LOVE CONQUERS ALL

Differences in family values for interracial or multicultural families

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ABSTRACT

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This was a qualitative research with the aim to study the differences in family values between interracial families. Data collection was done in helsinki Finland. Research participant where malawians who have Finnish partners. Eight Malawians were interviewed. The results were thematically analysed and it indicated that the is a difference in values. These were gender roles , family structure, family and marriage. Some couples are working through the differences. And some are finding it a bit difficult to adjust to the change in environment.

In my conclusion most Malawians viewed family in a functionalistic approach. This was due to the religious and societal backgrounds. Whilst Finnish people view it in a feministic way where everyone is equal and should be treated equal. The influence of socially defined events and roles. Time also played a big role in the changes.

Key words:Family, values, interracial, multicultural, gender roles, family structure and marriage.
1 INTRODUCTION

Family gives each of us a set of blood relations or non-biological relations who surround us during our most formative years whilst marriage brings a new set of familial relationships such relationships may be dissolved through death, divorce or distance. Due to many different changes in the world the meaning of family and types of family values have also changed. Family may seem like a simple concept to grasp but it has fairly changed over the years.

Each family has its own different family values whether from the same cultural background or different. This is because every family or everyone is raised differently. Values are what is held and endorsed by an individual. This can be complex and intricately connected with that individual's beliefs and emotions (Hansson sven ove pg. 1-3). For some it is easy to define what family should be namely a heterosexual conjugal unit based on marriage and co residence. My thesis describes the differences in values between intercultural families in relation to gender roles, family structure, family and marriage. My studies will be on Malawians who are in a romantic relationship or used to be in a romantic relationship with a Finnish person.

My research question is can different values be a problem in multicultural families. The aim is to study the differences and to see how the couples are dealing with the differences. I specified my research on Malawians who are currently living in Finland. These are Malawians who came from both rural and urban parts of Malawi, some I knew before the research. Some have lived longer in Finland and some just recently moved to Finland. My thesis has background information on the topic, methodology, findings and conclusion.
2 BACKGROUND

Family can be described differently or defined differently either according to structure, form of living or according to its function. Family can be extended or nuclear, can be patrilineal or matrilineal. Family is a group of people related by blood or by law, living together or associating with one another to a common purpose. That purpose being the provision of food, shelter and rearing of children (Wilson, 1985 pg.2). Family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of who maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children own or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults (Murdock)

Family is a group of individuals who share a legal or genetic bond, but for many people family means much more and even the simple idea of genetic bonds can be more complicated than it seems. There are different perspectives or theories on family, like the functionalistic approach which existed from the 1940s and 1950. This was to outline the major social systems of the society and links that existed between them. Family was viewed as the core element of the society and any change or decline would have a major impact on the whole social structure. Feministic approach came in great contradiction to the functionalistic approach since it provided great sexual equality within the society. This approach examined the role of women in the society both domestically and politically (Wilson, 1985 pg.21-25)

Marxist approach believed that family performs ideological functions to capitalism. Family is unit of consumption that teaches passive acceptance of hierarch.
Family also acts as an institution through which wealth is passed down in form of private property to their children therefore reducing equality (Wilson, 1985 pg.27-29). He believes in promiscuity, no rules restricting sexuality, emergence of private property and private ownership. Male dominance and he regarded men to be the only owners of property.

Radical psychologists approach stated that family is damaging the development of individuality by providing an environment that is too restrictive. Ronald Laing was the key figure he viewed family as dysfunctional he based his studies on schizophrenic patients. The David cooper also argued that family destroys the inner life of a person (Wilson, 1985 pg.29-30)

Family with all its tawdry secrets and narrow privacy is the source of all our discontents (Leach 1967)

2.1 Change in family structure

Family structure has changed in recent years as a result of high divorce rates, increase in single parent families and a decline in fertility rate. Families without children are the most common in Finland. This type of family makes up to thirty per cent of all families that belong in the category since 2009. In the early 2004 the most common types of family were married couples with children (statistic Finland 2015).
Figure 1 Families by type and age of wife/mother in 2009 (families with father and children by age of father)

2.2 Intercultural marriages

Apart from change in the family structure Finland has become very international due to high immigration rates, with vast people of different cultures and ethnicity. Immigrants mean people who have moved to Finland and intends to reside in Finland for more than twelve months or have resided in Finland over three months without interruption (statistics Finland, 2015). Most people come to Finland in search for work, education or asylum and tourist purposes. Due to the
diversity of cultures it there has been a rise in intercultural or interracial marriages and courtship (statistics Finland, 2015).

Intercultural or international marriages are growing phenomenon in Europe, America and East Asia. Marriages between different nationality, country of birth, language or cultural background have also become common in Finland in recent years. Marriages entered during 2009-2010 in Finland, almost ten per-cent were marriages of Finnish citizens and a foreigner (Statistics Finland 2012). These marriages are very common in the metropolitan area of Helsinki rating up to 15 percent of all marriages in Helsinki in 2011 (City of Helsinki Urban Facts 2012). By intercultural marriages I refer to marriages between people who have grown up in different socio cultural environments. Families with at least one of the spouses or the only parent is a foreign citizen make up six percent of the 82,300 families. The most common combination was a family that comprised of wife a finish citizen and husband foreign citizen. Number of families in which the wife was a foreign national and the husband a Finnish national was the largest beginning of 2000s. The most common combination of foreign citizen is still the one where the husband is a Finnish citizen and wife a foreign citizen.

2.3 Previous research

In the past intercultural relationships were banned and punishable during the time of slavery. Since 1961 in America the laws concerning interracial marriages have changed. There is now social acceptance and understanding that what matters is how the person feels and not how they look. Studies have shown that every interracial couple goes through the adaptation period. This is the process of adjusting to environmental conditions. Studies have shown that interracial
couples have difficulties adjusting to the cross cultures. Studies also reveal that such couples have are more complicated relationships because both partners come to the relationship equipped with different sets of rules, different values and habits (Cools 2011).

A research was done by Lassi Lainala and Minna Säävälä to see intercultural marriages and the consideration of divorce in Finland. This was to really see if Values do matter, in the research they made surveys. The results were that couples who reported a difference in values had a significantly heightened risk of divorce. However it is known from registered data and numerous studies in different countries that compared to monoculture couples divorce is more common in intercultural couples and in marriages between an immigrant and native (Lainala and Säävälä 2014).

Another study was made by a Diak former student on the challenges of multicultural relationships from the perspective of Finnish men. Who had both educational and personal interest in the research. Her findings came up in a thematic form like the social interaction challenges, language and communication, differences in religious view and gender roles? On the social interaction he explains on how the society had influenced on the couples.

For instance negative attitude towards the relationship and social labels were vital in the reassurance of the couple’s relationship. In a way it determined if the couples would remain together like family acceptance. She express how couples have problems in communication and language (Hirvonen pg. 9-10 2012).

Even though they use verbal and non-verbal communication. Due to miscommunication couples often go into misunderstandings despite the presence of a
conformed language. There can also be a difference in cultural conduct as a form of communication. If partners have different beliefs or religion it can be a problem since other religion prohibit or restricts certain practices. The researcher also talked about gender role or position conflict is visible in multicultural relationships. Who is dominant and who is passive can be a problem especially if the other partner comes from an environment where men are strong and dominant (Hirvonen pg. 9-10 2012)
3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVE

A research question is the uncertainty that the researcher wants to revolve. This defines the area of interest to be addressed in the study (ucfs formulating a research question). As a qualitative researcher I want to explore the significant truths in people’s lives (Bakan 1996).

Since I will delving on people’s lives and asking questions about real experiences, finding a good research question is important. Since it forms the basis of my research and helps me identify what I want to know. Therefore my research question is based on different values and how they affect multicultural families.

After answering my research question I intend to relate my thesis to multicultural counseling approach. Finland is becoming more culturally diverse, so clients are different not only by nature of their problem but their cultural background. Multicultural awareness is understanding, sensitivity and appreciation of the history, values, experiences and life styles of minority group. Since there is a high number of immigrants and intercultural marriages are increasing, the next generation will have different family values. The best way to deal with multicultural people is to know their roots (Pedersen 2007).
4 DATA COLLECTION

In my research I used the qualitative research method which always aims to explore people’s experiences. Data can be collected through interviews and observations. In qualitative research you base your analysis on subjective experience. Since my research is on the differences in family values qualitative research was the best choice because it seeks to answer questions and uses systematically defined set of procedures to answer the question. I like it the most because it gives the ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (May 2011).

First and foremost I started to read books with emphasis on family as well as looked into previous research done on the topic. I also had to look into the ethical considerations before drafting my questions and conducting the interviews.

I used questionnaires to obtain subjective information about the participants and to document objective, measurable impact results for analysis. In the research I used open ended questions to allow unlimited answers. The questionnaire also contained fix questions in accordance with the topic this helped in guiding the interviewees.

The questions were straight forward and simple. This was to avoid confusion and also leading the interviewees to my desired response (Philips, Pulliam, Stawarski and A, 2008 pg.xxiii). A questionnaire was sent beforehand so that they could prepare themselves and they could also choose which questions they didn’t want to answer. During the house visits I was able to observe the
interaction between the families helping me understand the responses they gave.

During my face to face interviews one of the methods used, I arranged to meet participants either at their residence or merely at a normal coffee house. I did this because I believe people tend to be more open if they feel safe and usually it’s in their comfort zone. This method yielded higher responses and it also helped to clarify ambiguous questions that I had in my questionnaire.

I was able to use a purposive sampling method which involved a selection of informants based on the importance of my study like Malawians who have stayed in Finland longer and the ones who had families of their own. I also chose to interview informants repeatedly to be able to explore deeper issues (King and Horrocks 2010)

Before I began I had already taken the first step which was identifying the important group or categories of people whom I wanted to interview. These were people who were married with children, Malawians who are cohabitating and the ones who are single parents. I managed to get three families in category one, three in category two and finally two in category three. so in total I interviewed eight people.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF FAMILY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married with children</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohabitating</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single parents</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
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4.1 Data analysis

In my research, I used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and it represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke 2006)

Since interviews were used I printed out all the transcripts and read them carefully. Some topics appeared repeatedly that is when preliminary themes were made. After the interview process I used the coding method by using colors and numbers. So the themes were colored and given number according to how
many times they appeared. This was one of the ways I used to manage my data since it was all on paper and color stickers helped in the grouping.

After I was done I revisited the interviews to see what needed to be added or change. There were three main themes in this research gender roles, family structure, family and marriage.

4.2 Research Ethics

Ethics derives from the Greek word ‘ethos ‘meaning character .The moral integrity of the researcher is a critically important aspect of ensuring that the research process and findings are trust worthy and valid. As a social service student we have a set of fundamental moral or ethical principles to which we are committed to (Banks, 2001pg.6).Ethical research is the making of moral judgment about the aims and methods of a study. Therefore in my research I examined my aims and methods to see if their fair and right. I had to make sure my questions were family sensitive meaning that they don’t touch topics that the family is not willing to disclose (Aubrey, Carol 2000).

Privacy and confidentiality were important during my interview. Because interviews can delve into areas unanticipated at the outset. There is a particular issue with “dyadic” in-quiry as in the case of using interviews to study issues between cares and those they care for and using interviews to study family relationships. Here privacy is threatened when the interview probes into areas that at least one interviewee would prefer to keep private and confidentiality is threatened when the interview reveals details between the pair that were previously secret (sagepub.com)
Informed consent is extensively important whilst it is desirable for the participant to know the privacy and confidentiality “rules” before agreeing to the interview, the privacy issues suggest that this cannot be entirely assured. Therefore some authors recommend a model of continuous or process consent where the researcher reaffirms consent throughout the research process. For example, there is a danger of participants being drawn into the research on partial information and then feeling obliged to continue. Many interviews concern issues that are sensitive; this can make interview emotionally intense. They might potentially harm both interviewees and interview (sagepub.com)
5 RESULTS AND LIMITATIONS

The aim of the research was to know if family values have changed for Malawians living in Finland. To see how these values differ from each other and how they have influenced change. This was to be made based on the different family perspectives. My findings are in thematic form and will be addressed using quotations from the interviews.

5.1 Gender roles

Gender refers to the socially constructed attributions and expectations assigned to individuals on the basis of their biological sex (Suzuki and Ahluwalia pg120 2003). This can be described as the roles that men and women play in their private lives and in the society. Gender roles are behaviors that men and women enact congruent with the socially constructed ideals of masculinity and femininity (Mahilik, Cournoyer, Defranc, Cherry and Napolitano 1998). In many cultures women have been associated with the feminine gender roles like domestic activities whilst men with masculinity gender roles (Miville and Marie L pg. 3 2013). When the married interviewees were asked on the gender roles the responded:

My wife works and I stay home with the children, because am currently unemployed and my Finnish language is not as good, something that I wouldn’t have done if we lived in Malawi
Although there is a division of labor in human affair between the sexes, there are changing social expectations, which are reflected gender roles at different times. On the same topic others responded differently like some families both work and took care of the children together. A plan was drafted on who does what chores in the house. As well as take shift on who nurses the baby or changes the baby's diapers. Some they believe they are all equal.

Whilst living in Finland I have realized how everyone is equal so me and my husband we both work and take care of our children. As a woman I have learnt independence.

Some interviewees expressed their first dates with their Finnish spouse where they went to eat and at the end of the date. They had to split the bill something they found odd because usually in Malawi the man usually pays for the meal. They also expressed how they liked the fact that parenthood was a shared responsibility between both parents something they couldn’t have done whilst living in Malawi.

There have been huge changes for women in terms of employment in the past decades with women moving into paid employment outside the home in ways that their grandmothers and even their mother could only dream of. Women are now moving into jobs that used to be done by men. Even those women working in factories or sweatshops have more choice and independence than if they remained at home (statistics Finland, 2015).
5.2 Family and Marriage

Family is described as people living in the same dwelling according to the population information system of the population register center. Finland has so many types of families like the one without children, married or cohabitating couple with children, single parent and registered partnership (statistics Finland 2015). When I asked what constituted a family almost said married with children some stated having children so they had different views to what a family is.

I believe family is when you’re married with children because my parents were married before they had me and my siblings. And if you have children out of marriage is considered a sin so that’s what I think.

Most of this idea came from their religious and traditional beliefs which they grew up with. When I interviewed single parents or Malawians who are cohabitating they say, that they can’t tell their parents that their cohabitating because their parents will think it’s immoral. Whilst the single parent families are asked every time by family back home when will they get married so that they can take the shame away.

I have lived in Finland for four years and cohabitated with my girlfriend for three years and still my parents don’t know I stay with my girlfriend.
5.3 Family structure

In Malawi having many children is associated with having wealth but now due to the introduction of family planning the number of children is also decreasing. Even though the number of children changed families are still extended. During the interviews the interviewees expressed how since they are now leaving in Finland there is a large responsibility that is laid on them. Because now they are expected to send money home to help their parents and relatives something that their Finnish spouses don’t understand.

Am the eldest of nine children and me living in Finland gave hope to my family who still live in the village because I send as little money I get back home to my relatives, to help with food and education for my smaller relatives.

They also expressed that for some of the spouses it easy for them to understand why especially the ones who have leaved or visited Malawi but for those who have not find it very difficult to see why they still feel obligated.

5.4 Limitations and challenges

Choosing a topic that I had interested in was quite difficult. As well as a topic that will still keep me interested in writing because research has to do with a lot of reading. If the topic is not interesting enough finding literature as well gets difficult. Another thing was choosing the right methodology knowing the effective way to collect my data and having a work plan was difficult but I managed.
Finding participants was also a bit challenging since Malawians are few in number in Helsinki, Finland.

During my research I encountered some challenges since the research involved a lot of people with families. Finding time for the interviews was difficult as well as doing home observation. So I had to come up with a work plan in which we made a time table suitable with their work schedules and mine. I also experienced technical difficulties.

The other challenge was that some of the people I interviewed I knew them before the research. So the hard part was to keep it professional but it also worked to my advantage, because they also felt free to express themselves fully in the interviews.
6. CONCLUSION

My research focused on the differences in family values in multicultural families. According to Lainala and säävälä’s research they found that intercultural couples did have conflict over household duties. But they were most unlikely to consider divorce. This can also be seen in my research as most couples do have difficulties when it comes to gender roles. But some are making exceptions to the roles. In their research they also gathered that the values of Finnish people in intercultural marriages didn’t differ drastically, from values of other married population in Finland. In my research I also noted that almost everyone’s core values were the same.

In Hirvonen’s research she found social attitude to be one of the problems faced by intercultural couples. I also noted the same in my research how some cohabitating couples. They kept it a secret from their families in Malawi because they are afraid of what they may say. He also spoke on religious views, on how other religions prohibited certain things. In my research most of the cohabitating couples or single parent felt to be in conflict with what their religious views states or stipulates like sex before marriage being a sin.

Using the different family perspectives I was able to conclude that most Malawians viewed family in functionalistic approach. This was due to the religious and societal backgrounds. Whilst Finnish people view it in a feminist way where everyone is equal and should be treated equal. Due to some of the difference in the perspectives or values may lead to divorce may lead divorce.
I could also notice how a sequence of socially defined event and roles that enacted over time. Like for instance their concept of marriage was based on them seeing their parents and relatives. It built in them that life is supposed to be life that. When it comes to gender roles because they saw their mothers doing the cooking and cleaning. The men thought it fit that the woman they marry should do the same. But coming to Finland where genders are treated equally. Some of them are making the adjustment but some are still finding it difficult it’s all because that’s how they grew up.

Time also played a big role in the changes. The ones those who have lived in Finland the longest had their values changed the most. The ones who lived in Finland for a few years their concept also changed a bit. This was because the ones who lived longer got more exposure to Finnish life and traditions. And had adjusted more to it than the ones who were just recently been exposed to the culture. Financial stability has made a lot of people to change their values, like having both spouses working due to their financial problems. Because life in Finland is expensive compared to Malawi. So for them to be financially stable they had to make compromises. As well as for the ones who had cohabitated it was for financial issues, and also wanting to know the person before they make a commitment. Finland has fathers leave, something Malawi lacks and this made the men to also bond with the children. And for some of them their concepts changed because of their life situations like having children out of wedlock, for some it was something they didn’t plan for but just happened.
The journey to the ultimate achievements never ends. So I have gained a lot from this research. These include how to use technical appliances like how to use a recorder. How to make notes as well as expand them when analyzing. My knowledge of Microsoft word has been enhanced since I had to make my own graph and plans.

When you’re in the real world that’s when everything you learn comes into practice. I noticed how important confidentiality is when dealing with families or any other client I will deal with in the future. Because I was entrusted with peoples personal stories. I also learnt how to separate myself from the research being from Malawi. It was easy for me to impose my own opinions but I conducted the research with an open mind. Endured and also learnt from others and the research. This helped me not to feel attached to anyone in the research.

My knowledge about Malawi and Finland has increased therefore if I would ever work with multicultural families. It will be easy for me to understand both parties. This study has helped me think what kind of field I would like to work in and also now am more self-innovated. This research has also made me develop my own skills and made me more determined that I can achieve anything. If put my mind to it. My self-motivation has been enhanced because during the research it was easy to get overwhelmed and give up.

Social work is a diverse profession which deals with people’s everyday life. Self-reflection is vital to becoming a culturally competent counselor. Clearly identify-
ing my own world view and personal beliefs about those who are different from me. This will help me in uncovering my own prejudice feelings, stereotypical ideas about clients from other cultures as well as my own. And being open minded and willing to educate myself about culturally different groups as a productive way of moving forward towards my goal of working effectively with them in counseling (Mcleod J 2002).

I now believe in self-awareness and that sensitivity to one’s cultural heritage. This was essential in thereby making me more aware of my own cultural background and experiences have influenced attitudes, values and biases about psychological process.
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APPENDIX 1

Background information

GENDER:

AGE

MARITAL STATUS:

HOME LOCATION (Urban or Rural):

YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN FINLAND:

REASON OF MOVE TO FINLAND:
APPENDIX 2

Family values and background

What do you understand by the term family or values?

Can you explain how it was like growing up in your family?

What kind of family values did you have if any?

What traditional values are important to you?

Where there some values you disliked if any? Which?

Are there any values that your parents tried to make you follow but you weren’t good at doing?

How do you feel when you see someone not following the values you were bought up with?

Which values are not important or necessary now?

Some say that poorer societies have stronger values than rich countries. do you agree?

What values will you pass on to your children?