# DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES OF CHILD UPBRINGING IN MULTICULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

## MOTHER'S PERSPECTIVE

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# ABSTRACT

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This qualitative research aims to find out the challenges of child upbringing in multicultural relationships and how to deal with them when they occur from the mothers' perspective. Another focus was to find out suggestions or proposals from the mothers to other multicultural relationships. It hopes to provide a suitable research in English to multicultural relationships and organizations especially Famlia ry.

Data was collected from a "multicultural mother and baby discussion group" via Familia ry. This group consisted of ten women from multicultural relationships from different countries. They all participated in the group discussion sessions and eight responded to the questionnaire. Secondary data consisted of both Finnish and international studies.

Data was analyzed using the thematic approach and it revealed varying results on the challenges and how to deal with them from the mothers' perspective. Amongst the mentioned challenges, some proved to have stronger influence on the relationships than others like language and cultural values.

At the end of the research, it was concluded that challenges in child upbringing in multicultural relationships do not only occur because partners are from different countries but also due to their individual uniqueness. It was also noted that child upbringing in multicultural relationships are not only faced with challenges but also rich with positive aspects including a rich blend of culture from both parents. Future studies were suggested in similar topics and for them to be written in English to serve non Finnish speakers.

Key words: multicultural relationships, mothers, challenges, Deal, child upbringing

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# 1  INTRODUCTION

This thesis describes the challenges faced by multicultural relationships in child upbringing and how they deal with such challenges when they occur; it will focus on the mothers involved in these relationships to get their perspective on the aspect of child upbringing in multicultural relationships. Different cultural values and cultural differences which bring about the challenges in child upbringing in multicultural relationships are going to be elaborated on. It is worth mentioning that there are many advantages in child upbringing in multicultural relationships considering the richness of both cultures impacted on the child but for the purpose of the study, I will be focusing on the challenges in the child upbringing aspect of these relationships.

This is a qualitative research based on multicultural relationships from the metropolitan area of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa through Familia ry located in Helsinki. These relationships consist of partners from different countries or cultural backgrounds who have one or more children together in their relationship.  It is also going to be based on the perspective of the mothers in the above mentioned relationships.

There are three main objectives for this research from the mothers' perspective. Firstly and most importantly, I wish to find out the challenges of child upbringing in multicultural relationships. Secondly, I will be interested in knowing how these challenges are dealt with when they occur. To conclude, it will also be important to find out suggestions or proposals for future or other multicultural relationships. The research questions to this study are closely related to the objectives of the study. What are the challenges faced by multicultural relationships in the child upbringing aspect of their relationship? Secondly, how are these challenges dealt with when they occur? On the last note, are there any suggestions or proposals for other multicultural relationships in similar

situation? The research at the end will assist social work practitioners in the field of social work because child upbringing in multicultural relationships is a vital part of social work. Due to the fact that I conducted the research in collaboration with Familia Ry, it is going to facilitate their work with multicultural couples and families. With relation to community work, Familia Ry has and will continue to work with multicultural couples and families especially through the Duo Project, so, this research will continue to remain current due to the fact that immigration and multicultural relationships continue to increase in Finland.

I also decided to go with the perspective of the mothers in these relationships because mothers in almost all cases spend more time with the children especially when the children are very young. I believe they know more about children due to the fact that they spend more time with them and might definitely have a better say in the challenges involved and how to deal with them. Also, women are easy to locate because they are mostly on maternity leave after the child is born. Through Familia ry, I was able to work with this group of women from multicultural relationships who all have children below one year old.

Much has actually been written on this topic in Finland but most of it is in Finnish. Some of these are quoted by Hirvonen (2012, 9) which are Tuomi-Nikula (1997) who pays attention to three main topics related to multicultural relationships including acculturation, problems in such relationships and reasons for choosing a partner from a different background. Also, Vesalainen (1999) and Toivonen (2006) debate on whether multicultural relationships are rather challenging or enriching. Similarly, Kuusisto (2007) studies the relationships of Finnish women with Italian men. Therefore, limits the purpose it is meant to serve because not all multicultural relationships have Finnish as the language of the relationship. For this reason, I thought it is necessary I write in English to serve non Finnish speakers. On another note, many writers have approached this topic on a rather general manner and so I thought it was necessary to focus of on the child upbringing characteristic of such relationships. From the organizational point (Familia ry) of view; they also thought it was important to write on this topic based on the mother and baby discussion group for mothers in multicultural relationships since none has been

done before by any researcher. For all the above reasons, the subject is current and necessary to be researched on.

This research is going to be made up of six chapters with the first chapter giving a detail introducing the topic. The second will be elaborating on the multicultural relationships and the child upbringing aspects of it. The third will be reviewing literature related to this same topic and the fourth will be focused on the methodology of the research. The firth will focus on the findings and sixth will be focusing on the discussion and conclusion of the research.

# 2 CHILD UPBRINGING IN MULTICULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

As the world moves towards being a "global village", migration rates continue to be on the high side. "As the world is increasingly globalized, nowadays more and more people move across borders and settle in a society that culturally differs from their origin." Tam & Chan (2015, 03).  Finland is one of the countries in the world with an increasing number of immigrants increasing by the day with immigrants stemming from almost every country of the world. In recent years, there has been a big influx of migrants coming to Finland with majority from Iraq (7107-Migri 2015), thus, increasing the number of multicultural relationships and multicultural children existing in the country. According to Migri (which is the Finnish Immigration Service; a subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, is the agency that processes and decides on matters related to immigration, residence, refugee issues, and Finnish nationality), Finland, the number of immigrants increased from 113,925 in 2005 to 231,295 in 2015. There are many reasons for migration, ranging from international job opportunities, social networking, migration (voluntary and involuntary), education, family reunion etc. Of the total number of migrants, majority are always men with about 53% of the total number.

A multicultural relationship is the marrying, cohabiting or any sexual relations between people from two different cultural or racial backgrounds. In the case of this study, the focus will be on heterosexual relationships with partners from different cultural backgrounds. This phenomenon has also been defined by Romano, Dugan (2008, xviii) in his book Intercultural Marriage as; "By which we mean a union of two people from diverse cultures as well as different countries, which may also, but not necessarily, indicate differences in race and/or religion" In this study, multicultural relationships must not be necessary married ones: it also includes cohabiting couples. In all cases, these relationships must have one or more kids with at least one of them below the age of one. This study is constantly going to use the word challenge which should be understood as "… something people have the choice to face, deal with, and grow from. (Pollock 88, 2010)

Another country with great increase of intercultural marriages or relationships in Europe is Italy. According to ISTAT (Italian National Institute of Statistics) as the percentage of intercultural marriages has risen from 4% in 1996 to 14% in 2006 of total marriages in Italy (cited by Paul Spickard, pg 214). This influx is greater in the Northern part of the country. This author goes further to say that the female gender has more access to the Italian community than the male supporting it by a percentage of 7.4 and 2.6 respectively.

In every relationship, there are bound to be challenges with child upbringing mostly due to the uniqueness of each partner of the relationship. Each partner in a relationship comes mostly from a different family background, values, character, different strengths and weaknesses and many other things that may make someone different from the other. If there can be challenges with child upbringing in relationships that are from same culture, what more of multicultural relationships? This is supported by:

"Any marriage is like a game (a very serious game), but intercultural marriage is more complicated because each partner comes equipped with a different set of rules— different values, habits, and viewpoints, ways of relating to others, and strategies for negotiating differences." (Roman 2008, xvii)

Multicultural relationships are bound to have even more challenges given the fact that they are from different countries, cultural background, family roles, values, friends, language of communication, raising children, finance religious beliefs and other factors that may not act in the same direction. In a nutshell, a multicultural relationship is one which is affected both by their personalities and cultures. Within a family, culture delineates boundaries, expectations, rules for interaction, ways of defining problems, communication patterns, and coping skills (Crippen & Brew, 2015).

Most parents have the best parenting ideas based on own experiences when they look back on their own relationship with their parents. These parental skills develop with time are based on the best model that they have which are: parents' attitudes, perceptions, attributions, goals and expectations (Luster & Okagaki, 2005 4-14).  Most partners in multicultural relationships only realize how their different cultures can pose as a challenge in child upbringing only

when the child is born. Crippen and Brew (2015), continue further in their work to say the birth of a child often act as catalyst for cultural discrepancies on how to raise children. In most cases, these differences can come in the forms child discipline, cultural values, tradition/religion, parental roles, language, etc.
In order to limit these challenges, parents sometimes need to discuss more often about these differences to come to a compromise. This phenomenon will limit the problem children from multicultural relationships often times face in belonging to a defined cultural background. This is supported by a statement from Steel M. & Valentine G. (1995) when they say "Therefore, it behooves interracial couples to recognize at an early stage of their relationship that offspring from their marriage are not only racially mixed but will also have to adjust to being identified as `others`." It can be noticed in the society that children from mixed background find it really difficult to merge into a particular group because they are "half" of both.

Though there are many common challenges in the child upbringing aspect of multicultural relationships, there are equally many advantages in such relationships. Amongst many aspects that can be admired in such relationships, is the fact that a child raised in such homes grows with a richness of culture from both parents. This is due to the fact that when two cultures come together, they form what is known as the third culture. This culture is one which is enriching and unique made from marriage of two cultures from both parents. The third culture mostly manifest when a child is born and it is a big advantage to the children because they benefit from this unique compromised culture which are always the positives of each culture combined.

Other advantages come from the fact that the children from multicultural relationships are unique in many aspects and often grow with an open mind due to the fact that they come from two or more cultures. This trait makes it easier for them to embrace new thing and even perceive different aspects of the society in an unbiased manner.

# 3  LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism has gained a lot of attention recently due to the fact that it is on the increase worldwide. Väestöliitto Finland (a family federation in Finland in charge of family welfare and working in the social and health sector), statistically reveals that there are 70 000 families with at least one foreign language speaking partner in them. Within it, there are 40 000 families with children of which one of the parents speak a foreign mother tongue. Within the 70 000 families, 30 000 have children with one of the parents from a foreign nationality (see chart in appendix I). The above statistic is in line with a project by Duo-Familia ry (2016), which says the number of multicultural couples and families in Finland is on a steady increase and has more than tripled over the last twenty years. They also believe this trend will not change in the future.

My thesis is based on the child upbringing aspect of multicultural families. It therefore, falls within the 30 000 multicultural families mentioned by Väestöliitto with children living in Finland. It is focusing on how to deal with the common challenges of child upbringing in multicultural relationships. From most sources, it shows that these challenges always stem from cultural aspects including language, values, child care, tradition or religion, parental role. Romano (2008, 109) who says "Parents who clash over child-rearing issues are often really battling over some basic difference in philosophy, values, or beliefs that they as a couple have not managed to resolve".

Many authors have written about multiculturalism in all its aspects; some in English and others in different languages including Finnish. Some are in the general sense like Hirvonen (2012) who writes about the challenges of multicultural relationships-Finnish males´ perspective. He focuses on challenges faced ( language and communication, gender roles, religious views and social reactions )in heterosexual relationships involving Finnish males and their partners from different cultural backgrounds. On the same direction, McFadden (2001) writes on "Intercultural Marriage and Family: Beyond the Racial Divide. McFadden (2001) focuses on the trend of multicultural marriages

and how they are influenced by the dynamics in the family including the development of children and adolescents.

In my perspective, I decided to write on something more specific; the child upbringing aspect of multicultural relationships with children. These families must be multicultural and to avoid bias, it does not limit any particular background like that of Hirvonen (2012) who writes specifically about the Finnish males´ perspective. This work gives the opportunity to all the mothers in the "Multicultural Mother and Baby group" to give their opinions. Some writers have also dwelled on similar topics in English such as Crippen & Brew (2015) who write on "Strategies of Cultural Adaption in Intercultural Parenting". They interviewed parents from multicultural families to get their experiences of parenting as intercultural couples, to understand how they navigate cultural differences within the family.

This chapter will continue with the challenges faced by multicultural families in the child upbringing aspect of their relationships and how they deal with the situation when it arises. These challenges include language, cultural value, parental/gender roles and religion which are sometimes interwoven.

3.1 Language

Language is a vital part of communication in every relationship including that of a multicultural relationship especially when there is a child involved. In a multicultural relationship, language is one of the biggest challenges when it comes to child upbringing. This is because both parents are from different countries and consequently have different mother tongues.  Therefore, the decision and implementation of bringing up a child to be bilingual is often difficult because it requires lots of persistence from the parents.
Crippen and Brew (2013, 7) supports this by explaining that children introduced to their parents languages hardly gained bilingual fluency due to language asymmetry in the households. In some cases, one of the parents gets jealous

when the other is talking to the child in his/her own language because he/she cannot understand the partner´s language thus feeling left out. Often, the parent who is not from the host country has a lot of work to do if he/she wants the child to speak his/her own language of origin. This is because the language of the host country comes automatic to the child based on the fact that the child hears it in school, streets, families and friends. For example, children growing up in Finland are inclined to speaking Finnish than a foreign language from one of the parents because they probably interact in that language more.

In order limit this challenge; parents need to think about the benefits of being bilingual. These benefits will encourage them to be persistent and patient in order to achieve their goals. Bilingualism is a richness which a child inherits from his or her parents because it opens the window to both parents´ culture and supports a child´s identity. True multilingual individuals can switch fairly effortlessly from thinking and speaking in one language to thinking and speaking in another (Cotton 2013, 72). Also, bilingualism is part of that "third culture" which is a unique culture formed from the culture of both the father and mother. Crippen & Brew (2013) proposes that "The enculturation of dual cultural codes for children was complemented by long-term stays and close contact with extended families in each culture of origin to gain language fluency and cultural immersion experiences". It is also important that the child's language skills are being promoted by people who can speak the language and will speak to the child only in the language to help them develop their language strength. Following Ball (2011, 49), he says "Infant development workers, home visitors, family daycare providers, and early childhood educators need training, ongoing professional development, and resources to encourage them to support parents' use of their mother tongue and bilingual/multilingual language acquisition in the home". Supporting his view, it is vital for parents to take their children to discussion groups or any arena where the child can enhance his/her language proficiency.

## 3.2 Cultural values

Values and beliefs define who we are, what is true, what is right and wrong, and the "musts" and "must nots." They are first learned at home and then often vanish into our subconscious until something causes them to surface, something that challenges them. Romano (2008, 111). Cultural values are a very vital part of everyone's culture because it defines a person in respect of where they are coming from. It is a unique part of every background and differs from one country to another because it is passed from one generation to the other and defines what is acceptable and not acceptable. Some cultural values are similar to another and some are different even within same country. Bovolek (2012) in his summary of practices and traditions cites that family, respect for elders, religion, education, harmony, patriotism, Love, children, helpfulness and hard work are the ten most talked about cultural and family values after a study he conducted. Crippen and Brew (2013, 8) explains that "Some counsellors may have a bias toward acculturating to the dominant culture of residence, while others may believe it is essential for parents to continue cultural traditions and pass down parental heritages." It is partly due to some of these differences in cultural values that some multicultural relationships face challenges.

When a couple are to start a relationship, it is much easier to come to a compromise on cultural values but when a child is born, then challenge of which value to pass on to the child starts manifesting. The kid's matter community (2013) in their material of why culture matters for children's development and wellbeing explains that "There are many differences in parenting practices between cultures, including (but not limited to) the ways children are shown affection, attitudes towards discipline and how much emphasis is placed on family responsibility compared with promoting children's independence." They also go further to acknowledge that children from multicultural homes also face cultural value challenges because they have different expectations at home and at the local school they attend because the values at these two places differ. Many fortunate couples discover that, despite their many other differences, their

basic beliefs and values are the same, and they are able, each in his or her own way, to instil the same strong personal code in their children; Romano (2008, 111). He goes further to stress that not all couples are fortunate like he mentioned above and in some cases, one person is willing to compromise but has a feeling of loss for failing to pass on his/her values to the child. In order to deal with such challenges: The focus on the family site (2015) proposes that "…it's important to acknowledge and understand how contrasting customs and cultural backgrounds are likely to impact your marriage and family life." It is also important to note that a when two cultural different couples have a child, a third culture is born which is compromised culture from both cultures. Considering each other's culture is important because parents despite their differences always want the best for their children

*"Yet regardless of culture, parents throughout the world share the same basic goals for their children. They want their children to be healthy, develop skills for surviving financially, and possess the positive values respected by their own culture." Raising children network 2014*

In conclusion, reaching a compromise when cultural value differences occur is the best solution to solve this issue.

3.3 Parental/gender roles

Parental/gender role is a complicated topic due to how it is perceived from different parts of the world. It is even more complicated when two people from different cultures come together with different ideas on how to handle the different roles in their relationship. Finland being country which promotes equality between women and men has been voted by the Sofeminine online magazine-focus on women, as the second most feminist country in the world second only to Iceland and also has an act promoting equality between men and women. With all these in place, parental role is challenged especially if the

other partner is from a country where a family is traditionally viewed with women being the weaker sex.

"Theories that were historically aligned with the traditional view of the family have been challenged and replaced by more flexible contemporary views of the roles played by mothers and fathers in families" Parke (2013, 27). These challenges in child upbringing often manifest in the form of who names the child, who has the greater say in the child's wellbeing, who does the child takes orders from, who makes the rules or who is the primary caregiver to the child. Parker in page 29 of his book continues by saying "In spite of the conflicting views and the inevitable tensions between those who pine for the past and those who wish for new social and economic opportunities for men and women, there have been and continue to be real shifts in how families are - organized especially in terms of the roles played by mothers and fathers.

Parents living in Finland must despite their respective perspective of parental or gender role integrate themselves in the community where they are living: a one where men are equal to women and thus have an equal say in the life of their child. Familia ry- Duo Project on gender roles in intercultural marriages (2013) supports this by saying "Gender roles aren't necessarily complementary in intercultural relationships, because partners may come from two cultures with very different ideas of female and male roles. When this is the case, the success of the relationship will depend on the couple being able to satisfactorily negotiate a new kind of gender complementarity agreeable to both partners." Discussion and negotiations have always worked and it is even better if the family can decide before a child is born.

3.4 Religion

Many scholars have made an attempt to define the term religion and there has been a lot of argument of which definition suits best. It is either the definition is too scanty and excludes many aspects of religion, or too ambiguous and difficult to differentiate religion with some aspects of culture. "De natura deorum", II, xxviii, from the Catholic encyclopedia (2012) attempts the definition of the

word, *relegere* (to treat carefully) and also broadly defines it "…
the voluntary subjection of oneself to God."

Religion has a big role to play in multicultural relationships due to its complex nature. When the partners come from the same country but different religion, it causes some misunderstandings and what more of when they are from different countries and religion at the same time? Romano (2008, 102) supports this by saying "Even between couples from the same country, different religious beliefs can be a cause of conflict in marriage, not only because the partners may not be in agreement on where and how to worship as a family, but because so much of what people do and believe, their attitudes about what is right and wrong, and their philosophy of life stem from their religious background." When multicultural partners with children come from different religious backgrounds, these questions begin to erupt "We have two different religions, which one do we choose for our children? Do we choose one, blend them? Will we attend church, mosque, temple, etc? Ahmadinia (2012). At one point, the partners may find themselves wrestling the child to their respective religions which does to help the situation.

When religious challenges arise in multicultural relationships, Romano (2008, 103) upholds that in a bit to solve the situation, "… one of three things usually happens: (1) one partner converts to the religion of the other; (2) both partners keep their own faith and try not to interfere in the practices or beliefs of the other; or (3) both partners drift away from their own religion and either join a third religion or refrain from adhering to any formal religion at all." Sometimes the grown up children are allowed to choose or belong where they want to and this helps them to create an identity for themselves. A grown up child sometimes uses the building block provided by the parents to build his life including choosing a religion for his/her self because every child is unique. Heredity, genes or parents' wishes for their child does not determine the child's identity; instead, the child is more than the sum of all the he or she is made of.

# 4 METHODOLOGY

Kothori (2014, 8) defines research methodology as way to systematically solve the research problem. He adds that "In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them." This chapter will focus on the methodology of my research. I will tell how I selected the respondents, how data was collected, what methods were used to collect data and how these data will be analyzed.

## 4.1 Participants

My research was conducted in collaboration with Familia ry which is a religiously and politically independent NGO, founded in 1988. It brings together Finnish people interested in multicultural issues and immigrants with different language and cultural backgrounds (familia ry 2016). The aim is to promote equality and non-discrimination in the Finnish society, and also to prevent racism and alienation. The Duo project amongst other projects carried by this organization is focused on multicultural families. As one of the activities of the Duo project, the discussion group for women with children from multicultural relationships is organized. This group comprises of women from multicultural relationships who have children below the age of one with their partners.

The group of multicultural women served as the participants of my thesis which I observed as a participant and also served questionnaires. This group was made of up ten women (excluding me) from multicultural relationships from seven different countries and their spouse from six different countries. The group met every Thursday from 2:30pm to 4:30pm from the 7$^{th}$ of January 2016 to the 25$^{th}$ of February 2016; making a total of eight sessions. All group sessions were conducted in English due to the fact that the group is multicultural and that was a common language everyone understood. Each group session contained a unique topic to be discussed for the day guided by a handbook written by Kinnunen (2010). Topics included; from falling in love to

love, between cultures, third culture combines old ways from both cultures and creates new ways, when two becomes three, an intercultural child is more than the sum of his or her parts, bilingualism is a richness and blended families. Most of the topics were closely related to my thesis work while others were not. I attended all the sessions because discussions were open and the best materials can come up when you least expect.

According to Kothari (2004,59), It is clear that I used the non-probability sampling which is a non-random type of sampling implying it is that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has a chance of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling can also be referred to as purposive, deliberate or judgment sampling. It is also useful to know that in this kind of sampling, the researcher chooses the units to work with; which was the multicultural women's group in my case as they possess all the characteristics of my target population. Data was collected from this group via questionnaire and observation during group sessions.

The stratified sampling technique was used for this study which according to McLeod (2014) who defines it as where the researcher identifies the different types of people that make up the target population and works out
the proportions needed for the sample to be representatives; which involves dividing the population into small sub-categories to suit your study. In this case, it required me to work with women having children below the age of one from multicultural relationships leaving in Finland. Due to the procedure that let to me working with the target group, I would conclude the sampling method that best suits the situation was the stratified non-probability sampling method.

The target group for this study was the mother and baby discussion group under the supervision of the Duo Project of Familia ry. I got to meet them through a meeting with the group coordinator who proposed the group as a suitable group for my research. The group was made up ten women from multicultural relationships with children below the ages of one.  There were three Finnish mothers and seven mothers with non-Finnish background (from different African, North American and European countries). Their spouses on

other hand also come from Finland (four) and the rest from African and European backgrounds. They all participated in the weekly arranged discussions which I was permitted to take part in but eight out of the ten responded to the questionnaires.

From the respondents involved, it is clear on the level of diversity existing between the participants. The participants and their spouses come from different nationalities making a total of eleven different nationalities. Diversity can also be seen from the number of years spent together which ranges from one to ten. On the other hand, there is less diversity in the number of children from the relationship which all cases except one has one child. There were cases of participants or their partners having children from previous relationships. I chose not to include those in the study because am working with the children had from the present relationship and below one year which was not the case with the other children.

## 4.2 Data collection

In this study, data was collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The primary source being data collected from questionnaires and notes taken during group sessions as a participant and the secondary source being from authors who have wrote on similar topic.

This is a qualitative form of thesis which implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Anderson et al., 1998-8). The qualitative approach of research endeavors to extend our understanding of human behavior, individually and collectively, by investigating the underlying causes for people acting and thinking as they do (Cottrell 2014, 93).

Data was collected through questionnaires (which is also an aspect of the quantitative approach) and participating in the target group which is a form of the observation approach. A questionnaire according to Kothari (2004, 100) consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form

or set of forms. McLeod (2014) adds that questionnaires can be thought of as a kind of written interview and can be carried out face to face, by telephone or post. The participant observation approach is defined by Cottrell (2014, 144) as an observation in which you are a participant in the context that you are researching, as in ethnographic research. McLeod (2015) from the simple psychology organization gives a better definition to suit my study when he describes this as a variable of observation where the researcher joins in and becomes part of the group they are studying to get a deeper insight into their lives. He goes further to mention that there are two different types of participant observation; the cover and the overt. I participated in the overt observation which is where the researcher reveals his or her true identity and purpose to the group and asks permission to observe unlike the cover which is on the other hand.

Due to the fact that the observation method was structured, I was able to decide in advance which type of data I will be writing down and the reasons why. In order to get an in-depth knowledge of what I needed for my research, I also decided to administer questionnaires to the participants. The observatory method of data collection is advantageous in that it can yield rich information, the researcher gains more immediate sense of the subject, context and how multiple variables interact and also, the researcher gains insights into aspects that were not anticipated during the designing of the project Cottrell (2010, 143). This method was particularly suitable for this thesis because the participants gave me the opportunity to get greater set of responses as everyone responded to the questions freely. It was also possible to get an in-depth analysis the individuals involved in the study coupled with the fact that I could ask question. On the other hand, Cottrell (2010 143) proposes the following disadvantages that are related to my research. It was time consuming as I had to attend all sessions because you never know when valuable information will be available. Also, there are complex ethical issues in this type of research because participants might be reserved due to the fact that you are there and lastly, the findings can be highly subjective and difficult to generalize from. On my own personal note, making notes of necessary information was difficult because I did not get to write in their own exact words all the time due to how fast they spoke.

The questionnaires administered were comprised of both open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions were mostly used to get the participants' background whereas the open ended questions went deep into the topic of the research. These questionnaires are advantageous in that they provided relatively large amount of data within a short while. Also, participants can elaborate on their answers to suit which situation fits them best. For this research, the questionnaires were able to get respondents to open up on issues they are not able to during the group sessions. McLeod (2014); notes that, though this method is useful for data collection, it also possesses some disadvantages in that for open questions due to the fact that it takes long for the respondents to complete. Also, the researcher needs more time to analyze such data in a qualitative research because they have to read the answers and organize them into categories which is often subjective and difficult. In a similar sense, response levels may be low because respondents have the option not to answer questions they do not want to and this end up with them not answering the most vital questions. Questions are also likely to be misinterpreted and participants may tend to provide answers they feel the researcher is looking for.

4.3 Data Analysis

The thematic data analysis method is widely used in analyzing qualitative data, was used in this study. Pope, Mays and Popay (2007, 96) defined the thematic analysis method as a method which comprises of the identification of the main, recurrent or most important (based on the specific question being answered or the theoretical position of the reviewer) issues or themes arising in a body of evidence. They further explain that it is typically the method used for identifying, grouping and summarizing findings from included studies and looking for what is prominent from the data collected.

The psychology students from the University of Auckland-New Zealand came out with a six step procedure on how to use the thematic method of data analysis. The first step involves familiarization with the data which requires the researcher reading and re-reading the data to become immersed and familiar with its content. Secondly, the researcher needs to code the data by identifying

the relevant features in the data that will help answer the research questions. Thirdly, the researcher searches for themes which involves examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning. The fourth step is all reviewing the themes by checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story of the data and one that answers the research question. The firth step defines and names the themes by developing a detailed analysis of each theme, working out the scope and focusing on each theme, determining the 'story' of each. The last step which is the writing up stage involves weaving together the analytic narrative and data extract and contextualizing the analysis in relation to existing literature. These steps are not rigid and they can be manipulated to suit the study.

All data collected in the course of this study was analyzed to answer the research questions which stem from the research objectives. Most importantly; from the mothers' perspective, what are some of the challenges in child upbringing in multicultural relationships? Secondly, how are these challenges dealt with when they occur? And are there any suggestions or proposals from the mothers to other multicultural couples?

For this study, data from two sources was analyzed including data from administered questionnaires and notes taken during observing as a participant in the group sessions. Data from both sources was arranged following the steps proposed above and presented to suit the objective of the study. This research is studied in four different main dimensions including language, cultural values, parental roles and religion which may at some instances include other sub-dimensions supporting the objective of the study. Due to the fact that I have two sources of data, I had to familiarize myself with the content of data from both sources. I continued by rearranging the relevant data to suit my studies and rechecking to see if it matched my claim. Later on, I developed a detailed analysis based on related combined data. This last stage entailed that I put it down in writing relating to the research objectives.

4.4 Ethical Consideration

Ethics according to McLeod (2015) refers to the correct rules of conduct necessary when carrying out research. He also adds the every researcher has a moral responsibility to protect research participants from harm. In this research, the participants' identities were well concealed given the fact I understand the confidentiality rule of research ethics.

At the very beginning, participants' consent was sought and they were made to understand that participating in the research was voluntary and refusal from just one of the group members will mean I cannot participate to observe. As a result, they all had to submit their response via the coordinators whether they are interested or not; which they all said 'Yes'. Secondly, I wrote a 'Research Permission' form explaining all there was to know about my research and the ethical rules I was bound to respect. These forms were taken home by participants to understand and sign to their content then, later returned to me.

They were also made to understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, benefits of the research to Familia ry and the society and their right to confidentiality. The group facilitators on their part made it clear that it was closed group and under no circumstance should members situations discussed elsewhere. All these were to instill trust and make the participants comfortable during the group sessions as the observational research method is vulnerable to ethical malpractices. This statement is in conformity to Anderson et al (1998, 100) where they say "Several features of observational research make it vulnerable to questions of ethical malpractices". It is also true to them that amongst all social science method of data collection, the observational technique is the least obtrusive.

With the questionnaires, the purpose of the research was still repeated to make sure the participants knew what they were signing in for. They were also given the liberty to skip or leave a question unanswered if they wanted to. No name, address, or identities were required from the questionnaires to keep their information confidential. This means questionnaires are good for researching sensitive topics as respondents will be more honest when they cannot be identified. Keeping the questionnaire confidential should also reduce the

likelihood of any psychological harm, such as embarrassment, McLeod (2014) from the Simple Psychology institute.

4.5 Limitations of the Research

Limitations to research as defined by the USC University of California (2016) are "… those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from your research. They are the constraints on generalizability, applications to practice, and/or utility of findings that are the result of the ways in which you initially chose to design the study and/or the method used to establish internal and external validity." Due to the technique in which data was collected and the nature of the topic; digging into respondents personal lives, getting exactly relevant information from the respondents seemed rather limited. From my judgement, I got more relevant data from group sessions than from the questionnaires. This could be explained by the fact during group sessions, participants were comfortable and talked freely and this made even the shy ones to follow suit. On the other hand, questionnaires were administered individually and as individuals, they may tend to limit their responds which led to many unanswered questions in the questionnaires.

As earlier mentioned, group sessions were in English and so were the questionnaires. I would hardly think the unanswered questions were because of the language because all participants spoke English fluently even seemed to have studied in English which also makes the written aspect not a problem. Hirvonen (2012, 21) blames her part of limited response to the shyness of Finnish males who are mostly introverts and are good in listening that speaking. I seem to differ with her in that my respondents were all women and just three Finns out of ten participants. I would rather say limited response was due to the fact that we met every Thursday for eight consecutive sessions and I guess they felt I know them to an extend which adding more private information to the ones I heard already during the group sessions was too much. This may have

made them to hold back some vital information because of the topic at hand "Dealing with the challenges of child upbringing in multicultural relationships" which to some extend requires information which the respondent is not comfortable sharing with some other person especially a strange researcher who they barely knew.

From another perspective, my research is limited to the fact that it only researches on the perspective of women with children below one year of age and who are from a multicultural relationship. This therefore means that the sample size was relatively limited because to be a participant, you must meet all the above mentioned criteria. This may not be a big limitation since the sample size of qualitative research is less relevant.

Though the above limitations existed, data collected was rich enough to help me forge ahead with the research. This was due to the fact I had two sources where data was collected; questionnaires and group discussion sessions which collectively provided me enough data to be used.

# 5 FINDINGS

This chapter is based on the findings of the study from both the questionnaires and notes taken during group observation sessions. It is going to be on the perspective of the mother's in the studied multicultural relationships.

## 5.1 Language

Language which is the most important form of communication is often an inseparable part of everyone's identity and culture. Language also represents roots and continuity, because language and culture go hand in hand. Due to the important role played by language in every one's culture, that aspect of letting it go or seeing your child grow up with another language is not often a good feeling. Therefore, bilingualism tends to be the only option in multicultural relationships.

In a multicultural relationship, the child is bound to live in a world were two or more languages coexist which some of the time is a challenge. However, language problem according to the mothers, manifested in diverse ways requiring the partners to deal with it differently.

One of the most prominent challenges related to language was one partner not understanding what the other is saying to the child. Sometimes what the partner says to the child can be misinterpreted by the other partner and is sometimes a challenge. As a result of all this, they often feel left out because of the language barrier. One mother admitted to this during a group sessions by saying

*"I get jealous and sometimes annoyed when my partner speaks a language to the child which I do not understand"*

This does not come as a surprise because some of the mothers are in a relationship with Finnish men who spoke Finnish to children. Lewis (2004, 45-49) for instance after stating some facts on how difficult the Finnish language

may be, says "If all these considerations make Finnish appear difficult for an Indo-European learner, it only confirms the fact that one does not easily learn a language that differs wildly in structure and thought processes from one's own." This case does not limit itself only Finnish partners as the other ladies also admitted the same fact.

Another challenge manifests in teaching a foreign language in Finland. It is no strange fact that teaching a language different from that of the host country is a big challenge. Mothers coming from different countries admitted to this challenge as one of the measure language challenges in the upbringing aspect of their children. Crippen & Brew (2013, 9) after their study on strategies of cultural adaption in intercultural parenting, supports this by saying "There was a consistent preference enunciated by mothers to transmit their heritage language to their children, although they enumerated many logistical barriers to multilingual households." This challenge comes in form of lack of patience to push forward and teach a foreign language to the child, lack of persistence and patience on the part of the mothers. It is true that mothers spend more time with the children and would want their children to speak their language. Crippen and Brew (2013) continue on same page by concluding that mothers living in a foreign country "lacked proximate support such as extended family or grandparents to facilitate heritage cultural transmission to their children. As such, the primary enculturation of their children was to the culture of residence In order to deal with the above mentioned challenges, one of the mothers proposed that

*"Just remain consistent; it is ok to repeat in English if one wants the other parent to know what one is saying to the child"*

This proposal falls amongst one of the ten key factors of raising multilingual children proposed by Tokuhama-Espinosa (2000, 13) which are timing and the windows of opportunity, aptitude for foreign language, motivation, strategy, consistency, opportunity and support, the linguistic relationship between the first and second languages, siblings and gender".

The other mothers from the multicultural discussion group also proposed some solutions they believe can help promote the richness of bilingualism in the child. They include speaking both languages to the child even before they are born because it helps them get familiar with the language and that makes it easy for them to speak. In addition to this, they proposed reading same books and telling same tales to the children in both languages for it encourages them to hear same stories in different languages, therefore, facilitates language learning. One of the main solutions they proposed was to take the children to their respective countries of origin to improve their language proficiency. In the same way, parents can speak just their native language to the child to increase language fluency in the child. Parents from multicultural families need to also see the benefits of bilingualism in the life of their child which includes the fact that a bilingual child has the possibility to express him or herself in two different languages and communicate with his or her family members and relatives.

5.2 Cultural Values

Cultural values are easily understood as the beliefs and customs of every society. They shape the community and those living in it giving rules of the acceptable and non-acceptable of the society. In general, however, our national or regional culture imposes itself upon our behavior rather than the other way round, and we become a solid German, a good Finn, a real American, or a true Brit, as the case may be Lewis (2004, 55). This therefore means that, the cultural values which will practice define who we are gradually until we become completely part of it.

When two cultures merge, these values tend to clash if they are different or compliment themselves if they are similar. Due to the fact that we all come from our respective cultural backgrounds, cultural values are bound to be different, thus, resulting to challenges in raising children if not handled with consideration. A third culture is born when two cultures merge. It is that unique culture made up of mostly the positive values of both cultures which the child grows in.  All the ladies succumb to the fact that cultural value differences pose as a

challenge in the child upbringing aspect of their relationship. These challenges as they say, comes from cultural values like discipline, family structure, concept of hierarchy, concept of time, nature of friendship, personal space, food, dressing, music, gestures, dance, rituals, etc. It was unanimously agreed by the ladies during group sessions that aspects of each partner's cultural values sometimes needs to explained due to the differences unlike mono cultural relationships where everything comes automatically. This is supported by statements from two of the participants:

*"….you need to explain things you never thought you would; why you behave and act in certain ways according to your culture"*

*"Discuss and explain everything! Often things that seem totally clear to you are not clear to someone from another culture and that leads to misunderstandings and disputes that could be avoided if everyone spoke out"*

Due to that fact that this challenge is faced by most women in the child upbringing aspect of their relationship, solutions to this challenge were easily forthcoming from the ladies on how they think it can be dealt with. The following quotations came from both sources of data collection.

*"Let the other spouse know why the value is important and why one wants to pass it on to the child"-*

*"Talk! Talk about what is important to us, about our own childhoods an how to handle the situation"*

*"It is important to keep and pass on the values of both cultures to your child and make rules"*

*"We made and set rules even before our child was born, it is recommended"*

From all the solutions proposed, it is quite evident that most ladies admit to the fact that dialogue is always a good way to deal with a challenge especially in the child upbringing aspect of a multicultural relationship, as one mother simply states;

*"Talk about it"*

However, some mothers were in agreement with Benish-Weisman et al. (2013) as cited in Tam and Chan (2015, 16) who "found that parents may acknowledge that their children have a unique set of values that differ from their own and they may therefore be willing to adapt their socialization practice in a way that fits their children's values." They see the challenges of child upbringing in multicultural relationships rather as an opportunity to bring up a culturally rich child as they say;

*"Keep an open mind. A multicultural child is a great treasure to the world. View challenges as opportunities"*

*"….of course, we talked about all of the above (meaning challenges) in preparation to become parents, however, we did not view it as a challenge but rather how we wish to enrich the child's cultural upbringing".*

From a completely different perspective one mother thought they have rather had to deal with the challenges of belonging to a multicultural relationship including racism and legal aspects (visas and work permits) than they have had with child upbringing she responded to that aspect by saying;

*"Our baby is so young that it is difficult to answer to this yet" and "We have discussed it only so far, again the baby still so young"*

It is true as Pollock & Van Reken (2010, 172) say after examining all the strengths and pitfalls of child upbringing "While there's no perfect formula for "How to Raise third culture kids 100 Percent Successfully," the most basic principle is what we said earlier: never forget a Third Culture Kid is still a kid and needs consistent, loving parenting like any other child."

5.3 Parental/Gender role

The parental and gender roles both in the relationship and family milieu are viewed differently across the globe with what one country considers normal being completely abnormal for another. Altunlu (2014) in her presentation of

"Gender role around the world" outlines the different ways in which the different continents perceive this phenomenon. She claims that in North America, there is a sharply defined gender role with feminist and masculinity distinguished through use of formal and informal sanctions, in South America, women have highly traditional household responsibilities doubled over with the expectation of career success as the trend evolves, in Africa the women usually live as housemakers, child-bearers and wives, coming to Europe which is the main representative of "western" culture, the official line is that men and women are equal and in Asia, women are often portrayed as the weaker ones who depend on men for support. Lastly, Australian women spend an average of two hours more each day than men on housework while the men spend this extra on employment related activities or leisure.

Though the above analysis may not be completely correct or the trend has greatly evolved, it is obvious that the gender and parental roles across the globe greatly varies. These differences tend to manifest sometimes as challenges in multicultural families with children because parents perceive the gender and parental roles differently. The ladies during the group sessions mentioned that these challenges can manifest in the form of who names the child, child discipline, hierarchy in the household, respect for partners or relations and courtesy. They also admitted to the fact that these challenges in the child upbringing aspect of their relationship comes down to caring for the baby; that the men are mostly left out in taking care of the child's basic needs as they feel women are more inclined to such activities. In continents like Africa, Asia and South America, women are viewed as the primary home caretakers including children and when those from these continents are in a relationship with those from the "western culture", challenges may occur.

On the other hand, response from questionnaires proved otherwise because just two respondents admitted to the fact that gender or parental role is actually a challenge in their relationship. One of the ladies responded that

*"Responsibility and childcare"* are challenges they face in the child upbringing aspect of their relationship and she admits that it happens *"Nearly daily".*

I cannot really understand why the disparities exist, but I guess when everyone talks at same time, it is easy to say things than saying them individually as issues that occur in their families.  The second reason I thought they did not see it as a challenge is due to the fact that about 70% of their partners come from countries with the "western" culture, thus perceive parental and gender role almost equally.

One of the ladies who experiences responsibility and child care challenges in her relationship advices other families with children in multicultural relationship that;

*"Getting to know other families in similar situations and getting to know your partner's culture helps a lot"*

In the same direction, Lewis (2004, 148) says in Finland, "The national welfare system allows women to go back to work early after childbearing. Fathers, who are granted paternity leave, often stay at home and do the housework" which is not typical of other countries. In my opinion, I think this is a really nice way to lessen the burden of child care on the mothers are they are most of the times overloaded psychologically and practically. Lewis (2004) in the next page states "In Finland the dual task of career and home brings, more often than not, serious overloading, even for women imbued with ´sisu´". "Sisu" is considered by him (page 59) to be a Finnish word which defines direct translation and can be viewed as ´guts´ and implies courage, toughness, stamina, stubbornness, singlemindedness and tenacity-the ability to endure hardship and adversity.

Crippen & Brew (2013, 6) after a study conducted on parental or gender role, concluded that "… shared belief enabled them to relinquish their respective culturally constructed gender roles and to blend their cultural values for a higher goal."  This means that parents facing challenges in parental or gender roles should be able to come to a compromise considering their respective culturally constructed roles in relation to the present state. He goes further with another proposal when he proposes mutual abandonment of culturally defined gender roles to gain flexibility in order to incorporate other aspects of culture.

5.4 Religion

Religious diversity has been and is still patterns that exist in the world. There are different religious views in todays' world leading to a lot of religious diversity. Dark (2000, 2) stresses on the fact that "People's ideas, their beliefs, what they consider to be right or wrong, powerfully shape their behaviour. This is particularly true with regards to religion, because religion is considered to be at the core of a society's – or even a country's – value system in many parts of the world." Due to the fact there is a lot of religious diversity, there are bound to be challenges when two conflicting religions meet. In some cases, religious views might be different but similar in their values and this will tend to minimize the level of challenges faced.

Due to the fact that religion influences the way people think, behave and do things, raising a child in multicultural relationships may have different point of views if there exist different religions in that relationship. Mixing cultures sometimes means having to deliberately choose which beliefs and values to pass on the children. Each parent often wants to pass on to the child what he or she believes in with regards to religion. In this study, 50% of the mothers admitted via questionnaire to religion as a factor in their relationship. Their views do not seem to be a challenge in their relationship especially when it comes to raising a child. One mother response to the challenge of which religion they would want to pass on to their child as;

*"As long as the other spouse agrees. It's ok."*

Another mother was simply not sure if religion was the point or something else when she said;

*"Not religion as such, but perhaps the understanding of traditions with religious origins"*

From another mother, she thought it was still too early to talk about it based on the fact that their child is still too young;

*"We have discussed in only so far, again the baby being still so young"*

From the statements above, it is clear that religious differences are not really a cause for concern according to the mothers.

I may conclude that the other 50% of ladies who did not admit to religion being a factor in their relationship did not see it as a challenge. So, they tend not to respond on that fact.

Bauman (2002, 78-79) draws a better conclusion on the aspect of religion when he concludes that religion is not a cultural baggage that is wrapped, tied and dragged along with migration because it cannot be unpacked and unchanged later on. He went further to rather compare religion to a compass and a sextant. He prefers a sextant because it points to a direction relative to the night sky; thus more appropriate similarities with religion as religious conviction and action will change as the users themselves change positions. On the other hand, the compass points north, wherever you are which according to him should not be the case with religion as people should adapt to change.

5.5 Advice for other multicultural relationships

At the end of the questionnaire, the mothers were asked to give suggestions to other multicultural families with children. Baumann (2002, 140) in a summary on how writing the book "The Multicultural Riddle" changed his view says "All identities are identifications, all identifications are dialogical, and all struggles for a common dream are practical." In relation to the above quote, some mothers constructively suggested the following especially during discussion sessions;

*"Communicate with your spouse, get professional help if necessary"*

*"You only get to know your partner when you live together and have a child with them. Multicultural relationships are very rich and can be very challenging at times; requires lots of patience and hard work towards the relationship"*

*"As any parent; to consider the values and traditions you wish to pass on to the child, also in mono cultural families"*

*"Realize the difference between what you say and what you actually do. Your partner does not always know the difference and needs to know, be practical."*

*"Talk about it"*

*"Dialogue! Always find a way to talk about issues"*

*"It is important to let your partner have an equal say in the life of your child"*

From the above suggestions, it can be easily deduced that most mothers suggested `dialogue` as the best form to relate and solve a challenge in all relationships. Stains (2014, 4) Hope for relationship and community healing comes when dialogue focuses on personal stories, emotions and identities.

# 6  DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Discussion

From the findings in chapter five, it is correct to conclude that there are many challenges in the child upbringing aspect of multicultural relationships with regards to the mothers' perspective. Four challenges of the child upbringing aspect of multicultural relationships were dwelled on including language, cultural values, parental/gender roles and religion. From the response gotten from the respondents, it indicates that some challenges like language and cultural values had more impact on the child upbringing aspect of their relationship while parental/gender role and religion were on the low side. This notwithstanding, there are other challenges in the child upbringing aspect of multicultural relationships besides the ones mentioned above including where to live and bring up the children, which holidays to observe, children relationship with extended families , health and safety, dealing with prejudice, etc. One of the respondents made mention of a point that she thought was a challenge as she says after having a child, it is difficult to have some time set aside for each other without the child. She proposes a solution to this challenge by advising that couples put aside time in the evenings for each other; calling it `couple time`.

All these challenges affect the relationships in different rates as one big challenge in one relationship may tend to be something minor to another relationship.  It is also worth mentioning that the challenges are quite similar for all the respondents despite the cultural diversity existing between the different respondents.

It is not completely true or correct to say that the above mentioned challenges were caused sorely by fact that these relationships were multicultural. There may be different reasons for such challenges due to the fact that individuals are unique and are not completely defined by where they come from. Some individuals are tolerant and ready to embrace change and compromise depending on the situation especially in the child upbringing factor of

multicultural relationship. On the other hand, there are people who are resistant to change therefore, find it so difficult to change some aspects of their life or culture they think is ideal. Hvolbek (2013, 20) supports this by mentioning that "At some point, changing our conceptions becomes difficult. We become attached to our thinking and our conceptions and tend to support them with similar ideas; contra wise, we tend to reject ideas that do not support or further our assumptions." Other reasons for such challenges may be due to behavioral, psychological and social variations between men and women as parents.

After reading this research, one might be tempted to conclude that all multicultural relationships consist of just challenges or that only multicultural relationships face challenges in raising a children which are not correct. Mono-cultural relationships tend to also have challenges because even within same cultures there are bound to be challenges based on some other reasons. Partners coming from the same countries might still have different expectations about each other. (Hirvonen 2012, 37).

 It is also worth mentioning that child upbringing in multicultural relationship has many positive sides as advanced by the mothers during group sessions. Some of them include the fact that a child born from a multicultural relationship is rich with cultures from both parents: the third culture. Also, these children grow up with an open mind to embrace change and learn new things based on the milieu where he grew up. They also mention that children from multicultural relationships often speak more than one language which is a positive aspect. From another perspective some of these challenges can be viewed from the positive point of view as one of the mothers mentioned that they only saw them as a way to enrich the child's upbringing and not as a challenge. All these go a long way to emphasize the fact that raising a child in a multicultural relationship equally has positive sides.

## 6.2 Relating results to Familia ry, participants and the community

The results I got can be beneficial to the target group in many ways. To the mothers, it will enable them to understand what other multicultural relationships are experiencing in the child upbringing aspect of their relationships. Thereby, serving as an eye opener by making them realize similar challenges and strengths in such circumstances. It may also uplift their spirits when they realize they are not the only ones experiencing challenges in raising a multicultural child.

On the part of Familia ry and other NGOs with similar motive, this study can help them improve the mother and baby group sessions. Future group facilitators may have to focus discussions on challenges and strengths of multicultural child upbringing aspects that are most experienced by the families like language and cultural values. More time can be dedicated to these aspects that pose as challenges and propose ways to deal with them if they occur. It may also be a great support for future group sessions due to the fact that it contains the experiences of other women in similar situations. To increase the strength of the group, a resource person (preferably someone in similar circumstances) can be invited to dwell on the facts of pertinent issues in order to enlighten the mothers.

Social workers or other social field actors can also benefit from this thesis. It contains vital and relevant material for the social field in general. It can serve as a rich source of information in matters concerning multicultural relationships and the child upbringing aspect of it. Also, students in the social field can also extract relevant material from this thesis to support their studies.

Every individual is a small part of a big community. Therefore, this type of groups serve as a big influence on the community in that whatever activity they partake in will directly or indirectly be felt by the community at large. The community too influences every relationship especially multicultural relationships due to the fact that one partner is not a local. To this effect, challenges also occur in relation to the community which needs to be handled.

## 6.3 Professional development

This whole thesis process has had a lot of positive impacts on me professionally. On an important note, it gave me the opportunity of improving my research skills when searching for data to suit my study. This greatly improved my knowledge on multiculturalism especially the child upbringing aspect of it. In regards to this, I got to know, especially during the group sessions, about how different cultures around the world perceive different situations in the family due to the fact that cultures differ a lot in customs and traditions. Also, after constructing a questionnaire and participating in the group sessions, I ended up with a lot of skills of data collection and analysis. I was able to combine data from these two sources and using the thematic approach, transcribed it to suit my research objectives. I think it is a huge professional improvement on my part because it is something I was not able to do before this research. Moreover, I had meetings with my supervisor, Familia ry program coordinator and the discussion group coordinators which greatly improved my negotiating skills as a professional.

On a more personal note, after this research, I now know a lot about Finland especially about multiculturalism and foreigners in general. At the end of the discussion group sessions, I am more aware of what families go through and the vital decisions they take in order to raise a child. This is important to me because I was not aware of such vital phase in relationships especially in relationships with children. The mothers who participated in the group sessions are really friendly and we still have informal group sessions to have fun and talk more about children even after the sessions are over which is a positive touch to my personal life.

6.4 Suggestion for further research

After this research and the results I got, it leaves me wondering what more can be written about multicultural relationships. It is often said that new ideas are born after a concluded research. It is true that a lot has already been written about this topic but I understand knowledge is never enough. For this reason, I propose more can be written on other aspects of multiculturalism like the positive sides of such relationships. Also, same like this study, future writers could focus on particular issues of such relationships to get a focused result at the end of it. Such topics could include; multicultural relationships and their connection with extended family, dealing with racism, prejudice and discrimination from outsiders in multicultural relationships or the influence of the society to the child from a multicultural relationship.

On another note, there is a lot of research and maybe on the above suggested topic, but there are mostly in Finnish. I, as an English speaker was not able to interpret or understand them because of the language barrier. As I result of this, I will suggest more researchers dwell on same topics in English. This is because English the second most spoken language in the world after Mandarin (in China) with 508 million speakers (Listverse statistic, 2008). As a result, most multicultural relationships including those from the discussion group have English as a common language as they come from countries with different languages.

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APPENDIX 1: Proportion of multicultural families and families with children to the partners'/parents' native tongue in Finland 2008
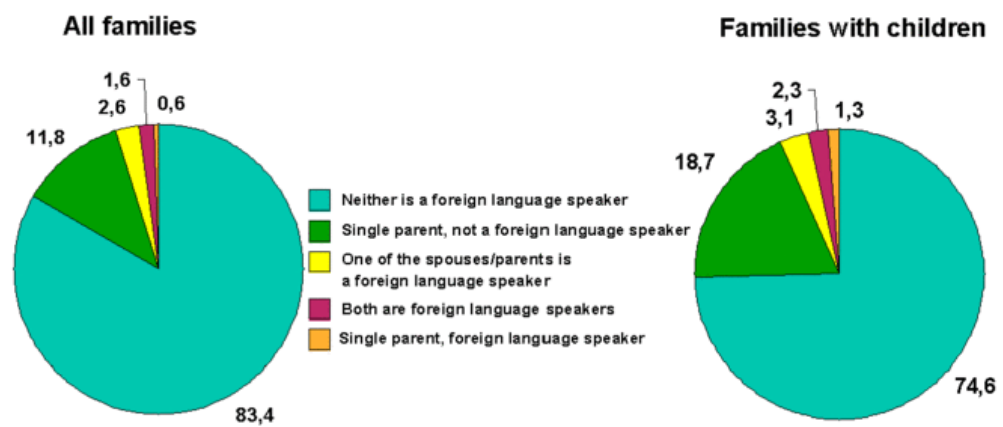


**Figure 3.** The prpoportion of all families (N=70 100) and families with children (N=39 300) according to the spouses'/parents' native tongue in Finland in 2008. (Statistics Finland: Families 2008.)

Source:

http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/@Bin/1910475/fig%203%20foreign%20families.gif

APPENDIX 2: Research questionnaire

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

I.    **INTRODUCTION**

Dear Ms

I am Colette Zeyeum, a student from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences in the field of Social Services. I am in my third year of studies and am currently carrying a study on the topic "Dealing with the Challenges of Child Upbringing in Multicultural Relationships." **Your response will only be used for the purpose of this particular research. In case you have any questions regarding the research or a question which you think is not well understood, please contact me via Tel: +358451696151 or email:** colettenyonga@yahoo.com **Thank you so much for your time and response.**

II.    **QUESTIONS**

**Directions:**

- **Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements regarding the questions asked. Place an "X" mark in the box of your answer or beside the option that best suits your answer.**
- Please do fill the open ended questions in the spaces provided. In case there is something extra you wish to add, feel free to write it at the back of the page.
- Feel free to skip a question if you do not feel comfortable to answering it.

**Section One: Preliminary Questions**

1. What is you and your partner's nationality?

   You_____          Your Partner_____

2. How long have you been together?

   a. Less than one year        ☐   b. Between one to two years        ☐

   c.. Between two to three years   ☐   d. More than three years; specify  _____

3. How many children do you have together?

   a. One        ☐        b. Two        ☐

   c.. Three        ☐        d. More than three        ☐

4. Your child (children) are of which age range

   a. Less than one year        ☐   b. Between one to two years        ☐

   c.. Between two to three years   ☐   d. More than three years; specify  _____

**Section two: Questions Proper**

5. What are some of the challenges faced in your relationship due to the fact that it is multicultural?

   a. Less approval from family, friends and society compared to a mono cultural relationship

   b. Differences in cultural backgrounds,

   c.  Family roles,

   d. Differences in values,

   e. Language of communication,

   f. Differences views in child upbringing,

   g. Finance management

   h. Differences in  religion

   i. Others_____

      _____

      _____

6.  a. Did you in any way prepare yourselves for the arrival of your child (children) in terms of the values or culture you want him or her to grow up with?

☐ Yes            ☐ No

b. If yes, did all that you planned or decided about respected by you both?

☐ Yes    ☐ ten    H☐y    Not☐ll

7.  Do you face any challenges in the child upbringing aspect of your relationship?

☐ Yes            ☐ No

If yes, please answer question "7" and "8" if no, skip them.

8.  What are some of the challenges faced in child upbringing in your relationship?

(Mark an "X" against the letters that corresponds to your answer)

a.  Which values to pass on to the child or children?

b.  Who has more to say in the life of the child; father or mother?

c.  Which from the two traditions or religion do we want to pass on to them?

d.  How to handle the different parental roles to our child (children) that differ in both cultures?

e.  Which language to speak or teach the child?

f.  Which culture is more preferable passing on to the child?

g.  Others_____

_____

_____

9.  For all the options ticked in question "7", how do you often deal with the situation?

a.  _____

_____

b.  _____

_____

c.  _____

_____

d.  _____

_____

e. _____

_____

f. _____

_____

g. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. Are these solutions always successful?

a. Yes, all the times

b. Some of the times

c. Rarely works

d. Never works

e. Some are successful and others are not. Please write to letters to the solutions that work in the space provided

_____     _____     _____     _____     _____     _____

11. Are there any suggestions you would want to propose to other families with children in a multicultural relationship?

12. Is there anything you would want to comment on or something extra you want to add?

_____

_____

_____

_____

III.     APPRECIATION

I sincerely thank you very much for dedicating time to answer this questionnaire. Your effort is really appreciated.

Date_____          Signature_____