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EXAMINING THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF INTERNATIONALLY MARRIED COUPLES
AND DIVORCED INDIVIDUALS: ARE RELATIONSHIPS AUTONOMOUS ENTITIES?

by

KIMBERLY JOHNSON-DIOUF

Under the Direction of Jennifer Patino PhD

ABSTRACT

Research on international relationships is plentiful but research on the roles of social contacts in international relationships has not been forthcoming. Additionally, recent research on companionate marriages suggests that couples who have relationships that mimic companionate marriages have weak ties to their community. This research uses participant narratives to understand the social network of internationally married couples and divorced individuals in an effort to understand the roles that social contacts may play in international marriages. The research findings challenge pre-existing arguments about the companionate model of marriage and suggest that simplistic marriage models are inadequate frameworks used to understand complex marriages.

INDEX WORDS: International marriage, International divorce, Companionate marriage,
Romantic love, Social network, Religion

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

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by

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December 2014

DEDICATION

I give honor to God for giving me the opportunity to be an educated woman of color- an opportunity which did not fully present itself to my mother and grandmothers. I dedicate this work to my late father who passed away only months before I received my bachelor's degree. He was the most intelligent man (and the funniest man) I ever knew. He pushed me to be educated, saying that people can strip you of money, clothes, and material possessions but no one can take your education away. He would be very proud of his "little fat girl".

This work is also dedicated to my mother who always encouraged me to press on in the face of adversity. For days at a time you cooked, cleaned, and somehow managed all four of my children just so I could focus on my studies. Your hard work will never go unnoticed.

To my husband, Bassirou Diouf, I would like to say thank you. Thank you for being a loving husband and a hands-on father. You have worked very hard to support our family; your dedication to our family is undeniable. Thank you for allowing me to cry, complain, and get angry all because of my studies. Most importantly, thank you for holding my hand through it all.

To my sons, Mioka Mokontou and Mamadou Diouf, and to my daughters, Fatima Diouf and Farrah Diouf, in a world that refuses to acknowledge God, make Him known through your words and actions. I encourage you to be leaders of your generation and to take advantage of every viable opportunity. Do not let your ethnicity, gender, or environment stand in the way of your goals. Surpass your parents in your piety and your faith. Finally, I pass on to you what my father told me: remember that people can strip you of money, clothes and material possessions but no one can take away your education.

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1 Chapter 1-Introduction

“...They thought his dad was my husband...and his dad has long dreads (dreadlocks) down his back and I’m like, ‘Do you think I would marry some 50 year old man?’”

-Sarah (North American)

Sarah sat diagonal from me at her kitchen table watching for my reaction to what she felt was an insult. Sarah was telling me about the time her father-in-law had come down to Georgia from the Northeast a few years ago. He happened to be pushing one of his grandchildren in a stroller when he was mistaken by Sarah’s associate to be Sarah’s husband, Michael. At the time, Sarah was in her 30’s and her father-in-law was in his 50’s. We had shared many laughs during our interview and in that particular moment I laughed at how animated she was as she told the story. She slapped her hand against the wooden table and leaned forward for emphasis while suggesting that her husband simply could not be 15 to 20 years her senior, with dreadlocks nonetheless. I debated telling her that my own husband, Dean (Senegalese), was 16 years my senior, but I feared that she may become embarrassed and limited in what she told me.

What ultimately interested me about Sarah’s story and other stories like hers and Michael’s was how their nuclear family interacted with people outside of their core family unit and what kinds of exchanges took place. A great example of these exchanges in Sarah’s life was her father-in-law helping her with the children in her husband’s absence. Chapter 2 will show how many non-native partners tended to have heavy involvement with their spouse’s relatives and other social contacts. Similarly in my own international marriage, our social network contacts played expansive roles. For example, one year my mother helped us look after our four

children almost twice a month and sometimes we had a mutual friend who mediated when Dean and I had a major disagreement. These interactions run counter to Paul Amato's (2009) notion that marriages modeled after the companionate and individualistic models of marriage - those which are presumed to be normative in the United States and much of the world today - have nuclear families that operate relatively independent of social contacts. This research focuses on the relationships among internationally married couples (and divorcés from international marriages) and the people in their social networks.

1.1 Project Goals

This research speaks to two primary issues. First, it examines the nature of the link between internationally married couples and their social networks, as described by participants in the study. Additionally, *international* marriages are said to have more problems than *intranational* marriages and often end in divorce (Amato 2009:78-81). This research does not provide new information on the divorce rates of internationally married couples but rather seeks to understand the motives behind the divorces that do occur and the roles that social contacts played in the marriages before and after divorce.

Another goal is to conduct this research using a qualitative approach. Qualitative ethnographies of international marriages are limited. Ethnographies that address social networks of internationally married couples and divorcés and are assumed to be even more infrequent and possibly non-existent. Interviews were conducted to gather narratives concerning social contacts as told by the participants. Participant narratives were a critical aspect of the research process because some studies published concerning international marriages are conducted by sociologists and demographers whose analyses often rely on quantitative research, such as census surveys, done by other researchers (see Yandis 2005, Eeckhaut et al. 2011, Kantarevic 2004, Monahan

1970). While the quantitative research of sociologists and demographers make necessary contributions to social scientific knowledge, participant narratives are more useful in a qualitative study that aims to illuminate the cultural trends underlying marriage stories. Quantitative research cannot provide information about the meaning that people find in being married or divorced. Likewise, quantitative research cannot address the reasons that people in intercultural marriages may face adversity, how the adversity they face as individuals is unique, how they navigate the issues they face, or who helps them navigate their issues.

1.2 Pilot Ethnography

Pilot ethnography was conducted on the topic of international marriage to gain a general knowledge about marriage as a basis for further research. In particular, this pilot research allowed me to gain specific knowledge about the growing phenomenon of international marriage according to the people experiencing these marriages. Much of the literature suggested that international marriages are becoming very common but most often end in divorce (Amato 2009:84-85). My goal was to understand how these marriages might be different from same-nation marriages in terms of relationship dynamics and most importantly what would make these marriages more prone to divorce than same-nation marriages. I asked questions about decision-making, communication, hybrid cultural practices (blending cultures), financial planning, reactions to disapproval, and support during marital hardships.

What I found was that the decision-making about issues such as child-rearing was shared among the couples but in most cases the final decision was left to the husband. There were communication challenges between the spouses which most couples attributed to the language barrier between them. Spouses typically blended traditions from each of their background to form new traditions of their own. Finances were either budgeted together or delegated by area of

expertise. Most couples had not experienced direct disapproval of their international relationship by others in their social networks. Finally, when hard times arose, most couples turned to family members or close friends for support and/or advice.

It did not occur to me until the pilot research was completed that in each conversation with the pilot research participants, people constantly made references to people outside of their marriage. For example, some of the couples started dating because a friend urged them to or introduced them with the intent of them becoming a couple. In some cases, there were people that the couples could talk to if they were having troubles or disagreements in the marriage. Chapter 2 will show that support and/or advice from outside of the marriages complicates the isolated and independent vision of the modern companionate marriage that many contemporary social scientists assume to be normative in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. There was also mention of key people that had to approve of the relationship before a partner decided to marry their spouse. Thus, the connections that these marriages had to broader social networks became the basis of my thesis research.

There were several limitations in the pilot ethnography. The most important of these limitations was the sample size of the participants in the pilot ethnography. The pilot sample consisted of five couples (ten people). Though the consensus is that you can technically do a qualitative study with a sample size of one, when conducting ethnography to see what could be affecting a trend, the more participants included increases the possibility that similar patterns will emerge in the result. Another limitation of the pilot study was that four of the five couples were recruited through contacts at my church. As a result, the people that contacted me who were willing to be interviewed tended to be more religiously inclined than the one couple that was recruited through a contact at Georgia State University. This skewed my study in ways that I did

not foresee. For example, on more than one occasion, reasoning for life events or occurrences were summed up to fate handed down by God. God and fate were not topics that I wanted to focus on initially, but Chapter 3 will show how people can be influenced by their lifestyles and their sense of self among other things. Finally, time was also a factor of limitation in the pilot study. The research was conducted from start to finish in less than two months. This time frame did not allow for more participants, nor was I able to add more depth to the ethnographic data by conducting additional subsequent interviews with the same participants.

Despite the limitations, my pilot ethnography enlightened me that social network contacts are important to international marriages, but it left some critical questions unanswered. What cultural trends are at work? *How* are social contacts important? And to what extent do social contacts shape the decision making process of individual in international marriages, if at all? I also felt that it would be important to know what role social contacts play in marriages that are now dissolved. I set out to answer those questions in this ethnography.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Recruitment

For the purposes of this research, 21 total participants were recruited, which included married couples and divorced individuals. I had initially anticipated that approximately 25 participants – 7 married couples and 11 divorced individuals – would participate in this research. However the final number of participants was 21, which included 8 married couples and 5 divorcés. Recruitment was done primarily through word of mouth. I used every opportunity possible to tell people about my research at my university, church, and in my circle of contacts. I hoped that whomever I was speaking to would be interested or would know someone who may have been interested. I had originally intended to post flyers in various places advertising my

research; instead I used the flyers by giving them to participants so they could pass it on at will to others who may have fit the participation requirements. I changed tactics because my IRB approval had already taken enough of my research time. When I finally received the approval for this research, time was running out and I thought the flyers were more useful if I handed them to people myself instead of taping them to a wall.

The table below contains demographic information. In the table, continent of birth is used instead of country of birth for the foreign born participants. This was done to protect the confidential identity of the participants because some of the participants attend the same local church. Additionally, continent of birth was used throughout the table for all participants for the purposes of uniformity. However, when their narratives are told in later chapters, I use USA to identify the participants born and raised in the USA. Due to the nature of this research as one that is conducted in Atlanta, G.A., U.S.A about international marriages, it is to be expected that some of the participants would be born and raised in the United States. The class statuses represented in the table are the participants' self-identified class status. Some participants chose not to reveal their class statuses, which are indicated by the abbreviation for not applicable "N/A."

Table 1 Participant Demographic Information

	Age	Continent of Birth	Years Married	Duration of previous international marriage	Class Status
<i>Paula</i>	9	South America	10 years	N/A	N/A
<i>Phil</i>	3	North America	10 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Carlos</i>	0	Caribbean	1 year	3 years	Middle
<i>Sasha</i>	4	South America	4 months	Unknown	Middle
<i>Amy</i>	2	North America	35 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Fritz</i>	9	Europe	35 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Tony</i>	4	Europe	9 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Rachael</i>	2	North America	9 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Sarah</i>	7	North America	9 years	N/A	Middle

<i>Michael</i>	0	North America	10 years	N/A	N/A
<i>Joy</i>	9	Southeast Asia	8 years	N/A	N/A
<i>Travis</i>	2	North America	8 years	N/A	Middle
<i>David</i>	6	North America	25 years	N/A	Middle
<i>Joanna</i>	7	Europe	26 years	3 years	Lower-Middle
<i>Samuel</i>	7	North America	N/A	20 years	Middle
<i>Sheila</i>	8	North America	N/A	12 years	N/A
<i>Marla</i>	6	North America	11 years	N/A	N/A
<i>Reid</i>	0	South America	11 years	N/A	N/A

I contacted two participants from my pilot research in an attempt to recruit them to participate in this research study. I did not contact the other participants from my pilot research because I wanted the participants in this project to represent diversity specifically in Atlanta, Georgia. Two of the other couples were not residents of Georgia at the time of the pilot research

and one additional couple moved out of the state between the end of the pilot research and the start of this current study. Of the two participants that I did attempt to contact, one couple was unresponsive to my phone call and voice message. Consequently, that couple was not pursued further. The other couple was asked in person if they were interested in taking part in this research and they were happy to participate a second time. I made it abundantly clear to all participants that neither involvement in this research nor the forwarding of my personal contact information was mandatory.

1.3.2 Data Collection

The recruits that consented to participate in this thesis research project were interviewed a minimum of one time. There were two follow-up interviews conducted and several casual conversations about marriage in general before and after some of the original interviews. Information from interviews and casual conversations were what allowed me to understand marital, post-marital and extramarital social dynamics. Information gathered from informal interviews generally supported the narrative already detailed in the formal interview. Internationally married couples were interviewed separately and confidentially for the initial interviews. Participants that were divorcés of international marriages were interviewed individually without the presence of the estranged spouse.

Interviews allow anthropologists to ask in-depth questions and allow an interviewer to ask unplanned follow-up questions. Additionally, anthropologists are often able to let the participant guide the conversation by using semi-structured interview questions rather than structured questions. Doing so allows the researcher to ask the questions they think are important but also allow the participant to discuss the issues they think are an important contribution to the subject matter. The conversations I had with the research participants were prompted by a short

series of in-depth questions, but what the participants actually shared was completely under their control. The longest interview was 1 hour and 45 minutes while the shortest was 25 minutes. On average, each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Due to the nature of the study as one that aims to focus specifically about social contacts, which includes the touchy subjects of parents and in-laws, it is always possible that some information could be withheld during interviews to spare feelings. I felt the risk of this would have increased if I were only interviewing the couples together. It was to be expected that when interviewing couples together, I would be given the general impression that everything was excellent in their marriage and that they adored everyone their spouse introduced to them. Therefore, I decided that discussions with individual partners may be more revealing of their true feelings about social contacts during interviews. I also recognized that individuals would likely feel more comfortable sharing information with the knowledge that they have complete confidentiality, even from their spouse. Thus, all initial interviews were conducted separately for couples.

I also had the opportunity to conduct multiple but brief observations and participant observations of interactions between the married couples and between one or both partners with contacts in their close social network. Observation and participant observation were used to gather background and/or contextual information. Participant observation entails the same process as observation but the researcher may take a more hands-on approach instead of just observing. I observed many interactions in the field between the couples and I generally just watched and took note of things. However, there were other times that I became a participant observer. For example, when Sarah's mother was visiting to help out with her baby, I pitched in

a hand to change the baby for Sarah's mother and I helped to organize the diaper bag and other baby items by making them easier to carry.

As a supplement to interviewing and observation I wrote field notes during interactions and interviews with participants. Field notes allowed me to pay special attention to minute details such as body language, excitement, and hesitations during the interview. Field notes were also useful to document the setting of the interview. For example, when an interview was taking place in a participant's home I was likely to see pictures on the walls that may clue me into who was important in the his/her life.

Finally, there were two things that I intentionally avoided doing in this research study. First, I did not compare the relationships of *intranationally* married couples and *internationally* married couples. No comparison was made because there is not a group with which international marriage or any relationship discussed in this research can adequately be compared. Each relationship, international relationships included, are unique in their complexities. When comparisons are made with relationships that are dissimilar, the comparisons can cast the relationships as polar opposites. It is important to say that all marriages have their different issues and that such comparisons would have complicated this study rather than advanced it. I acknowledge that some challenges may be shared by international and intranational couples; however, the intent of the research is not to compare the two types of marriages.

Second, I was very intentional in not asking about topics of immigration such as citizenship statuses, visa statuses, and/or anything else related to immigration during interviews. The purpose in not discussing immigration was simple: this research was/is not directly related to issues of immigration and I wanted everyone who participated to be comfortable talking to me without political tensions to complicate the interviewing process. That is not to say that issues of

immigration were not mentioned by the participants because some participants indeed had a lot to say about immigration politics. I did not ask about statuses nor did I dwell on the subject. However, it later became important to use a narrative from someone with non-legal status to show how parts of the self are constructed in relation to companionate marriage and society. The use of the narrative concealed as much identifying information about the participant as possible.

1.4 Literature Review

This research asks: What are the functions of social contacts in the marriages of internationally married couples? What were the functions of social contacts in international marriages that are now dissolved? What other factors may have influenced international marriages that are currently dissolved? Finally, what factors may influence the course of current international marriages? To frame the significance of these questions, background information is necessary about the general trends of marriages, divorces, and international relationships.

Early works from some social scientists suggested that the process of spousal selection took place according to the characteristics and qualities of a potential mate (Buss and Barnes 1986) and that we frequently choose someone very similar to us for various reasons (Bizman 1987, Buss 1985). Buss (1985) made a logical geographical reference that people who share the same local space (e.g. neighborhood, grocery stores and other areas of the city) select marital partners from that same locality. Cottrell (1973) posited that intercultural marriages were usually a direct result of a lifestyle that allowed for international travel. According to Cottrell, international travel leads to an appreciation of people of unfamiliar national cultures.

The concept of globalization remains important and its applications are a key theoretical principle in this research. However, technology has changed the way we communicate since Cottrell and Buss made their observations. Whereas anthropologists once conceptualized

“cultures” as entities distinct from one another experientially and in geographical space, it is impossible to sustain this vision in an era when ideologies and concepts such as Feng Shui or The American Dream are communicated between people through the use of technology, namely media technologies and travel technologies. The movement of ideas and material culture inform our everyday lives and may even inspire someone to relocate across the globe (see Appadurai 1996). To put this in conversation with Cottrell and Buss, we no longer have to travel to experience different national cultures. And while experiencing a culture and appreciating a culture are two completely different things, I am of the opinion that as people of different nationalities cohabitate in the same geographical area, the continual experiencing of different cultures may lead to an appreciation of said national cultures. Regardless, as a byproduct of the movement of people and cultures, international marriages have become prevalent (Chen et al 2013, Zahedi 2010, Silva et al 2012).

Social scientists have talked about marriages in a number of ways but most recently studies of marriages have focused on three types of marriages: traditional, companionate, and individualistic marriages. Traditional, companionate, and individualistic models of marriage can be described as a sliding scale of involvement in relation to social contacts. In the traditional marriage, which includes (formally and non-formally) arranged marriages, kinship reinforces the bond of the spouses and social contacts are heavily embedded in the marital union (Amato 2009:77). The focus of this ethnography is companionate marriage. Companionate marriages are characterized as love-based unions in which, as its name suggests, the primary purpose is companionship, friendship, and teamwork with love at its core (Giddens 1992: 43,155, Amato 2009:78-79). In companionate marriages, couples work together to benefit the family as a whole (Amato 2009:78). In individualistic marriages, couples love each other but the relationship must

benefit each spouse individually for the marriage to continue. Couples in individualistic marriage disconnect from social networks and value the privacy of their marriages (Amato 2009:79).

While Amato presents these models as separate entities, he also recognizes that modern marriages and the marriages of the past may be composites of all three types of marriage models (2009:80). Companionate marriage has been discussed in many ways by scholars but the intersections that are most important to this study are companionate marriage and romantic love, companionate marriage and divorce, companionate marriage and religion (particularly Christianity), and finally, companionate marriage and the social network.

Scholars have discussed companionate marriage and romantic love as separate and intersecting. Giddens (1992) suggests that romantic love entails an unspoken, subconscious meeting of two "broken" souls (Giddens 1992:45). When two souls meet and the romantic relationship forms the "flawed individual is made whole" (Giddens 1992:45). This is a direct comment about self-identity whereby one partner discovers a part of themselves was "missing" only after "finding" themselves in someone else. Giddens also suggests that the modern self is reflexive, taking its cues of who it is and what it is from resources such as media and therapy sessions (Giddens 1992:30). A romantic relationship is understood as an additional means through which an individual defines his or her identity and constructs a life narrative.

Jennifer S. Hirsch and Holly Wardlow, the editors of *Modern Loves: The Anthropology of Romantic Courtship and Companionate Marriage*, argue that intimacy and pleasure are becoming a vital and expected component of the modern companionate relationship and the modern self (2006:2). This expectation of intimacy is a force of the modern West whereby people, cultures, and countries are pushed into the categories of traditional or modern (2006:14). Hirsch and Wardlow also argue that the expectation of intimacy and pleasure are driven in large

part by different forms of media, which (continually) commodify the concept of love and makes the acts of love increasingly social (2006: 8-14).

Chan (2006) has emphasized the social and economic aspect of companionate marriage through the illustration of jewelry gifts in China in the 1960s-1970s. Chan argues that love is “codified” by means of men giving gifts to women (Chan 2006:47). Additionally, in the act of giving bigger, better, more expensive gifts, love is nurtured through consumption (Chan 2006:47). Chan argues that jewelry consumption is a reflection of a man’s wealth while women as the receivers of the jewelry are obligated to wear it at social functions (2006:48). At social functions jewelry serves a dual purpose: it signals how loved she is and it displays her husband wealth through which she and the gifts of jewelry are objectified (Chan 2006:48).

This research only examines two of several marriage models; however, all marriage models are theoretical. The shift from a traditional model to a companionate model of marriage in particular has theoretical implications that the nuclear family functions separately from the people outside of the nuclear family. In addition, the shift implies that gendered performances are toward equality. The undertone of such is that people in marriages operating similar to the companionate model are progressive and forward-thinking. This research in particular is in direct contrast to some theories about these models. Not only does this research indicate that the nuclear family does not always function independently from outsiders but also that whether one is considered progressive and forward-thinking is measured by their own cultural and individual standards. Traditional models of marriages did include heavier kin involvement but companionate marriage does not prevent or inhibit kin involvement. My research serves as a corrective to the models of marriage because simplistic guides can be misleading.

Wardlow (2006), in particular, has discussed the influence of Christianity on the companionate marriage. Christianity for women in Papua New Guinea meant a chance to perform love the modern way, using verses from the bible to elevate their positions in the family (63). In Rebhun's (2006: 111) research in Brazil, Christian Bible verses were referred to as the epitome of what love is. Rebhun also notes that the older generation usually married a cousin that they didn't know very well but their family was acquainted with while the younger generation married someone they became close with outside of the family and chose to marry for themselves (113). Because of the change in what relationships are permissible, the young and the old insist that the opposite generation married strangers (113). Constable (2003: 122, 129) notes that for some Western (American, European, and Australian) men seeking an Asian (Filipino or Chinese) wife, the initial attraction to the women was because they were traditional in the Christian sense. To the men this meant that the women were less modern, opposed to divorce, and were likely virgins or not promiscuous (122, 125).

Family is undoubtedly important in most people's lives and it is reasonable to assume that family members have an involvement, or stake, in intercultural marriages. In the modern companionate marriage individualism and separation from kin is assumed, but it continues to be theoretical - that is, an ideal model that is not necessarily played out on the ground- as this research will show. Social scientists have found that the family unit creates a culture that may endorse unified family values (Huijnk et al. 2008; Kalmijn 1998). This may ultimately be a factor in spousal selection, but families are not always advocating for intermarriage. Some scholars found that families may be more relaxed and accepting of whomever a relative chooses as a spouse. This may occur for various reasons one of which may be because the family trusts the judgment of other family members (Huijnk et al. 2010). Friendships, like family, are essential

to marriages and friends often act as confidants (Julien et al. 1994). Some authors base their argument on the functions of friends and family that together influence international marriages (Felmlee 2001; Julien et al. 1994). Reiter et al. distinguishes “close friends and first degree relatives” (2009: 2) implying that the degree of closeness signifies level of influence the person could have on a marriage. This implication requires further qualitative research, which is a method that is frequently overlooked by scientists outside of anthropology. Furthermore, authors such as Felmlee (2001) have touched on the fact that contacts can provide support in various ways including provision of material aid and in giving advice, but this topic has not been discussed by social scientists in depth as it relates to international marriage. It is important to further investigate and understand the functions of family members, friends and other social contacts in ways that extend beyond neutral or antagonistic positions.

While some have tried to determine the relationship quality of international marriage (Tadinac et al. 2012, Holmann-Marriott and Amato 2008), other authors have tried to explain the complex manifestations of international marriages (Remennick 2009, Inman et al. 2011). Literature on international marriages by social psychologists has clinical implications whereby they determine the likelihood that international couples will require marital counseling and the likelihood that internationally married couples will divorce (Heller and Wood 2000, Shi and Scharff 2008, Inman et al 2011). Much of the literature by sociologists have implications for the family unit as a whole, implications for the children of the union, or implications for fertility (Amato 2004, Amato 2009, Remennick 2009, Lichter and Brown 2009, Fu 2008). Many authors have used international marriage as a platform to discuss indicators of assimilation and acculturation/integration (e.g., Tadinac et al. 2012, Silva et al. 2012, Sandel and Liang 2010, Chen et al. 2013).

More useful to this study is the research whereby social scientists have linked social network contacts with marital satisfaction. Julien et al. (1994) use the support model and the interference model to examine the roles that confidants play in marriages. They suggest that a confidant's roles in others' marriages may be connected to their own relationship status. For example, if the contact is unhappily married, he or she may adversely affect the marriage/s of friends. Additionally, Lee et al. (2012) posit that as parents age and their adult children begin to provide them with support, the spouse that is providing the most support to their parent/s can begin to feel marital dissatisfaction. Lee et al. reject contingency theory which claims that needs motivate intergenerational interactions. Instead, they found that intergenerational interactions are simply a part of life. Other social scientists that have connected social contacts with international marriages include Tadinac et al 2012, Taylor et al. 2012, Reiter et al. 2009, and Julien et al. 2000, among others; however, most of these studies are quantitative rather than qualitative. This research will expand on the roles that parents and other social contacts play in international marriages.

International marriage has not been specifically addressed in detail by many anthropologists. Two notable exceptions are Nicole Constable (2010) and Dan Rodriguez Garcia (2006). Nicole Constable has examined international marriage through the phenomenon of the "mail-order bride." In a recent book she examines what it means to be an Asian woman (focusing specifically on Chinese and Filipina women) married to a Western man (focusing specifically on American, European, and Australian men) in the "mail-order" context. The societal aspects of these marriages include the approvals and objections of family and friends but also of society in general through the media. One of the main contributions of Constable's book to the literature on international marriages is that there are a multitude of sources that come into

play in international marriages. Constable examined the role of politics by conveying the struggles of some participants in obtaining visas and defending their marriages against the protective “big brother” U.S. government. Constable also shed light on economics, love and most importantly social networks. Social networks in Constable’s research included family and friends of participants but also people who became friends via social media and support groups geared toward those who were spouses and future spouses of someone living abroad.

Constable’s research is important to my research for two major reasons. Getting married in the United States and abroad is sometimes as easy as filling out paperwork and showing documentation of who you are. However, Constable informs readers of some of the obstacles before obtaining visas that some couples have to endure before they can actually live together as a married couple. Scholars agree that internationally married couples are likely to experience relationship difficulties due to persons outside of the relationship (e.g. Silva et al. 2012). Essentially Constable showed that couples may experience negativity from family and friends and resistance at the government level even before experiencing opposition from social contacts. Constable’s research is also important because it presents the participants as people who turn to others outside of their family and friends who understand their marital situation. These newfound friends are then included in their social networks and, considering that some of the people participating have already been through the visa process, the newfound friends’ opinions may be highly influential in a couple’s decisions.

In Constable’s research much of the data was gathered from the internet via chat room and email. While she conducted some in-person interviews, the virtual approach was useful to her research because she was able to access a large population of people with similar interests. While conducting a semi-virtual ethnography was useful for Constable, I chose to do all in-

person interviews because it is rarely possible to gather the contextual data that could be observed in a face to face interview such as hesitations, excitement, and frowns. Furthermore, I wanted to see and hear unfiltered reactions to the questions I asked in interviews whereas the internet allows for a time lapse wherein participants are able to plan their answers to questions and can potentially carefully construct their answers before they respond instead of responding candidly.

Garcia (2006) has done anthropological research on intercultural marriages in Catalonia, Spain between Spanish and West African couples. His research examines how political processes may hinder intercultural unions from forming and how accommodation presents itself in the marriages that have formed. One major contribution Garcia makes to discussions of international marriage is that clashes, Garcia maintains, are not usually clashes between cultures but rather are conflicts due to economic factors and/or personal factors such as practicing different religions in the household. While I did not find evidence of religious clashes and only found one example of economic conflict, Garcia's essential argument that people clash, not cultures, led me to investigate the ways in which national culture, economics, and personal choice are interconnected in some cases. It is reasonable to consider that some personal choice may be a *reflection* of one's national culture. Another consideration is that one's national culture could lead others to ascribe an assumed social position which in turn could affect his/her financial condition. Many of the participants in this study were unemployed. Some female participants defined themselves as homemakers or housewives while the one man did not define himself in proximity to his home, though that is where he spent a lot of his time. Chapter 3 of this study will briefly discuss the economic dynamics of the intercultural relationships in this ethnography and how financial matters are related to the sense of self.

When I combined the theories of the literature, I expected to find that social network contacts would have an influence in the lives of participants which could ultimately affect the marriages of the couples. However, as Constable demonstrated through her research, kin relationships were not always the most important relationship to an individual as sometimes fictive kin was formed to substitute for kin that was located far in distance. According to Hirsch and Giddens, I could expect intimacy and love to be a critical part of the marriages, but Garcia also inspired me to think critically about the interconnectedness of multiple challenges that could present themselves in the marriages.

2 Chapter 2- Introducing International Marriage and Divorce: Love and Agency

This chapter will explore notions of romantic love and companionate marriage in order to examine how people form – or dissolve – marital relationships. This chapter will show how international relationships come together, how they fall apart, and how these developments reflect the agency and decision-making of individual partners. Though it is a cliché, love at first sight holds true for some participants in this study, but for others it took months and even years for love to develop. Contrarily, divorced individuals felt differently about the romantic love they experienced in their previous international marital unions after the marriage was over. For each participant, agency was used to make choices that benefitted them, however, for some participants, agency was utilized against the wishes of others.

2.1 Marriage

The most basic definition of romantic love is a relationship based on mutual affection and attraction. Romantic love is most closely associated with the companionate and individualistic models of marriage (Amato 2009). The difference between these two models of marriage is that companionate marriages are characterized as love unions between the spouses. The companionate marriage union emphasizes the success of the family unit (ibid.). Individualistic models of marriage are also characterized as love unions and suggests a focus and a drive which benefits an individual more than their spouse and the family unit (ibid.). In this research, I have opted for the use of the term companionate marriage over individualistic marriage simply because all but one of the participants in this research were adults with a child or children. While I cannot say they thought of their marriage primarily as the base of a family unit, I perceived the actions and decisions of the participants in this study to be foundational to the family as a unit rather than just themselves. In other words, many decisions were made as parents or as a parent

instead of as an individual person. If I had interviewed couples or divorced individuals without children, I would have examined their decisions with equivalent scrutiny to understand if decisions were made to benefit themselves or their family.

Romantic love and companionate marriage are undoubtedly separable, though in Western culture the rhetoric seems to put forward that these two separate ideas are one grand idea and that the meaning of each is the same. The best way to differentiate between romantic love and companionate marriage is to understand that romantic love does not particularly suggest a marital relationship, though it can include a marital union. Romantic love is also based on affection and sexual attraction (Giddens 1992:62). While affection could suggest a continuity of affection throughout the relationship, it more often than not means affection during some parts of the relationship or affection until a certain event happens which had an adverse effect on the couple. Companionate marriage as described above puts forward that the *reason* couples married was because they loved each other and they intended to work together as a team to successfully advance the family unit.

The intersection of these principles manifested themselves in very different ways in marriages and divorces. For married couples, people expressed the intersection of romantic love and companionate marriage in present tense and described them as ongoing and long-lasting. Romantic love and companionate marriage were expressed through phrases such as having found “the one”, “my soul mate”, “my best friend and love of my life”, or by statements such as “my husband is my best friend.” This was especially true for people who had only been married one time and were still married. What tends to be missing from the romantic “soul mate” narrative is that sometimes love has to grow on you.

Paula and Phil were married for around 12 years at the time of our interview. They met while Phil was in South America for a job. They were introduced by friends who set them up on a blind dinner date. Phil knew from the first time he met his wife that they would be married. Paula, contrarily, thought that after their first blind date she would never see Phil anymore. Then, they began communicating via phone and email. This communication continued even after Phil had come back home to the United States. While Phil was stateside, Paula's friend that introduced them began saying "This man will be the father of your children." Paula was baffled about why she would say such a thing but Paula also admits that her friend "started a little spark" inside of her. She began seriously considering the possibility of actually marrying Phil and having children with him. He eventually went to South America again and as the saying goes "the rest is history." By the time Phil asked for Paula's hand in marriage they were both in love.

Amy and Fritz met in Europe when Amy went there for college. She went back and forth from Europe to the U.S. for 7 years before they actually began a true relationship. During those 7 years they began hanging with the same crowd and as Amy described it, they "fell in love gradually over the course of 7 years." According to Fritz, he loved her long before they got married. They wrote letters which would take one week to arrive from Europe or the U.S while Amy was away from him. Then he visited her in the U.S for three weeks which he described as a turning point in their relationship. He recalled arriving from Europe with friends and being picked up from the bus station by Amy. When he arrived at her home he met her late father, with whom he became great friends. The meeting of her father seemed to seal the deal for Fritz because he and Amy's father got along extremely well. Despite the variations in how they fell in love, Amy and Fritz had been together for 35 years at the time of our interview.

In these partial stories of how Phil and Paula and Amy and Fritz fell in love and got married, there are two things that are noteworthy. First, in both stories there was one spouse, the husband, who said he loved his mate instantly and there was the wife who said it took a little longer for her. This clarifies romantic love as a love that can involve instant attraction and affect but also that sometimes one cannot be certain if their spouse is “the one” until the relationship stands the test of time. When these couples were sure that they loved each other they entered into a companionate marriage because of the love they had for each other.

Second, people outside of their friendship paved the way for a serious relationship. It is evident in the story of Paula and Phil, but seemingly unclear in the story of Amy and Fritz. For clarity, you would have to know that Fritz’s parents faced a war in Europe that left them “putting back they pieces for the rest of their lives.” They were in a sense emotionally unavailable for their children who were born close to the war period. The friend and father (if you will) that Fritz found in Amy’s father meant very much to him. It was a relationship that encouraged his love for Amy and also a relationship that he would not have wanted to lose if he had not married Amy.

2.2 Divorce

People who had been divorced had a very different outlook on love and marriage. Many of the divorcés described their previous international marriages as a union in which by entering into it, they had made a mistake or had been tricked. Sheila (U.S.A), divorced from a West African man, and Samuel (U.S.A), divorced from a Caribbean woman, both described a time in their previous marriages when they were in denial. Carlos (Caribbean) described his previous marriage to a European woman as very troubled with an abrupt ending. Sasha (South American) was reluctant to marry her first husband (U.S.A) from the start. Joanna (European) described her divorce to an American man as a big mistake on her part, not his.

Carlos and his ex-wife lived in Europe during the time of their marriage. He described his marriage as “good but it was not the right foundation for a marriage.” Their relationship consisted of traveling and partying all the time. They had no children and no real responsibilities so their lives were essentially about fun. Carlos attributed their lack of responsibility and party lifestyle to both of them being young and in their twenties. His ex-wife exhibited unpleasant behaviors early on in their marriage that he was willing to work through such as jealousy, immaturity, and other things. The breaking point of their marriage came when his ex-wife cheated on him. They tried to work on the relationship a few times after they broke up, but Carlos said, “At that point, it was me. I couldn’t trust her.” He filed for divorce quickly without even telling his friends and family.

Joanna’s case is a little different from some of the other divorce stories in the sense that she was the cheater and she left her husband in Europe and moved to the U.S. Joanna described the beginning of their relationship as rocky. They “were addicted to each other” according to Joanna, which kept them from dissolving the relationship early on. Her ex-husband used heroin and other drugs and she was essentially left to clean up his messes and trash drug paraphernalia such as needles. Her ex-husband was not only using drugs but making them as well, drawing upon his scientific educational background. Joanna experienced heavy criticism from his mother who bought Joanna revealing lingerie and insisted that Joanna was not having enough sex with her husband. Eventually Joanna began to see other people while still married to her ex. As time went on, her husband finally “got himself together”, but by that time Joanna was ready for a change of scenery. She moved to the U.S. for better economic opportunities thinking that her then husband would follow her; meanwhile he maintained that she would not last two weeks in the U.S. because she did not speak any English. She flourished in the United States and began

working in a restaurant. It was in that restaurant where she met her current husband, David, who was working there as well. They began a relationship but neither her ex-husband nor Joanna ever filed for divorce. When Joanna and David wanted to get married, it was David who filed the divorce paperwork, not Joanna.

Carlos and Joanna's stories are very different; however, both stories allude to the fact that people outside of the marriage can also contribute to divorce. Whether a marriage dissolved because of their direct actions or not, each participant in this research had choices to make during the course of their marriage that determined its course. The next section will explore the concept of agency in greater detail.

2.3 Agency

The goal of this section is to explore how agency was employed by many of the participants in this research to make ordinary decisions and to make life-changing decisions. In this chapter agency is defined as using one's own freedom of choice to make determinations about one's life. Agency includes the ability to frame your own experience (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008:12) and the choice to engage in creative, innovative, and potentially risky behaviors to achieve intended goals (Williams 2010:48). A key theme in this section is that many participants made choices that opposed their social contacts' desires for them. For some participants in this study, mostly divorcés, some choices occasionally prove to be risks not worth taking and choices were often made in light of other options that may have benefited them in some manner. For other participants, usually married people, agentive decisions did not carry critical consequences but sometimes went against what the people in a spouse's social network wanted. The act of making the correct choices was undoubtedly a social act though it did not always involve people outside of their marital relationships.

The role of agency is most clearly exemplified in most of the narratives of divorcés whose international marriages had ended. Five divorcees were interviewed for this research, each of whom say that it was their initiative that brought the marriage to an end. Four of the five participants whose international marriages ended in divorce involved infidelity either by the participant or the spouse. Two of those participants said that the marriage ended specifically because of the issue of infidelity, two ended their marriages due to abuse, and one relocated to the U.S. leaving her husband in another country alone.

The initial display of agency in all of these divorces was the choice of when to stay in a marriage and work through problems and when to take action to dissolve the marriage. This may not be as evident as the other displays that followed but it is an important choice nonetheless. Contrary to theories which suggest that most romantic marriages (those comparable to the companionate and individualistic models of marriage) end when one spouse becomes unhappy (Amato 2009: 79), it is important to note that the decision to leave for all divorcees occurred because of chronic problems with their marriages. It was not the case that the first thing that made them unhappy made them leave their spouse (see also Sailor 2013).

Before the divorces occurred, one of two things usually happened: either small issues that the couple had been trying to work through continued to build up until one or both of the spouses realized that the relationship would not improve OR the couple was dealing with the small marital issues and something major occurred that made one spouse decide to dissolve the marriage. The major events which ultimately led one spouse to seek a divorce are what I call deal-breakers. The deal-breaker defines an imaginary line that was crossed and led a spouse to seek refuge from the relationship through means of a divorce.

Samuel (USA)

Samuel was married to his Caribbean ex-wife for over a decade. He described their marriage as troubled even from the beginning. Their families did not get along with each other and he frequently dealt with racism from some of her family members. In the home, his ex-wife was verbally abusive and threw fits of rage often. What bothered him the most was the persona she would display in front of other people as if they were the perfect couple and family while behind closed doors she was a completely different person. Samuel put up with all of these things until his ex-wife was unfaithful to him. Her infidelity was the deal-breaker that not only led him to divorce her but also meant that he had to face all the people who believed her public persona of the perfect wife.

Sasha (South American)

Sasha hesitantly married her ex-husband a few years ago. Her ex-husband was an emotional and angry alcoholic who stayed outside the home for long hours on most nights. Sasha frequently endured his temper tantrums which included breaking things and hitting walls. Sasha frequently locked herself in her room to avoid him. She often suspected that her ex-husband was not alone when he stayed out into the early hours of the morning and she sometimes saw provocative text messages that corroborated her suspicions. The deal-breaker for their marriage occurred when Sasha, a new mother at the time, was pushed by her ex-husband while holding her infant child. Sasha describes their divorce as the best thing she ever did.

In the marriages and divorces of Samuel and Sasha there were social ramifications which came with the territory of both their marital statuses. Samuel became unhappily married over the years. Some of his friends and family rejoiced when he divorced his ex-wife and they became close once again. However, Samuel actually found himself distanced from others who believed that his ex-wife was the perfect woman. Samuel simultaneously found himself in the role of

single parent to children who were already currently in counseling. Samuel's story is a great example of the entwined nature of social contacts and marital relationships. His divorce was not simply the end of his marriage with his ex-wife. The divorce meant that relationships between Samuel and his family and some friends could be pieced back together. The divorce also meant that other friends would begin to distance themselves from him and take sides with his ex-wife. Finally, the divorce forced Samuel to form a new identity as a single father to newly distressed children.

Sasha's story plays out very differently. All of Sasha's family is in her home country in South America. When she met her ex-husband, close friends encouraged her to get married and stay married because her ex-husband was older than her and more financially stable, even though experiencing violence in her marriage was not an ideal situation. In addition to having more financial stability, being married to an American meant that Sasha could also begin the citizenship process and stay in the U.S. permanently. However, before Sasha could make progress toward citizenship the marriage deteriorated very rapidly. The members of Sasha's church, from whom she sought advice concerning her tumultuous marriage, discouraged Sasha from divorcing her husband. Yet, on the day she was pushed by her ex-husband, Sasha decided to cut her losses and flee from her volatile spouse. Socially, Sasha may have disappointed some friends and church members, but she decided that the safety of her baby and her personal well-being mattered more than her marriage and what people outside the marriage thought. Sasha's use of agency, freedom of choice, is also very clear in her narrative. She made choices independent of her social contacts which were aimed toward the safety of herself and her baby rather than choices that would benefit her financially and which would lead to her citizenship.

Agency presents itself fairly differently in the lives of internationally married couples. The cost of agentive decisions which conflicted with the preferences of their social contacts for married couples did not carry the same consequences as the divorcees from international marriages. Two examples of agency are used here: one case involves just the husband and wife and the other case involves a wife conflicting with the will of a social contact.

Joy and Travis (USA & Southeast Asia)

Joy's relationship with Travis began as a roller coaster. They met as teenagers and began communicating via international phone calls. They had good days and plenty of bad days to go along with the good. They would frequently make each other angry and break up with each other only to get back together later. When Joy and Travis came together years later, the arguments were fewer but they, like most couples, still had their ups and downs. Joy used to talk to her mother when she and Travis were upset with each other, but many times she would be more upset after talking to her mother who insisted that Joy leave the U.S. and return home. Rather than return home because her relationship was not perfect in the moment, Joy chose to stay with her husband and get through the tough times. Consequently, Joy also chose not to share as much information about the ups and downs of her marriage with her mother anymore. They still talk regularly but their conversations focus on topics other than Joy's marriage.

Marla and Reid (USA & South America)

For Marla and Reid, buying the home they currently live in was previously a great source of tension in their married life. Marla and Reid rented a wonderful townhouse (one that Marla absolutely adored) with their two small children. Then, one day Reid announced that they were going to buy a house. Marla, caught off guard, protested because it was a big task to undertake financially and without consulting her first about when to buy a house. Marla saw buying a home

as a process, while Reid saw buying a home as something you just did. However, Reid was persistent and they soon bought a house and moved into it. While Marla was not pleased at first about the suddenness of the decision to buy a home, she recognized the benefits of having a permanent home as opposed to renting. Reid employed his individual agency in deciding to buy a house and uprooting his family from their townhouse to transition into a permanent home. In both cases one spouse made a decision about their own lives that also affected their partner.

Married couples and divorced individuals used their agency to make decisions about their lives. Some participants made choices that did not coincide with the advice and/or pressures from the people in their social networks, which may include their spouse. Married and divorced individuals navigated through problems by choosing the outlet that benefitted them the most. When international marriages end in divorce, it occurred due to a gradual decline in the relationship or a deal-breaker such as infidelity or abuse. The next section will examine how social contacts are involved in the daily decisions.

3 Chapter 3 – The Social Network

The intent of this chapter is to show in greater detail how relationships outside of marriages may affect the family. The marital union is usually developed as a means of starting a partnership whereby each partner is (contractually) obligated to each other, but the partnership is sometimes in competition with extended family members. When children were born into the nuclear family, relationships between spouses and their parents and/or spouses and their in-laws were sometimes strained for the well-being and preservation of the nuclear family. Yet, while the participants pushed their parents away to focus on their own families, the participants also became very close with friends who had similar family units. This chapter will detail spousal relationships with extended family members and friends. It will also show how the birth of children may change relationships with social contacts for the parents and may also change the international marriage as well.

3.1 Prioritizing Companionate Marriages and Extended Family

The social network in this chapter refers to the people with whom individuals have extended interactions on a regular basis. This tends to include immediate family, extended family, and friends. The parent-adult child relationship, the parent-child relationship, the spousal relationship: these are all relationships that have taken time to build. Individuals may encounter many people every day, however the difference between those casual encounters and the social network is intentionality and the formation of a relationship beyond cordialities. Intended intimacy simply means that someone intended to and desired to encounter someone else. The formation of a relationship beyond cordialities means that conversations will penetrate surface level dialog and regularly progress to personal topics. For example, these definitions leave little

room for narratives which include co-workers in the social network because in most cases the people you work with are picked for you. To give a hypothetical situation: because you see the same people in the workplace every day, you may begin to talk more comfortably with that person by sharing personal matters. It is at that time that a relationship beyond cordials begins to occur. If you begin to look forward to seeing and talking with that person at work and outside of work, then intended intimacy is there as well.

Hypothetically, when spouses join together it is a marriage of two families instead of two individuals. This is not always true when one person is not a native of the country in which they married. In cases where one spouse's family is abroad, substitutes for family members are usually found. This is especially the case for mothers but it also holds true for other family members. A close friend may be affectionately referred to as a brother or sister. Similarly, an older neighbor whom one sees often may be referred to as uncle or aunt. These substitutes are not true replacements for actual family members but chosen family may indicate affectionate relationships which may signify that a person that can be relied on or has similar attributes as the actual relative they are affectionately named after.

With a few exceptions, participants in this study who were born and raised in the USA had parents living in the USA. Contrarily, participants born and raised abroad usually still had parents that still lived outside of the USA. Examples of exceptions include Samuel whose mother and his ex-wife's parents both lived in the USA and Amy who had parents living in the USA, but Amy and Fritz spent most of their time living abroad. Those who did not have family in the US either adopted (or attempted to adopt) their spouse's family as their own, like Joanna, or adopted the people they had known the longest and developed relationships with, like Sasha.

Having parents in close proximity created an interesting dynamic between the participants and the couples. It was viewed positively in some instances and negatively in other instances. Ironically, having parents nearby could be viewed as *both* a positive and a negative occurrence which meant that some parents occupied an ambivalent position in the lives of their adult children.

The nature of the companionate marriages represented in this research allowed for the nuclear family to occupy the highest level of importance for each married (or previously married) individual. However, putting the nuclear family as the primary priority does not entail forgetting about natal kin, especially parents. Participants often felt obligated to their own parents (despite what their spouse thought about their in-laws) and yet they usually put their own family's needs, especially the needs of their children, as the first priority. The act of placing their own family first did not signify that their parent's needs were insignificant, they were simply less (sometimes slightly less) important than their own family's needs. The needs of their parents were usually secondary but they were no less integral to the family unit.

The esteem in which adult children held their parents was evident in the number of people that admitted having cared for or provided for their parents and their own nuclear families simultaneously. For example, at some point in the marriages, including the marriages that were dissolved when this study was conducted, many participants had either their parents or in-laws who had lived in their home for an extended period of time. For example, Samuel's mother lived with him and his ex-wife for a short period of time before his divorce. Similarly, Carlos' parents were living with him and his wife at the time of our interview after disaster had struck their previous home months ago. Again, Sarah's parents had their own room in her home because they stay for weeks at a time when they visited the U.S. Other participants provided for their parents

by sending their parents money. Despite research (Plaza and Henry 2006:7-8) that insists that immigrants to the United States were more likely to send remittances, funds were transferred to parents in the U.S. and to parents abroad. The transfer of funds went both ways; while some participants provided money for their parents, many participants also admitted accepting provisions from their parents as well. While the provisions from parents to adult children were sometimes monetary, more often than not, provision was in the form of services rendered. These services primarily involved helping with their grandchildren.

3.2 Then comes baby: The Status of Grandparents after Children

Children typically brought extended family members and other kin members closer together. This was especially true for the maternal and paternal grandmothers of the children. Grandfathers were involved in their grandchildren's lives as well; however, this research focuses primarily on grandmothers because of the expectation that is placed on grandmothers to help with children. Kristen Hawkes' (1998:1336-1337) grandmothering theory suggests that post-menopausal women (and some non-human primates) were no longer producing children in order to help with younger offspring in their families. For this to occur, it meant that grandmothers were concerned with the fitness of those carrying their own DNA and that post-menopausal women did not see their children or grandchildren as competition. While this theory is used solely to explain why menopause affects some mammals and not others, the experience that grandmothers had was passed on for the survival of other kin members. In this research, grandmothering may not be useful in the survival context but what is to be gained from interactions with grandmothers is the knowledge and experience that grandmothers possess from being mothers themselves. Thus, in this study grandmothers' knowledge and experiences were conveyed by becoming heavily involved in the children's lives. Grandmothers were supportive

by physically helping the parents with the children, providing financial support, and by giving advice concerning the children.

A grandmother's heavy involvement in her grandchildren lives was welcomed by some parents but became overwhelming for other parents. Marla's mother traveled from Athens, Georgia every week to help Marla and her husband with their two young children. This was viewed by Marla as dually beneficial for the family and for the grandmother. Marla's husband worked late some days and on the days he worked late Marla's mom stepped in to help. Marla considered it was beneficial for her mother as well because she loved being close to her grandchildren. Contrarily, Rachael's parents frequently traveled from Florida to spend time with Rachael's children. While their company was welcomed, Rachael found herself stressed by her mother's over-the-top spending on her grandchildren. Her stress was due to the fact that her mother's finances were not stable enough to justify her lavish spending habits. However, a great benefit to having her mother in town from Florida was that Rachael and Tony did not have to bring their children everywhere with them (even to work) which was usually how they normally accomplished everything they had to do in a day. Rachael's mom proved to be a big help with her grandchildren as I saw her months later in our church carrying Sarah and Tony's youngest child.

The ambivalent positions that the parents of participants occupied lies in the paradox that while married couples separate themselves from their natal families to focus on their own nuclear families, grandparents are also occasionally needed by their adult children and encouraged to be involved in their grandchildren's lives. Additionally, just as the parents in this study place their children above everyone including their spouse, the parents of adult children/grandparents are sometimes marginalized by the same children they may have once held in an even higher status

than their own spouse. Marginalization, even if minimal, occurs though the parents of participants are usually participating in a relatively equal exchange of services with their adult children.

Despite whether heavy involvement is welcomed or unwelcomed, it is evident from the previous examples that involvement in their grandchildren's lives was primarily beneficial for the parents of the children and the grandchildren. However, grandparents may have received emotional benefits such as enjoyment or satisfaction that they could help out. It is also evident from Rachael and Marla's example that distance is not a factor for some grandparents. However, for grandparents residing in other countries, it was harder to participate and engage in the lives of their grandchildren. For some grandmothers, living far away meant involvement was almost non-existent. For others, when grandchildren were born their involvement increased despite their distance.

The mother of Reid, Marla's husband, is currently living in South America. She has only been to the United States once since her son moved to Georgia. Before Reid and Marla had children, Reid spoke to his mom about once every two weeks- if that often. Since having children, Reid contacts her every Sunday via Skype. They talk via Skype and she speaks to her grandchildren as well. Years ago it could be said that the social network consisted of the people with whom there were "real," physical interactions. However, that was a time before the phone (landline and mobile) and the internet with its multitude of technologies. Now, these technological advances have contributed to the expansion of what people consider "real" and "valid" interactions. While Reid's mother is not physically involved, she talks to the children weekly and essentially is able to physically see the children grow up. Thus, in the construction of

the children's social selves these interactions may make the difference between growing up with one absent grandmother or two "present" grandmothers.

3.3 Friends: The Family We Choose

Children are a major social influence on international marriages and divorces. In fact, the overwhelming finding of this research was that children affected the social lives of each of the participants in some manner. In this section, I will show how children served multiple functions in the relationships of their parents with each other and with other social contacts. Children were a link to bring people together, a barrier which separated people (usually their parents) from others, and a force that brought the social lives of their parent or parents to a halt- if only temporarily or partially.

Having children changed many of the participants' families as a social unit. Friendships that were formed before children were born typically did not endure the life changes associated with having children if their lifestyles were dissimilar. Parents with children under the age of 18 typically considered their closest friends to be other parents with children. While there were exceptions to these approaches to friendship, parents ultimately preferred these social circumstances because they could relate to other parents and because having playmates kept children entertained while adults were interacting. In this sense, having children served as an (often unforeseen) mechanism that separated their parents from adults with dissimilar lifestyles and family environments. Simultaneously, when they had children, parents were drawn to socialize with other parents with comparable family situations.

Reid worked at a local school not far from his home. He had co-workers that he got along well with at work. However, outside of the workplace, Reid and his co-workers did not socialize because they led different lifestyles. Reid's work friends sometimes went out on Fridays after

work. Instead of attending their outings, Reid said, “I have to go home and spend quality time with my wife and children.” Reid also said that if he had not been married with children he would have tried to hang out sometimes but “home obligations come first.” Reid had a few friends that he lost contact with as well. He attributes the lack of communication with previous friends to his move to northern Georgia. Marla and Reid both told me that Reid had continuously tried to contact his old friends but they never answered nor returned his calls. Reid made an interesting distinction between “work friends,” “friends,” and “church friends.” Attempting to contact friends several times to no avail suggests that he may consider them his true friends.

Similarly, Michael (Sarah’s husband), considered his friends that he went to college with (“his boys”) to be his closest friends. Like Reid, Michael and his friends had gone their separate ways in college and ended up in different states. However, the distance did not hinder their friendships at all. In fact, even before Michael married his wife, his friends met her and liked her. Michael thought very highly of their opinions and even suggested that he would have reconsidered whom he was marrying had they not thought she was a good fit for him. When I asked why what they thought mattered, Michael responded by saying his friends know him better than anyone else. Even if he really loved Sarah, he would have trusted their opinion of her over his feelings.

Michael is extremely close with one particular friend from his group of friends. His friend had a family unit comparable to Michael’s family in the sense that he was married with children. When he needed advice about life’s issues, Michael could always count on that particular friend. “The goal is always wisdom,” Michael said. In his opinion, talking to an unmarried friend about your marriage problems is useless. Likewise, seeking advice from friends about children when they have no children is useless.

Reid and Michael's examples show a resistance to people with dissimilar lifestyles. Simultaneously, the people they considered their friends are friends from their past, before they had wives and children. It can be assumed that these people are those they consider to be "true friends" because these friends are the people whom they know well and who know them well. The sentiment here is that these friends know them or once knew them personally, whereas people who have similar lifestyles as Reid and Michael would be friends because they have something in common- the family unit. However, the division between friends is clear in Michael's story. For him, there are friends that you don't get advice from just because you are close to them. Rather you seek the wisdom of someone that knows what you are going through because they have been through it themselves.

There are many reasons why parents opted for friends with children. The most significant reason was because they did not want to feel as if they were burdening people with the presence of their children. If the children had playmates it also lessened the time that they were competing with siblings or other adults for their parent's attention. People also chose friends with children because they could participate in more activities outside of the house which included their children even if the activities were not geared specifically toward children. For example, Rachel and Tony got together with friends for game night at least once a month. Both couples had their children present. This was beneficial to each couple because the children entertained each other and the parents did not have to pay and/or arrange a baby sitter. Additionally, meeting at one of the couples' homes hypothetically meant that the children could have followed their routine sleep and feeding schedules. Rachael and Tony suggested that the reason this social gathering worked out every month was because their children and their friends' children were close in age.

Sasha frequently went to child-friendly outings with her daughter. Most of the events they attended happened to be children's birthday parties. Sasha's daughter is an only child and she requires constant attention. Sasha admittedly loves children's birthday parties because her daughter goes off to play and Sasha gets to have uninterrupted adult conversations with other parents that showed up for the birthday party. While I interviewed Sasha, we were interrupted several times by her daughter. I had no problems with the interruptions at all, but Sasha became increasingly flustered that she could not talk without being interrupted. As an only child, Sasha's daughter had no one else to talk to or play with. While Sasha was not a single parent, she was the parent who was constantly with their daughter as her husband Carlos spent a lot of his time out of the house (according to Sasha, he frequently plays sports after work). In the eyes of her daughter, I was taking Sasha's attention away from her, so she became louder and increased her antics to get her mom's attention back. They spent most of their days in the house together unless Sasha's close friend, who had a daughter the same age as Sasha's daughter, was available for a playdate. Then, the same dynamic was created as with the birthday parties: the children went off to play and the parents could (for the most part) have uninterrupted adult interactions. I saw Sasha and the person I assumed to be the friend she told me about at a Stevie B's pizza restaurant about two months after her interview. Sasha and her adult female friend were sitting next to each other laughing, while Sasha's daughter and someone I assumed to be her friend's daughter were sitting together across the table from their parents engaging in their own conversation. Sasha's husband Carlos was not present. However, I saw Carlos twice a few weeks before I saw Sasha at Stevie B's; both times I saw him, he was alone with their daughter.

Similar to those who choose friends as their chosen family, participants with children continuously chose friends with parallel lifestyles because they could relate to their family make-

up. The concept of "families we choose" was introduced by Kath Weston (1998) to illustrate the friendships that formed into kinship-like bonds in which lesbians and gays rendered unconditional (emotional and psychological) support to each other. My use of chosen families here represents a relationship that did not form due to kinship obligations but rather because participants made a decision to form kin-like bonds with friends. It is difficult to say if people felt that parallel lifestyles were more important than cultural differences. While participants like Reid, Tony and Rachael, and Sasha seem to demonstrate how important parallel lifestyles are, I have no reference point by which to measure these interactions. Neither Reid, Tony, nor Sasha mentioned having someone close to them from their country of origin. I cannot speculate, with the exception of Rachael, about how they would treat a person from their country of origin with a dissimilar lifestyle.

This chapter intended to show the various interactions between divorced individuals and married couples and their social network contacts. Spouses born and raised outside of the U.S. typically did not have close relatives living in the U.S. Most foreign born spouses adopted their spouse's kin as their own or created chosen families from friendships. Parents were subordinated to the companionate relationship until they entered an ambivalent position when their adult children had children. As grandmothers, the mothers of some participants were sometimes expected to have heavy involvement in their grandchildren's lives. When parents chose friends they usually aligned themselves with people who had similar lifestyles. The next section will explore additional frameworks which can function as influences on the companionate international relationship.

4 Chapter 4- Frameworks that Shape the Self

It has been established by social scientists that social network contacts can be a source of influence on relationships (see Tadinac et al 2012, Taylor et al 2012, Reiter et al 2009, Julien et al 2000). In addition to social contacts, there are other mechanisms that may shape an individual's behavior and sense of self. This chapter will discuss each person/couple who participated in this ethnography in one of three different frameworks: identity, employment, and religion. The goal of this chapter is to explore how issues of identity, including religious identity, and economic complexities play out in the lives of the participants and to what extent these concepts contribute to their sense of self.

4.1 Identity

For many of the participants in this research, the security of an identity took place through the juxtaposition of the self with a current or ex-international spouse. In other words people defined themselves in contrast to their international counterparts. I expected for the narratives to center around their position in the United States; however, the narratives gathered from the participants showed that issues of self-identity went beyond native versus immigrant. Instead people gathered meanings about themselves from their partners that were tied (more often than not) to ideas about ethnicity and adaptability.

One of the strongest examples of a culmination of self-identity and ethnic identity in an intercultural marriage was from Marla (United States), the wife of Reid (South America). Marla identified herself as a black woman though she was technically a racial mix of black and white. She recalled feeling racially judged at many jobs and in many social settings about everything she did from the way she wore her hair and clothes to how much she weighed. Because of the judgment she perceived, Marla constantly felt the racial struggles of being a black woman.

Contrarily, Marla referred to her husband Reid as having a sense of “white privilege” though his skin tone was almost the exact same color as hers. According to Marla, where Reid was from, his ethnicity was the ruling class and he had not experienced the racial injustice of being “black in America.”

Sheila (United States), a divorcée with two adult children from her dissolved marriage, found a strong African-American identity after her divorce. Her ex-husband, an African man, was described by Sheila as very controlling and jealous. When they had children together, they had different expectations of Sheila’s role as a wife and mother. Sheila’s ex-husband expected her to mimic his culture and she went along with it because “African-Americans don’t have a strong culture.” She admitted during our interview that the same thing that attracted her to her ex-husband was the same thing that turned her away from him. When I met with her for an interview, she showed me the many books she had published through Amazon, many of which were poetry books about being black, female or both.

Marla and Sheila both identified themselves by contrast with the perceived identity of their current spouse and ex-spouse respectively. Marla felt black mainly because of her skin tone. It seemed difficult for her to come to grips with the idea that her husband had the same skin tone as she did but he was not considered black. Marla felt he was "orientalized" (Mirzoeff 1998: 282) as an exotic "other" because of his foreign identity. Sheila had her ex-husband's native identity forced on her, so to speak, as she was expected to operate in accordance with his native customs. She later embraced the African-American identity that she once thought was not a strong culture by becoming and personifying a proud, black woman.

Many other participants lived out their identities with respect to the place they lived or called home. Amy (United States) and Fritz (European) had homes in both the U.S and Europe.

While she was in Europe, Amy spent lots of time with a group of English-speaking Europeans who were mostly British. They got together two to three times a week for activities they could do in their native language, English. They often went to see movies or played the board game Scrabble using English words. Fritz attended these functions from time to time but did not share the same excitement for the group as Amy. His lack of excitement was why Amy referred to the group members as her friends rather than their friends as a couple. Amy (maybe unknowingly) defined a part of herself through her participation in the English speakers' activity group which in turn reflected her identity in terms of her home, the United States. Amy recalled a few times that Fritz became jealous that she was attending events with her English-speaking friends. Fritz spoke excellent English; however, he did not want to attend the events and Amy had no intention of not attending the events. Their social lives continued on as they were.

Rachael (United States) and Tony (European) both told me in separate interviews how adaptable Tony was to any national culture. How they essentially "proved" this was through his behaviors; he acted like an American. According to Rachael, the only glitch was the slight accent you heard if you listened closely to Tony's speech. Tony's willingness to "fit into" and adapt to American culture suggested that his sense of self may have been linked to the United States in some meaningful way. Maybe he felt that "fitting in" granted him social advantages or Tony realized a part of his identity in his American spouse, the opposite of what Marla and Sheila seemed to do.

Amy and Fritz lived a transnational lifestyle, spending most of the year in Europe and a small part of the year in the United States. Tony on the other hand, rarely got to go to Europe. When he was there he spent the first days gathering everything he could not buy in the United States. Apart from talking about his parents, this was the only time Tony mentioned his home

country in a way that expressed his European identity. Amy made a comment that seemed particularly applicable to herself and Tony as well when she said, "A professor of mine once told me long ago, that once you have lived in two different countries, you will never be satisfied in either one." For Tony, so much of his "self" was located in the United States, his marriage, family, his career which emphasized his Christian identity, that through these lenses adaptation had become a necessary choice.

Joy (South Asia) actually attempted to resist falling in love with Travis (United States) because she felt that it was stereotypical for women of her national culture to have a relationship with a white man. It was unclear the ethnic identity of a person she would have rather married to reject the stereotype. However, a renunciation of the typical and stereotypical in association with a national culture defines the self just as much as adapting and assimilating to a culture.

Finally, Carlos (Caribbean) and Sasha (South America) had very different realities than any of the other couples. They were the only couple in which one spouse was not born and raised in the United States. The irony of their identities in the relationship was that Carlos lived in the United States with legal status while Sasha did not. Thus, while they were both immigrants to the United States, the roles of native and immigrant were played out in their marriage on a daily basis. Sasha's status repressed her freedoms to do even the simplest activities such as drive. It is unclear how this dynamic affected her current marriage to Carlos. However, not having legal status was one of the consequences of Sasha's choice to enter into a companionate marriage with Carlos, a man that she loved. She divorced her first husband, an American man, whom she had never loved, yet he could have given her a chance to have legal status relatively quickly.

Giddens (1992) argued that in companionate marriages the self is realized or found in one's spouse. The aforementioned examples add to that discussion two additional layers to the

formation of the self: 1. The idea that, for some people, their sense of self is not defined by who their spouse is but rather who their spouse is not and 2. The concept of the self can simultaneously be tied to nationality as it is experienced in the companionate marriage.

4.2 Economics

Often a critical part of who you are, the self, is partially defined by how you survive economically. The career you have grants you economic capital which then can be traded for other types of capital and symbolic power (see Bourdieu 2001). Unfortunately, immigrants to the U.S. often have to hold legal status to be gainfully employed which is enforced by programs such as E-verify. At the time this ethnography was written, only about half of the participants were employed. This section is not intended to suggest that you are what you do for employment, instead the section will explore how nationality and gender may have factored into some participants' employment situations and how it affected their sense of self.

Phil (United States) was self-employed in doing contract home repairs while his wife Paula (South America) was not employed. Similarly, Michael (United States) was self-employed in the fitness industry while his wife Sarah (North America) was not employed. Both Phil and Michael were very hard workers and in some ways they had it harder than people who simply went to work at a company that was not their company. They both worked long hours and had very minimal free time. Both Paula and Sarah defined themselves as housewives with one child and six children (respectively) who required their attention.

David (United States) had been unemployed for two long months at the time of our interview while Joanna (Europe) was self-employed. David, a chef, had been looking for any job that was available. He had been to several interviews and felt that it was always his age (over 45) that kept him from getting the job every time. Both Joanna and David resented the fact that

David was unemployed. Yet, David never defined himself as a “house husband” or in any relation to the home, even though his occupation was a chef and he was the primary meal preparer for the home. Joanna placed herself in proximity to the home by continually referring to her son, who ironically had recently moved out of their home.

Similar to David, Samuel initially presented himself to me in relation to his career. When we were setting up interviews, he cancelled many due to meetings at work and other job related activities. Rescheduling because of his job was unavoidable, but it was only later (and from his daughter) that I found out that Samuel also spends a lot of time babysitting his grandchild. Men, whether employed or unemployed, created a physical distance from the domestic frontier through the discussions they had with me. It was not only uncommon for women to distance themselves from the home, they actually did the opposite. Women, even working women like Joanna, referred to themselves as "house" wives or as mothers which gave them identity through their children and still positioned women in relation to the home.

Many scholars have linked domesticity to womanhood or rejected the theories that seek to link womanhood and domesticity as the natural, immutable order of the world (see Rebhun 2007, Mascia-Lees and Black 1999). Hirsch's 2007 work "Love Makes a Family" focused on what the transition from traditional marriage to companionate marriage can mean in terms of gendered identities. She suggests that couples in the 1950s and 1960s in Mexico may have stayed together because of obligations to fulfill gendered roles (2007:94). Gendered obligations were enforced by societal pressures which encouraged women to satisfy their wifely duties. However, Hirsch suggests that with the shift to companionate marriage, couples were together because they shared an emotional connection and because it was their desire to be together (2007:99). The presence of love and intimacy did not suggest the absence of economic or social issues but love

added to the dynamics of the multifaceted concept of the self. This section has shown that for the participants even the act of working contributed to their (albeit gendered) sense of personhood, but for women working inside and outside of the home, their dialog was representative of their roles in the domestic sphere.

4.3 Religion

“At [our church] we have this whole concept of ARP (advice requires permission) and people not in your church family- they don’t understand that concept. [We are] disconnected from our families in the sense that we have our own family now. We are the most important people in each other’s lives. Our parents: yes, they play a role but not as important as her and myself...The part that I think every couple deals with is how much can you say about the other person’s family before they get offended like ‘ok that wasn’t very nice’.”

- Tony (Europe)

I interviewed Tony at his job. We sat relatively close together at a long oval conference table. Soft instrumental music played in the background as we had a very candid conversation about his married life and his social life. In the quote above, Tony illuminated what it is like for him to live a Christian life even when the people around him, particularly his in-laws are not. Tony’s quote highlighted the concepts of the Christian nuclear family, principals taught by the local church, the concept of the church family, unity among husband and wife, and the battle to be “nice” or not get angry with people that do not follow the same principles in which he believes. This chapter will not cover all of those concepts but will give depth and detail to the importance of religion as a major social influence from which people take their cues.

Religion, particularly Christianity, was an important part of this research for many reasons. Its importance stemmed primarily from the fact that many of the participants were recruited at the church I attended. It was also significant because Christianity guided ten of the participants' attitudes concerning their family, friends, and others they came into contact with. As a result, their lifestyles and even their marriages were affected by how they understood the way God wanted them to live.

I chose to focus on Tony primarily because we spent the most time talking about Christianity and because most of Tony's life is centered on Christianity including his career. Though not all of the participants were Christian, many of the other participants, especially Sarah, Michael, Sasha, Phil, and Paula to name a few, felt just as strongly about their Christianity as Tony. It is crucial to state that Christian ideologies and lifestyles vary for each person individually and that Christianity is simply a framework through which people understand, legitimate, and act out companionate marriage. The purpose of this section is not to lump all Christians in one group as culturally or religiously homogenous. The purpose of this section then is to show how the piety and the expectation of piety of those who considered themselves Christians affected how they lived their lives and particularly affected their relationships with others.

Tony mentioned that the extended family of him and his wife were less important than the people in their particular household- his wife and children. The idea that immediate family comes first was a theme that most of the participants repeated. Additionally, participants that considered themselves Christian may have put this concept into practice because the Bible emphasizes the importance of the family. The Bible offers scriptural guidance and examples of

how to have Christian interactions with others many of which also reinforce ideas of romantic love and companionate marriage.

For example, throughout the Bible in Genesis, Ephesians, Mark, and Matthew the same verse is repeated that “A man shall leave his father and mother and join (and depending on which linguistic version of the Bible: be united to, cleave to, hold fast to) his wife, and the two will be one flesh.” This scripture and similar scriptures promote unity and the centrality of the nuclear family as opposed to the centrality of the extended family which would include the mother and father of at least one adult spouse. The centrality of the nuclear family was practiced by all of the married couples that were recruited from the church. However, as mentioned previously, they sometimes exchanged services and support with members of their extended families on both sides.

In addition to Biblical values, there are many secular values that may stem from the church itself. In the opening quote to this section, Tony mentioned the concept of ARP which means Advice Requires Permission. This was a principle taught by the local church he attended to minimize conflict and to spare the feelings of people. It is evident in his quote that Tony separated himself from his in-laws through distinguishing himself as person whose behaviors are guided by Christian values. He also (maybe unknowingly) distinguished himself as a person that adheres to the principles of the local church, which are principles that may be unknown to his in-laws and others outside of the local church. Tony’s quote shows that the influences of Christianity for some people may be inclusive of Biblical values and the values of the local church. Principles taught at the local church level will vary from church to church.

Understanding Tony's application of principles from the local church also serves to reiterate that

Christianity is a framework through which people construct and make sense of the "self" and the companionate marriage.

This chapter examined the different frameworks through which people may define themselves and/or unintentionally define themselves. Ethnic identity can be derived through defining a spouse or understanding the ways in which a spouse is not defined ethnically by society. Employment contributes to the sense of self in ways that extend beyond net worth and merge into the territory of gendered identities. Finally, religion, particularly Christianity, may serve to shape and define the self into what God or a higher power desires for the self to be or become. All of these are invisible frameworks and guidelines through which the individual self is shaped.

5 Chapter 5- Conclusion

This ethnography explored the ways in which people and social frameworks influence international marital relationships. This research was conducted using narratives collected from internationally married couples and divorced individuals from dissolved international marriages. The purpose of this research was to call into question the pre-existing ideas that companionate unions have weak social ties and are prone to divorce (Amato 2009:78).

I learned a number of things over the course of this research. One of the most important things that my research showed was that weak social ties do not necessarily mean that companionate couples are more prone to divorce. Many of the individuals that had been married for more than 10 years had little to no physical contact with their extended families and very few friends to speak of, yet they remained married. In other cases, couples actually had strong social networks which sometimes included fictive kin and friends especially if family was too far away. I also learned that many times divorced individuals made choices to divorce or leave their mate in spite of social contacts that felt there were better options. Making choices that social contacts felt were the wrong choices mean that individuals were willing to risk the unknown outcome of a choice in hopes of achieving a personal goal. When they felt strongly about something they tended to make the choices they felt were best for themselves. However, influence did not stem solely from decision-making but by the individual experiences that shaped the lives of each participant. I learned that my initial hypothesis that marriages are influenced by people outside the marriages turned out to be a partial truth, as the relationships in this study were influenced by a number of factors including ethnic identity, religious identity, and economic achievements. Again, simplistic models did not easily mesh with grand theories.

Implications

There are many implications of this research. First, from a marital standpoint, if people are aware that the individuals in the marriage are not the only forces that drive a marriage, then people may be able to identify the influences at work in the relationship and consequently be more prepared to face the struggles that may arise in the relationship. Identifying the forces at work in a marriage would require that people will have to come to terms with the fact that relationships are not autonomous and do not occur and/or play out in a vacuum. If expectations concerning challenges that may arise outside of the relationship were assessed prior to marriage, the marriage would hypothetically have a greater chance of withstanding adversity.

Second, including the social contacts of the participants in this study enabled readers of this ethnography to see beyond the relationships and provide a glimpse of how and why relationship decisions were made. In doing so, this research complicates the view that relationships can be taken at face value. It takes the conversation from simple to complex. It is the difference between a divorced woman and a woman who divorced her husband because of abuse despite encouragement from the church to remain married. The implications of such research is that issues which once seemed to be clear cut can be questioned in meaningful ways. What looks like an individualistic choice cannot be fully understood until it is placed in the social context in which it was made.

5.1 Research Limitations

The limitations of this study were threefold. The most significant limitation in this study derived from the fact that all of the foreign-born spouses had migrated from different countries. This research may have been more descriptive about the international relationships and the influences on the relationships if all the relationships in the study were of similar backgrounds, i.e., if native born participants had been from the United States, which they were not (Carlos and

Sasha), and all of the foreign born participants had been from Peru or another country. While this ethnography made valid comparisons and contrasts between participants, the information in this study lacked true point of cross-reference because none of the cultural/geographical backgrounds were exactly the same. In the recruiting stages, the most effective way to display what different companionate marriages “looked like” was to recruit people with diverse national backgrounds. It is important to emphasize that this was a trade-off in the true sense of the word; I lost the ability to point to patterns in two specific countries, but I gained the ability to show the complexities of the companionate marriage as it plays out among people of dissimilar backgrounds.

Second, this research was conducted in and around Atlanta, Georgia. I was limited in the fact that this research cannot make broader generalizations about how social networks affect couples in different geographical contexts. International marriages taking place outside of the United States and in which the American was the foreign-born spouse may play out very differently. Additionally, this research cannot assume how international relationships unfold in areas with a higher immigrant population than Atlanta such as New York, nor can this research assess relationships in rural areas with a lower immigrant population than Atlanta.

Finally, this research is limited in its chosen framework of the companionate marriage. I have conveyed that there are many models of marriage. I chose to use the traditional, companionate and individualistic as presented by Amato (2009) because this research was in many ways influenced by his research. Additionally, Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) and Giddens (1996), all major contributors to this research, used the term companionate marriage as well. There is the possibility that there are other models of marriage that fit more with the marriages in this research but it is important to restate that no actual marriage will ever perfectly map onto a

model of marriage. Thus, the companionate model of marriage was simply a framework or a starting point from which I began to investigate the social ties of companionate marriages. The companionate model is predicated upon love and intimacy. Within the model, couples have weaker ties to social contacts than the traditional marriages of their ancestors. What my research showed was that companionate marriages are in actuality very complex. Love and intimacy are an expected component of the companionate marriage but social contacts such as parents, in-laws, children, friends and fictive kin along with social circumstances (career-related, ethnicity-related, and even law-related) all shape the individual experience of the companionate relationship.

5.2 Shifts in Marriage

In his very popular article "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage" (2004), Andrew Cherlin asserts that the social behaviors that we associate with marriage as an institution are becoming less defined (2004:848). Cherlin also asserted that the blurred lines of the family unit have changed to include cohabitating families, children born out of wedlock, and same-sex couples.

Daniel Lichter and Warren Brown agree with Cherlin on the changing patterns of marriage but instead of insisting that these changes mark the deinstitutionalization of marriage, they argue that these changes have set the stage for the "reinstitutionalization" of American marriage" (2009:366). Lichter and Brown define reinstitutionalization as new ways in which the traditional rules and practices are recreated to serve the same purposes of "replenishment of the population, kinship systems and inheritance, and the socialization of children" (2009:374). They recognize that men and women are not practicing the old social rules of American society such

as marriage before child-birth. Instead, they believe that new ways of forming families and kinship ties have emerged and will continue to emerge.

Lichter and Warren have made projections about the composite of these new family formations based on predictions from the U.S. census. From the 2004 predictions they concluded that the non-Hispanic Whites as a portion of the total population in the United States will decrease from 69 percent in 2000 to 50 percent in the year 2050 while the Hispanic/Latino population and the Asian population will increase. Additionally, the percentage of the black population will see little change.

I agree with Cherlin in the sense that the composition of the American family and its functions have changed and that these changes will not eliminate marriage altogether. Marriage is not likely to die; it will continue to change. The pair-bond (heterosexual and homosexual) is likely to seek institutionalization and legal protection. I also agree with Lichter and Warren that the changes that we are currently seeing, even the trends that support the theory that people are opting for cohabitation instead of marriage, will not destroy the family unit but will bring forth new ways of forming families. I also agree with Lichter and Brown that it is impossible to address future trends of immigration and marriage without acknowledging diversity in America (2009:369). However, I would like to propose that there is a more efficient way of assessing immigration (and consequently international marriage) in America that does not oversimplify diversity.

5.3 The Future of International Marriage

The U.S. Census has changed in the last ten years. Their representatives used to gather an assessment of certain data every ten years until recently. What spurred the change was the demand for the data more frequently. Now, every year the U.S. Census produces this body of

data annually to meet the demand for it. If scientists, social scientists, and all who rely on accurate data according to the U.S. Census would make a demand for specific details concerning ethnicity (or “race” as they state it) instead of accepting the data with everyone lumped together for simplistic purposes, eventually the demand for detailed ethnic identity would be met. Until then I propose that the most accurate way of accessing ethnicity in the U.S. is by looking at two categories labeled “Two or more races” and “Some other race.”

Between the years of 2008-2010 4.9 percent of the total population identified themselves as “Some other race” which did not include White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race), and White, Not Hispanic or Latino. In the same years (2008-2010) 2.5 percent of the total population considered themselves as having “Two or more races.” Between the years of 2011-2013 the percent of the total population that identified themselves as “Some other race” dropped to 4.7 percent while those identifying themselves as “Two or more races” increased to 2.8 percent.

In short, despite which estimate you prefer, over 3 million people are identifying themselves as having more than one race and over 3 million additional people are not fitting into the categories provided. I will not speculate about what the increases and decreases in these numbers mean but I do hypothesize that 1.) The percentage of people identifying themselves “Two or more races” will continue to increase as international marriage and American diversity in general continues to expand and 2.) The people who identified themselves as “Some other race” are possibly reluctant to identify themselves with such broad categories. Nonetheless, these are the categories that speak directly to diversity and indirectly to international marriage. Changes in the marriage composite in the United States are a reflection of increased

diversification in the American population. The complex marriages formed from the ethnically diverse American population may not strictly follow the companionate model of marriage but are usually companionate in nature with romantic love as the foundation on which the marriages are built.

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