrant addition to those who can participate in transnationalism supports the inclusion of the non-migrants participants in

my study. Many of the participants did in fact act on issues, events or happenings that affiliated and connected them to their partner's country of origin or ancestry. By pushing the boundaries and blending together the two above definitions of transnationalism, the participants in my study can be seen as transnationals. This enables non-migrants to become transnationals without actually migrating from one country to another or having familial ties to a different country.

One of the most dynamics instances that was highlighted by two participants was the need to fight negative stereotypes that plagued the reputation of their partner's country of origin or cultural background. The participants who felt that their partner's culture or country of ancestry was being misrepresented acted on the negative stereotypes and attempted to share a positive understanding with their others. This suggests that by being in an intercultural relationship, an individual can come to learn and embrace new perspectives, and in turn, pass them on to others, creating a domino effect of expanding horizons. This may be a positive consequence of non-migrants taking on components of a transnational identity as they are able to share knowledge and different perspectives with their networks that may include individuals who would not have had the opportunity to be exposed to these ideas otherwise.

Roudemetof's (2005) explanation of transnationalism as a result of internal globalization speaks to the emerging sense of hybridity among participants. Roudemetof (2005) suggests that a dynamic space for emerging human and transnational interactions is created when individuals embrace aspects of globalization in their everyday lives. This definition is similar to Bhabha's (1994) understanding of an 'in-between' or 'third' space, in which both the local and global are encompassed. While none of the participants

conceptualized their relationship in terms of an ‘in-between’ or hybrid space, many of their reflections and experiences suggested these ideas, thus supporting Rodríguez-García’s (2006a) idea that an ‘in-between’ space is created by intermarriage. While notions of hybridity were evident among the participants through the re-negotiation of their identities, they were often explicitly framed in terms of the future, especially through the desire to have children. None of the participants currently have children; however, four of the seven participants spoke of having children in the future and the implications of their intercultural relationship for their potential offspring. Jonathon and Camille spoke about the way both their own and their partner’s cultural, religious, ancestry and/or linguistic identity could come together and create a hybrid identity for the children. This is significant as it shows how intercultural couples are able to create a unique, ‘in-between’ space that encompasses components of identity that stem both locally and from different regions of the world. Furthermore, it speaks to the creation and perpetuation of hybridity through intercultural relationships as a hybrid identity will not only affect the couple, but their future children as well.

The hybrid space created by the couple and potentially, through having children, contributes greatly to Canada as a multicultural society. If individuals in intercultural relationships are able to acknowledge both partners’ cultures, ancestries and understandings of the world and furthermore, bring them together to create a unique identity and ‘space’, the implications for multiculturalism in terms of inclusion and acceptance are overwhelmingly positive. Hybridity among mixed unions may also help ensure a climate of acceptance for immigrants who neither want to assimilate nor completely embrace what they understand to be Canadian culture. While the positivity of

a hybrid identity may shine through in the context of multiculturalism and immigration, the convergence of so many differently framed identities may be problematic in terms of national identity.

Participants framed their cultural identity in terms of nationality; however, they did not reflect on any notions of nationalism. None of the participants suggested their involvement in an intercultural relationship detracted from their sense of being a Canadian or their allegiance to the country. In fact, one participant suggested that as a result of her relationship with her first generation Jamaican partner, she felt the need to emphasize her Canadian identity as her partner had strong cultural ties to his country and she also wanted to demonstrate that she had strong links to her country. Participants did not explore how being in a relationship with someone whose family had migrated to Canada in the past generation could affect their sense of civic identity. While these issues did not come up in the interviews, two participants' understandings of Canadian culture and identity were framed in terms of comprising so many elements that any concrete meaning or understanding had become lost or did not exist. If the prevalence of mixed unions continues to rise and the couples engage in identity re-negotiation in order to include both partner's cultural and/or ancestral backgrounds, what it means to be a Canadian and what Canadian identity consists of may become an even more convoluted issue.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Further Research**

As a result of the gap on identity acquisition in the transnationalism and intermarriage literature, I performed this research with the intention of beginning to close the gap. Through semi-structured interviews with seven individuals in intercultural

relationships, I attempted to demonstrate the extent to which and how individuals take on components of the transnational identity of their partner. I then framed and analyzed the findings in a constructivist and cultural studies perspective, and compared and contrasted my findings with the existing literature on this issue to determine the differences, commonalities and new premises that surfaced in my research. I found that all of the participants in this study attested to taking on components of their partner's transnational identity. The extent to which they embraced parts of their partner's transnational identity was dependent on the individual; however, many commonalities existed in how the process of identity shift in the context of an intercultural relationship occurred.

The participants' partners were very influential in exposing them to new cultural practices, norms and/or events; however, in some cases, the partners' families, especially in-laws, also played an important role. This became more apparent if the couple spent a significant amount of time with them or if the partners' transnational connections were distant. Many participants highlighted discussions and interactions with their partners, their partners' families and others of the same cultural background as a means to learning about, experiencing and embracing components of their partners' transnational identities. As a result of the participants' reflections on their experiences in their relationships, I have reached the conclusion that horizontal transnational identity acquisition is, in fact, a possible and likely outcome of being in an intercultural relationship. This is significant as it pushes the literature on transnationalism and calls for the inclusion of non-migrants who do not possess familial or ancestral ties to another region of the world to be included in the phenomenon.

While this study produced many interesting findings, it is not without its limitations. As I decided to focus on how a non-migrant individual in an intercultural relationship can come to take on components of their partner's transnational identity without any familial ties to that country or region, I interviewed only this person. My decision to do so was based on my desire to focus only on this individual; however, after conducting the interviews, it became apparent that the participants' partners' perspective on the issues we discussed may have proved useful and provided for another layer of analysis. Furthermore, as the participants sometimes spoke on behalf of their partners, a significant limitation was that the partners of the participants were not able to speak for themselves or express their own voices. If I also would have interviewed the partner, or perhaps interviewed the couple together, the findings of the study may have been different and I may have reached different conclusions regarding the horizontal transmission of transnational identity.

Some other limitations of the study included the micro-level theoretical framework, the methodology and the scope. While I implemented a strong theoretical focus through a cultural studies perspective and by exploring transnationalism, I took a micro-level approach with the intention on focusing on individuals, relationships and interactions. Although it may have proved useful or provided for a more in-depth understanding and application of transnationalism to intermarriage, I did not explore many of the structural issues of transnationalism. Also, due to the tight time constraints of the research, the size of my sample was relatively small. As a result, my findings cannot be generalized; however, I believe that they accurately represent the experiences of the participants that I interviewed and follow the intent of qualitative research to open the

doors for further research in this area. With a larger timeframe for recruitment and interviewing, a larger sample, in addition to a quantitative component, could have led to more substantial research that could be applied to a wider range of intercultural couples. In addition, the limited scope of the research only allowed me to explore the most salient themes that arose in the interviews and as a result, I could not expand on additional dynamic themes that emerged in the interviews that may have contributed to the findings. One of those themes was gender. It was recognized as significant in terms of perceptions of identity change in Fitt-Ajewole's (2008) research on intermarriage, assimilation and transnationalism; however, I was not able to incorporate gender, as I did not want the findings or analysis to become too diluted. As I had focused on theoretically framing culture and identity in a cultural studies perspective in my literature review, I did not think it was appropriate to analyze gender without first exploring this theme in depth, both in a theoretical perspective and in the transnationalism literature.

Further research could be done to complement and expand on horizontal transnational identity acquisition through intercultural relationships by exploring other types of mixed unions. Doing a similar study with couples in which both individuals have strong transnational identities stemming each from different regions in the world could provide for an interesting ground for comparison. Also, interviewing both partners would be a useful addition to further research as the scope of this study only allowed me to interview the individual who took on components of his or her partner's transnational identity. Similar research could be done on couples with children to explore if, in fact, a more hybrid identity emerges among the couple when they have children and furthermore, investigate if that sense of hybrid identity is embraced by the child. Similar

to my study, research on hybridity among the next generation would address one of the non-migratory ways that a transnational identity can evolve.

A longitudinal study on horizontal identity acquisition among mixed unions could speak to the evolution of partners' identities over the years, which could further investigate if the amount of time spent in a relationship with an individual affects identity change. Another possibility for further research would be a similar study done in a much less urban, diverse environment to explore if an urban versus a more rural setting affects how and if partners in a mixed union re-negotiate their identities. Studies on horizontal transnational identity acquisition among homosexual couples, in addition to exploring the link between transnational identity and racialization in intermarriage, could provide for more interesting research in this area as increasing numbers of immigrants are racialized and/or are seeking refuge on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The implications of horizontal identity acquisition in the context of an intercultural couple are significant for settlement and immigration. The fact that the majority of the participants in this study took on components of their partner's identity as a result of their own curiosity demonstrates that many Canadians are not only accepting of different cultures, but that they are genuinely interested in embracing and making different cultural practices, norms or products a part of their daily lives. This could translate positively in the settlement sector as newcomers may realize that neither assimilation nor cultural isolation are the only options as an immigrant; an entire spectrum of identity embracement, shift and re-negotiation exists in which one can come to define oneself in Canada. Furthermore, as intercultural couples have both common and differentiated networks, they are able to regularly interact with an array of individuals,

including family and friends, who may not have been exposed to a certain culture before. This may result in a heightened awareness, acceptance and interest in diversity for Canadians and newcomers alike, making intercultural couples a micro-level means to embracing and celebrating immigration and multiculturalism in Canada.

## Appendix A: Interview Guide

- 1) How did you and your partner meet?
- 2) What is your cultural background?
  - Nationality? Ancestry? Ethnicity?
- 3) What are some challenges in your relationship as a result of cultural differences?
  - Communication? Agreeing on living arrangements? Amount of involvement of your in-laws/family in your lives? Expected gender roles?
- 4) What are some benefits in your relationship associated with cultural differences?
- 5) Do you believe you have changed culturally as a result of your relationship?  
(If yes) How have you changed culturally as a result of your relationship?
  - Have you made an effort to learn another language? Any phrases or words?
  - Have you learned more about or converted to another religion? Or participated in any religious celebrations or events that you hadn't before your current relationship?
  - Have your values changed at all? How?
  - Have you changed your diet? Or learned to cook different types of food?
  - Have you changed the way you dress?
  - Are you active in diasporic politics? Or have you taken an interest in what is going on in your partner's country of origin or ancestry?
- 6) Thinking about what you just told me in terms of changing culturally as a result of your relationship, how did these changes come about?
  - Were you taught about cultural practices by your partner and expected to take them on?
  - Did you take an interest in your partner's culture and learn and embrace it as a result of your own interest and curiosity?
  - Were the changes unconscious?
- 7) What does your partner's culture mean to you?
- 8) Have you ever visited your partner's country of origin/ancestry?

(If yes) How long did you stay? Tell me a bit about the trip.

(Regardless if they have visited the country or not)

Do you feel a connection to that country? (Emotional, social, religious)

(If yes) How did you establish this connection?

- Through any specific activities? Experiences? Interactions? Media?

9) In what ways has your identity changed as a result of your relationship?

### Demographic Questions

a) What is your gender?

b) What is your age?

c) What is your partner's age?

d) What is your marital status?

e) In which country were you born?

f) How long have you and your partner been in a relationship?

(How long have you lived with your partner? If applicable.)

g) In which country was your partner born?

(If partner was born in Canada) In which country or countries were your partner's parents born?

Do you have anything that you would like to add about your relationship from the perspective of your own culture or identity?

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