

The Cultural Matrix:  
Exploring Cultural Influences on Familial Role  
Meanings in Bicultural Couples

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## Abstract

### The Cultural Matrix:

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Lois Jones

The current study is a phenomenological inquiry into the meanings and conceptualizations of familial roles within the lived experience of bicultural couples in Canada. The purpose, to contribute culturally sensitive knowledge to the field of drama therapy as little research exists on bicultural couples. As such, three bicultural couples, all varying in age, cultural origin and sexual orientation, were recruited. Each couple was independently interviewed and given Landy's (2009) role profile card sort, though this tool was adapted with the exclusion of many the original roles and the inclusion of new, more culturally relevant roles. Further, role profiles was integrated with Betensky's (1995) phenomenological approach to art therapy to both sequentially highlight the phenomenon under investigation and fit the cultural context of the study. Through a phenomenological conceptual framework, the data was analyzed according to Moustakas' (1994) stages of theme analysis allowing the essence of the phenomenon – family roles in bicultural couples – to emerge. Findings suggest that cultural differences influence family role meanings within the bicultural couple and are internalized. This may lead to conflict but also the development of strong communication, intentional cultural adaptation and the formation of a “couple culture”. Future implications of this study for the field of drama therapy include the incorporation of adapted role profiles for therapeutic work with bicultural couples and theory development.

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## Dedication

For Matt, who waited.

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## **Introduction**

Canadian families are changing as we find ourselves in the midst of a cultural transition due to both low fertility rates and the steady increase of visible minority populations over recent decades (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2008; Malenfant, Lebel, & Martel, 2010). With this shift, Canada has also witnessed an increase of bicultural couples since the 1990s: the number of individuals reporting multiple cultural ancestries continues to grow (Chui et al., 2008; Milan, Maheux, & Chui, 2010 ). Further, immigration from non-European countries has been on the rise since the early 2000s, with many preferring to live in major urban cities like Montreal (Malenfant et al., 2010).

In response to this trend, the current study explores the phenomenon of one couple sharing multiple cultural origins and how this cultural multiplicity may influence the meaning attributed to family roles such as “Caretaker”, “Nurturer” and “Authority Figure”. Such a phenomenon becomes important as couples navigate daily living in areas such as communication styles, shared values, conflict patterns, decision making, and other important facets of couple life.

Understanding that culture affects identity formation, and by extension experiences within and expectations about family systems (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 1997; Latane, 1996), clinicians must approach cultural difference with sensitivity and awareness (May, 1998). However, little research exists on the lived experience of Canadian bicultural couples, especially in new modalities of treatment such as drama therapy.

Therefore, the current study seeks to contribute to this gap in knowledge through



phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology is the study of consciousness and lived experiencing (Husserl, 1967; Moustakas, 1994). It is concerned with describing how and in what way a phenomenon is subjectively encountered (Moustakas, 1994). As a methodological approach, it works to elucidate these meanings or essences of the phenomenon as described by those who experience it (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the influence of differing cultural origins on family roles within bicultural couples. The goal is to contribute relevant and culturally sensitive knowledge about bicultural couples to the field of drama therapy. The research question is, “Within the lived experience of bicultural couples, what are the meanings and conceptualizations of familial roles?”.

The current study utilizes interviewing, the main method of data collection within phenomenological research (Giorgi, 1985), as well as two data collection tools borrowed from the creative arts therapies. The first, role profiles, seeks to understand personality and behaviour through societal roles (Landy, 2009). The second, phenomenological approach to art therapy, seeks to elucidate meaning through art expression (Betensky, 1995). These two tools have been combined and adapted for the purposes of this study.

In order to proceed, the basic assumptions were made that cultural differences exist within the bicultural couple, and that each culture ascribes different meanings to family roles. Further, the researcher acknowledges that the small sample size presents a limitation. The researcher's own bias as a visible minority person may also influence data interpretation. Lastly, time did not permit member checking, a way to validate qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and this may present a limitation to the study.

## Literature Review

### Definitions

Living in a culturally diverse society creates more possibilities for people from all over the world to connect, increasing the possibility of choosing a culturally different partner (Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen, & Monakes, 2011; Milan et al., 2010). Ho (1990) defines intermarried couples as a relationship in which the individuals differ in “racial, ethnic, national, or religious backgrounds” (p. v). According to Ho's (1990) definition, even though a couple may share the same skin colour, they may still be considered bicultural. Milan et al. (2010), however, define intermarried couples as a relationship in which one or both partner(s) are a person of colour. According to the latter definition, a white couple who has the same skin colour would *not* be considered bicultural – even if both had different cultural ancestries. It is clear that though there are many terms to describe a similar phenomenon, none are all inclusive and most are fraught with language politics (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006).

For this reason, the researcher chose the term “bicultural couple” instead of “mixed”, “intermarried” or “biracial” as the three latter terms tend to connote race, and race is only one facet of culture (Dunleavy, 2004). Therefore, bicultural couples can be defined as common-law or marital relationships in which both partners come from different cultures of origin, and includes both same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Therefore, one or both partners could be a person of colour or neither, as it is culture and not race, that is currently relevant in these pages (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). The study takes into account the experiences of first (foreign-born then immigrated) and second

(Canadian-born to foreign-born parents) generation individuals (Milan et al., 2010).

Common-law couples are included as their national average grew more than four times that of married couples between 2006 to 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012). Further, Milan et al. (2010) found common-law bicultural couples to be more prevalent than married bicultural couples. Thus, as common-law unions represent a growing number of Canada's population, their presence within the study was relevant.

### **Bicultural Couples in Canada**

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of bicultural couples in Canada increased by more than 30%, most likely due to immigration (Milan et al., 2010). Bicultural relationships were also found to be more common in second generation individuals, perhaps because many first generation individuals migrate after they have already partnered (Milan et al., 2010). However, as rising immigration trends are projected for the future, Canada may see more first generation marriages between people who do not share the same cultural origin (Chui & Maheux, 2011; Malenfant et al., 2010). Further, Milan et al. (2010) found a positive correlation between bicultural couples and more years lived in Canada.

Related to immigration trends, it is projected that by the year 2031, 29 – 32% of Canada's total population will identify as a visible minority in comparison to only 16% in 2006 (Chui et al., 2008; Malenfant et al., 2010). In addition, nearly half of Canada's population over the age of 15 will be either first or second generational in 2031 (Malenfant et al., 2010). Of that first generation population, 70% would be a visible minority by 2031 compared to only 54% in 2006 (Malenfant et al., 2010). In other words,

immigration is rapidly diversifying our country.

The visible minority and first generation populations are increasing quickly due to slightly higher fertility rates and continued immigration trends (Malenfant et al., 2010). In fact, it is projected that the first generation population will grow four times more quickly than the rest of the country's population, if present trends continue (Malenfant et al., 2010). Thus, it seems Canada is in the midst of an impressive population transition – a metamorphosis that will change the face of Canadian families.

### **Cultural and Familial Systems**

As mentioned earlier, race is only one facet of culture and thus a broad definition of cultural identity is required (Dunleavy, 2004). The Dynamic Social Impact Theory (DSIT) identifies the origins of culture within a specific group through proximity and influence via communication (Latane, 1996; Harton & Bullock, 2007). According to Latane (1996), culture is “the entire set of socially transmitted beliefs, values and practices that characterize a given society at a given time” (p. 13). Latane (1996) suggests that as groups of people spend time together, their values become similar. Understanding that individuals within a society influence those around them, how do bicultural couples assign meaning to their differing cultural legacies?

Dosamantes-Beaudry (1997), a dance therapist, posits that cultural identity is internalized at a young age. Thus, being raised in a particular cultural environment would teach a child to identify in a certain way and in turn, these patterns would become internalized over the lifespan. Self constructs are created through cultural exposure (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 1997) and it can be argued that such constructs may be carried

into adulthood and eventually into couple-hood. Dosamantes-Beaudry (1997) proposes “multicultural flexibility”, defined as the ability to take on aspects from another’s culture (p. 134). Yet the application of this theory to bicultural couples, wherein both have differing internalized cultural constructs, is not addressed.

Further, Ho (1990) suggests that each culture has a sense of “rightness” embedded within its values. As a result, bridging two differing cultures may cause tension in areas such as family structures, partner relationships, help-seeking patterns, and parenting (Crippen & Brew, 2013; Ho, 1990; McFadden, 2001). In fact, several researchers (Bustamante et al., 2011; Crippen & Brew, 2013; Ho, 1990; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006) suggest that combining two differing cultural frameworks will inevitably introduce stressors in bicultural relationships. It seems clear, then, that integrating two deeply internalized cultural systems within one couple is complex and multifaceted.

Thus, approaching bicultural couple relationships from a systems perspective allows for a wider scope of investigation and treatment: one individual cannot be examined without understanding the relational dynamics within the system of the dyad. Family systems theory views the family as a dynamic system of relationships (Kerr & Bowen, 1988; Doherty & McDaniel, 2010). Thus, familial role dynamics can be conceived of as reciprocal – one individual in the couple impacts the other and vice versa.

Applying the family systems framework to the cultural context found in bicultural couples may highlight the layers of meaning influencing familial roles (Almeida, Vecchio & Parker, 2008). What is the essence of the lived experience within bicultural couples when both partners have been raised in differently internalized cultural systems? What

meanings were transmitted about family roles through culture? In order to answer these questions the bicultural couple must be thought of as *one new system* that has combined two cultural legacies. However, little research could be located on bicultural couples and the family systems perspective in relation to role dynamics.

### **Related Research on Bicultural Couples**

Generally, bicultural couples have been the subject of much research within the last few decades as their numbers grow across North America (Foeman & Nance, 2002; Milan et al., 2010). However, most of this literature originated in the United States which differs from the multicultural Canadian context, and thus cannot be readily applied. Virtually no research was found devoted to cultural influence on family roles conceptualizations within bicultural couples.

A salient theme that did emerge, however, was the narrative of the bicultural couple. Researchers focused on awareness of negative perceptions and various discourses operating within the couple that may have gone previously unnoticed such as unchecked cultural assumptions and fear of judgement from family or friends (Foeman & Nance, 2002). Other literature focused on reframing unhelpful narratives within the bicultural couple such as anxiety around experiencing racism and silenced histories of oppression (Killian 2001, 2002). In an effort to explore the discourses of bicultural couples, Killian (2001) states that research on actual experiences and meaning-making processes of bicultural couples is sparse. As such, the current study seeks to contribute to this gap by exploring meaning attribution within the lived experiences of Canadian bicultural couples.

**Cultural sensitivity in therapy: Working with bicultural couples.** Within the field of family therapy, much literature has been devoted to culturally sensitive practices related to bicultural couples and families (Crippen & Brew, 2013; May, 1998; McFadden, 2001; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). May (1998) posits that cultural sensitivity is mandatory for therapists working with bicultural couples, “Cultural sensitivity requires not only developing an awareness and affirmation of difference, but giving up both power and assumption of superiority” (May, 1998, p. 296). Sperry (2010) goes further and suggests that cultural competency, the translation of cultural awareness into effective treatment, is needed. Thus, it is clear that the phenomenon of bicultural couples raises the question of practitioner intervention.

Practising culturally sensitive therapy begins with the therapist, according to May (1998), who posits that therapists must confront their own cultural ethnocentrism in order to effectively support clients. This suggests that therapists must remain cognizant of their own cultural positioning and level of power to not impose these on the client (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011).

Obtaining both knowledge about client's cultural orientation and their explanation of the problematic issue is also valued (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000; Ho, 1990; Sperry, 2010). Family therapists are warned not to blindly adhere to a singular theoretical framework, but rather to assess cultural identity and needs to find the best treatment match for the client (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000; Sperry, 2010). That is, therapists are encouraged to select a “cultural intervention”, a form of healing that fits with the client's cultural framework and beliefs (Sperry, 2010). Finally, therapists are admonished not to

assume difference within the bicultural couple is due to culture (Ho, 1990).

The abundance of research speaks to the need to for more relevant and critical knowledge that encompass cultural identity in working with bicultural couples. Though there has been a recent push for drama therapy practitioners to develop deeper cultural awareness of their clients and theories (Dokter, 2001; Mayor, 2012; Rousseau et al., 2005; Sajnani, 2009), such culturally sensitive approaches are non-existent in relation to bicultural couples within drama therapy. There is a gap in knowledge.

Therefore the current study, founded in research and not clinical practice, seeks to address the gap in drama therapy research with the goal of contributing culturally sensitive knowledge on the lived experiences of bicultural couples. Future implications may point to the development of a culturally sensitive drama therapy theory or approach.

### **Role Profiles and Bicultural Couples**

Landy's (2009) *role theory* posits that the self is a compilation of interacting roles and living within the contradictions of these often conflicting roles is inherent. Landy, Luck, Conner, & McMullian (2003) define role as “a set of archetypal qualities presenting one aspect of a person, an aspect that relates to others and...provides a meaningful and coherent view of the self” (p. 152). Role theory suggests that healthy psychological functioning is based on the incorporation of many roles and the ability to call on them as needed (Landy, 2003, 2009).

*Role profiles*, an intervention tool based on role theory, gauges a person's role repertoire, highlighting areas that may need expansion (Landy, 1991, 2003; Landy et al., 2003). It is a drama therapy card sort that includes a list of approximately sixty roles.



Each role is a type of character found in books, plays or movies; for example: hero, wife, child, etc (Landy, 1991). In its typical use, clients are asked to sort each card into four categories: This Is Who I Am, This Is Who I Want To Be, This Is Who Is Standing in My Way, This Is Who Can Help Me (Landy, 2009). Please see Appendix C for the original list of roles.

It has been asserted that each culture may have a specific range of roles (Moreno, 1987). Thus, applying role profiles to bicultural couples would help to elucidate the assigned cultural meanings. The tool would initiate an exploration of these possibly divergent roles, which the researcher argues may be based in differing cultural identities (Moreno, 1987), and how the bicultural couple experiences them. Through this, role theory may encourage the flexibility of or adaptation to a partner's role perspective.

However, cultural adaptation of role profiles is needed. In fact, much of Landy's work (1991, 1993, 2003, 2009) rarely mentions cultural sensitivity or relevance, speaking to the theory's cultural ethnocentrism (Mayor, 2012). Furthermore, role theory has traditionally been focused on white, middle-class, American populations. Though the role profiles tool was “tested on graduate students from different cultures” (Landy & Butler, 2009, p. 152), the statement itself suggests cultural ethnocentrism: the fact that the tool was tested on graduate students suggests possible privilege and bias and may not be indicative of the cultures themselves. Landy's ( 1991, 1993, 2003, 2009) own cultural position and how this influences bias, perspective, interpretation, and therefore theory development is not mentioned. The usefulness of role profiles is not questionable, but the cultural orientation is. The obvious lack of cultural attunement and racial identity in a

seminal theory within the field of drama therapy is disconcerting at best (Mayor, 2012).

However, Landy (2003) does state that further testing with culturally diverse populations is needed and encourages practitioners to adapt the tool as necessary (Landy & Butler, 2012). This liberty is being taken as role profiles need cultural revision for the current context (see Appendix D for adapted roles). Further, adaptation was required as no research relating role profiles and Canadian bicultural couples was found.

## **Method**

### **Conceptual Framework: Phenomenological Methodology**

Founded as a philosophical perspective by Husserl (1967), phenomenological research is based on the principle that there are many ways of perceiving the world as defined by an individual's lived experience (Macann, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1989). Because the lived experience is subjective and thus infinitely varied, there can be no singular, or objective, definition of a particular phenomenon; thus, the phenomenological framework is based on “subjective openness” (Macann, 2005; Moustakas, 1994). In its pure sense, phenomenology is the study of meaning, perception and consciousness (Betensky, 1995; Husserl, 1967; Macann, 2005). Phenomenological research allows the essential meaning of a phenomenon “to show itself [or] appear” and in the current study, the phenomenon under investigation is the experience of family roles within bicultural couples (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Husserl (1967), who believed that all knowledge was based on inner experience, coined the term “*eidetic seeing*”, or essence, to describe the structures of experience (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). It was an attempt to return to the essential

meaning of a phenomenon, rooted in consciousness (Creswell, 1998). Phenomenology, then, places the individual in the active position of the knower (Polkinghorne, 1989). This was a new perspective as other thinkers in Husserl's time believed that knowledge could only be construed from reality as it existed concretely – through the study of material objects – thereby eliminating human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Therefore the goal within phenomenological research is to “produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45). Meanings or essences of phenomena emerge by moving through the layers of how we think something is, by letting go of how we have been taught to view it, by returning to its appearance, by describing it from the many angles from which it is perceived, and by approaching phenomena with new eyes (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

**The tenets of phenomenological research.** Phenomenological research is inherently descriptive and guided by a researcher's desire to know something specific about human experiencing (Husserl, 1967; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Besides this is the commitment to describe the phenomenon with as much textural detail as possible (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological research is conducted through interviewing followed by thematic analysis in which descriptions about the phenomenon emerge (Moustakas, 1994).

A central principle within phenomenology is that of *epoche*, or bracketing, the process through which the researcher sets aside presuppositions and biases about the phenomenon under question (Creswell, 1998; Husserl, 1967; Moustakas, 1994). By bracketing judgement and preconceived ideas the investigator is free to see things as they

really are, which is to embrace subjective perception, and it is this process that facilitates the discovery of meaning or essence (Husserl, 1967; Moustakas, 1994). The epoche is a call for transparency and reflexivity (Moustakas, 1994).

It is important to remember that Husserl did not suggest the separation of subject and object. On the contrary, meaning is construed through both the objectively concrete and what an individual subjectively perceives, or the “real and non-real” (Husserl, 1967; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). As Creswell (1998) states, “Reality of an object [‘real’], then, is inextricably related to one’s consciousness of it [‘non-real’]...it is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual” (p. 53).

In other words, *how* one perceives is always connected to *what* one perceives, thus the subjective and objective intermingle (Moustakas, 1994). For example, we know that the phenomenon of bicultural relationships exists – it is objectively “real”. However, perception of bicultural relationships is inherently influenced by perspective, history, and experience of the phenomenon itself – the subjectively “non-real”.

**Phenomenological approach to art therapy.** Betensky's (1995) *phenomenological approach to art therapy* is also being combined within the methodology of this study as it serves to sequentially highlight the phenomenon of roles within bicultural couples. Thus, Betensky (1995) developed a creative synthesis based on Husserl's philosophy of investigating subjective experiencing.

Through the art of looking at their own art work, new facets of self become apparent to the art makers and new communication takes place between the art work and the subjective experience of the client...Clients learn to perceive more

clearly and more particularly the components as phenomena and their interaction in the art work as a whole. (Betensky, 1995, p. 12)

The approach can be thought of as facilitating a visual emergence of the art-maker's – or “knower's” - subjective lived experience. However, it is important to note that within the current study, the model is not being used as a therapeutic tool.

The approach, created to elucidate meaning within a client's life specifically through art expression, functions in four sequences. The first sequence, *Pre-Art Play with Materials*, involves clients interacting with the art supplies, which leads to discoveries about the self (Betensky, 1995). This in turn serves as foundational to the process of insight and the eventual emergence of meaning (Betensky, 1995).

In the second sequence, *The Process of Art Work: Creating the Phenomenon*, clients begin to create a piece of art which is the phenomenon (Betensky, 1995). Betensky (1995) notes that within this stage, several characteristics are noted: concentration on the art work, purposefulness, involvement, excitement, inventiveness, problem creating, and at times, problem solving.

The third sequence, *Phenomenological Intuiting*, is when the art work has become a phenomenon with “its own structure, expressive values and meanings” (Betensky, 1995, p. 16). It is through the next phases that meanings, or essences, begin to emerge. Within the first subsection, *Visual Display*, the client decides where the phenomenon (art work) is to be displayed (Betensky, 1995). In the second subsection, *Distancing*, both the client and therapist step back and gain physical distance in order to engage with the phenomenon as a whole, and also begin the process of intuiting (Betensky, 1995).

The third subsection is that of *Intentional Looking to See* (Betensky, 1995). Here the following instructions are given, “Take a good look at your picture...When the image is right in front of your eyes you don't see it as accurately as you do when you gain some distance from it. So take a long look in silence and discover things you have not seen before” (Betensky, 1995, p. 17). The goal of this sub-stage is to deepen awareness and allow clients to engage intuitively with their subjective creation (Betensky, 1995), similar to Husserl's (1967) “eidetic seeing”. It is a return to consciousness.

The fourth sequence, *What-do-you-see? Procedure*, is where the meaning or essence emerges in response to the question “What do you see?” (Betensky, 1995). In the first subsection of this sequence, *Phenomenological Description*, clients are invited to describe what they noticed in their art (Betensky, 1995). Though the question is simple it focuses on phenomenology's main principles: the individual's perception, the description of an aspect of human experience, and the epoche, as embedded within the question is a request to refrain from judgement (Betensky, 1995; Husserl, 1967; Polkinghorne, 1989). What is seen, the phenomenon, is approached with new eyes – the foundation on which meaning emerges.

In the second subsection, *Study of Structure, Interrelated Components and Whole-Quality*, clients continue making connections between the object, art, and their subjective experiencing, what they see in it (Betensky, 1995). Here they are encouraged to note how components interact with one another and to see what the structure may be “telling” them about the phenomenon (Betensky, 1995). In the third and final subsection, *Phenomenological Connecting and Integration*, all parts of the process fit together to

bring about “eidetic seeing” or the essence of the art-maker's lived experience of the phenomenon (Betensky, 1995; Husserl, 1967). Thus, Betensky's (1995) model is structured to naturally allow the subjective inner experience of a phenomenon (family roles) and its meaning to emerge.

As the model was created for art therapy use, adaptation is needed as the goal of the study is not to create a therapeutic framework but to contribute culturally sensitive knowledge. Again, the utilization of this model is not for therapeutic purposes. The specific adaptations made can be found under the section “Data Collection”.

**Rationale.** A phenomenological methodology is being employed in the current study as the phenomenon under investigation – family roles in bicultural couples – can only be discovered through the lived experiences of those within bicultural relationships. Thus, a methodology geared towards understanding perceptions and uncovering essential meanings was most suited to the research question (Husserl, 1967). The researcher combined traditional phenomenological research with Betensky's (1995) phenomenological approach as the latter sequentially highlights the phenomenon of family roles for co-researchers, encouraging them to reflect on their experiences.

### **Analytical Framework**

Moustakas (1994) outlines four core processes for arriving at new knowledge about a phenomenon, useful in discovering the meaning of family roles in bicultural couples. These can be thought of as overarching principles intended to guide the researcher to the discovery of meaning. The first is *epoche*, mentioned above, which is concerned with bracketing or setting aside the researcher's judgements and

preconceptions (Moustakas, 1994). It is a form of “reflective meditation”, preparing the researcher to see what knowledge emerges (Moustakas, 1994).

The goal of the second core process, *phenomenological reduction*, is to “reduce” the description of an experience to its fundamental meaning (Polkinghorne, 1989). This is accomplished through horizontalization, the process of treating each statement as equal or non-hierarchical in order to discover the “meaning units” (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). These units are given a textural description – what was experienced – and finally grouped into individual and composite themes (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

The third core process, *imaginative variation*, involves developing the essential structure of the experience through seeking all possible meanings or divergent viewpoints of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). This is accomplished through the researcher's imagination and intuition, and by returning to phenomenon with differing perspectives (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Finally, the fourth core process, *synthesis*, involves integrating all the analyzed data into a “composite description” that accurately describes the phenomenon from the perspective of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). All textural and structural descriptions are unified to reflect the meanings, or essences, of the phenomenon itself (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). That is, the researcher combines all the feelings and senses of each individual who experienced the phenomenon into a written description that elucidates their essential experience. It is a way of capturing lived experiencing.

**Sample and participant recruitment.** As phenomenological research inquires into the lived experience, it needs people to share their experiences about a particular



phenomenon. Data collection is understood to be a collaborative process between researcher and participants (Moustakas, 1994). As such, participants are viewed as co-researchers (Backhouse, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

The number of co-researchers in a phenomenological study varies. Patton (2002) suggests up to ten whereas Polkinghorne (1989) cites cases with up to three hundred and twenty five. Regardless, what matters is recruiting an appropriate sample: individuals who can act as “informants”, experts on the selected phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). Due to the scope of the current study, the researcher met with three couples on separate occasions.

The sampling criteria was as follows: (a) be in a common-law or married relationship in which both partners come from a different culture of origin, (b) be either first (foreign-born then immigrated) and / or second (Canadian-born to foreign-born parents) generational individuals, and (c) be between the ages of 25 – 50.

The researcher utilized a snowball sampling technique, recruitment through a known community, often used for “locating information-rich key informants” (Patton, 2002, p. 237) or when participant criteria is rare (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The researcher began by asking her community – academic and social – via email and word of mouth if anyone knew bicultural couples (see Appendix A for recruitment blurb). After initial response was indicated and participant contact information given, a consent form was emailed directly to the participants (see Appendix B).

The researcher's supervisor recommended two couples who had expressed interest, however due to life circumstances one couple could not participate. Ages ranged

among all six participants from early thirties to mid forties. The first couple, recruited through a professor, have two children (both under the age of five) and live in a suburb of Montreal. One partner culturally identifies as Cameroonian with French as the mother tongue, and is first generational having immigrated to Canada seven years ago. The other partner culturally identifies as a second generational White Anglo Saxon Protestant, with English as the mother tongue. The opposite sex couple has been together for seven years, married for five. Both are bilingual but French is spoken most at home.

The second couple, recruited through a friend on a social network, do not have children and live in Montreal. One partner culturally identifies as second generational Canadian Taiwanese with English as the primary tongue. The second partner culturally identifies as first generational Brazilian with Portuguese as the primary language. The couple has been in a common-law, same sex relationship for thirteen years and English is spoken at home.

The third couple, friends who volunteered, have a child under one year and live in a large city in Ontario. One partner culturally identifies as second generation Chinese Vietnamese, with both Vietnamese and Cantonese as primary languages. The other culturally identifies as thirteenth generation French Canadian from Saskatchewan (Fransaskois), with French as the primary language. Both are bilingual but English is spoken most at home. The opposite sex couple has been together for fifteen years, married for seven.

**Data collection: Two instruments.**

*Role profiles and phenomenological approach to art therapy.* Data was collected

in co-researcher's home or wherever they felt the most comfortable. The data collection process included two stages however, the first stage combined two instruments. The first was the aforementioned role profiles (Landy, 2009). However, because the instrument was not being used for therapeutic purposes it was adapted to suit the present study in the following ways: 1) the categories were simplified to Who I Am, Who I Want To Be, Who Is Blocking Me, and Who Can Help Me, 2) many of the roles were changed to reflect family life and cultural communities (see Appendix D for the adapted roles).

In an attempt to focus the proceeding interview on the phenomenon, the format in which role profiles was administered was also adapted to include Betensky's (1995) phenomenological approach. In further support of this adaptation, Moustakas (1994) suggests a reflective introduction to interviewing, allowing participants to focus “on the experience [and] moments of particular awareness and impact” (p. 114).

Thus Betensky's (1995) first sequence, Pre-Art Play with Materials, was adapted to an introduction of role profiles where participants took a cursory look at the role cards and silently noted reactions. The second sequence, the Process of Art Work: Creating the Phenomenon (Betensky, 1995), was adapted to role profiles as “art work” in which participants did the card sort. This adaptation developed focus and a reflexive attitude towards the phenomenon.

The third sequence, Phenomenological Intuiting, was adapted to phenomenological intuiting about roles (Betensky, 1995). The first sub-section, Visual Display (Betensky, 1995), was not relevant due to practical reasons and thus removed. In the second sub-section, Distancing, both individuals were asked to stand up and gain

physical distance in order to further support the process of intuiting or focusing on the phenomenon (Betensky, 1995). In the third sub-section, Intentional Looking To See, the same instructions Betensky (1995) offers at this stage were given with the goal of increasing awareness. The fourth sequence, What-do-you-see? Procedure, was not changed.

In summary, both partners within the couple were simultaneously administered the adapted role profiles. The couple was asked to complete the exercise independently and in silence. Thus, in its adaptation Betensky's (1995) model initiated a conscious investigation into the meanings of family roles. Following this, co-researchers were encouraged to discuss the relationships noted between their own "role profile" and then between their own and their partner's, which lead to the interview. Throughout this process, co-researchers differing role meanings emerged and were discussed in relevance to cultural origins. Photos were taken of each profile and, for viewing convenience, each co-researcher's role profile was inputted into a word document (see Appendix E).

***Semi-structured interviews.*** As elucidating the subjective is at the heart of phenomenology, interviews are the main method of data collection (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews need to be "an interpersonal engagement in which [participants] are encouraged to share...the details of their experience" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 49). The length of the interview may vary though Polkinghorne (1989) suggests thirty minutes to one hour. Due to the nature of the lived experience, interviews are encouraged to be open-ended and relatively unstructured (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989).

This researcher chose to follow a *semi-structured interview* format which directly

followed the card sort. A series of open-ended questions catered to inner experiencing was developed, though deviations were welcomed (see Appendix F). Each interview was one hour, though one extended to two which allowed for deeper exploration. The goal of interviewing was to more deeply engage co-researchers about their experiences of family roles and cultural influences within their bicultural relationships. Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed to ensure accuracy (Henriksen, 2001).

**Data analysis.** The four core processes of investigating lived experiencing outlined earlier serve only as the analytical framework for data analysis. It is too general and thus precision is needed. How, specifically, is the data analyzed so the researcher may arrive to the essence of a subjective human experience?

After verbatim transcription and reading through each interview to gain the whole perspective, the researcher chose to answer this question by employing Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, utilizing the following eight steps: 1) analyze each statement to see how it corresponds to the research question and list all relevant statements, 2) remove repetitions or overlapping statements, the results become the “meaning units”, 3) cluster these into themes creating a textured description of the experience including verbatim examples, 4) using imaginative variation to determine all possible meanings (researcher bias is later addressed), 5) the researcher develops an overall description of the experience, 6) repeat first five steps for each interview, 7) integrate all results and construct a unified or “composite description” of the meanings of the experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

**Expected results.** Results will hopefully highlight particular aspects of the lived

experience of family roles within bicultural couples. Specifically, the researcher expects that co-researcher's experiences of being raised in different cultures will influence what meaning is ascribed to salient family roles, how such roles are defined and consequently how they are lived out. That is, the meanings assigned to family roles will differ between partners due to cultural exposure and cultural identity. Further, the researcher expects that these differing role meanings will be connected to couple conflict.

However, the researcher acknowledges that culture is only one of many influences on identity formation and value systems. Family history, individual personality traits, socioeconomic status, displacement and migration, trauma, religion, and culture all contribute to how meaning is assigned to roles. It is not the intention of the researcher to over-simplify but rather to begin understanding a complex dynamic, that of family roles.

The researcher also expects that during the administration of role profiles, participants will demonstrate the same characteristics Betensky (1995) notes in the second sequence, the Process of Art Work: namely concentration on the art work, purposefulness, involvement, excitement, inventiveness, problem creating, and problem solving. This is expected because both Betensky's (1995) clients and the participants in the current study are both consciously attuning to a particular phenomenon, even though what they are creating (role profiles vs art) differs.

**Assumptions.** The basic assumption within phenomenology is that knowledge comes only from experiencing and that there is inherent meaning in it (Husserl, 1967; Patton, 2002). Thus it is supposed that the essence of a phenomenon can be discovered across subjective perspectives once enough comparisons are made (Patton, 2002).

Another assumption is that human personality can be “conceived as a system of roles” (Landy, 2009, p. 67). That is, human beings make sense of the world and their social environment through observing, emulating and internalizing roles (Landy, 2009). A final assumption is that different cultures assign different meanings to family roles and, extending from this, that cultural origin influences relationships and family role conceptualizations.

**Limitations.** The small sample size presents a limitation as perhaps not enough lived experiences are being investigated in order for essential meanings to emerge. In addition, a lack of variance may be introduced by the sampling technique itself as it allows for recruitment through the researcher's community. The fact that the researcher knew two of the co-researchers well could affect data interpretation (Kline, 2008).

Another possible limitation may lie in the fact that two methodologies are being integrated: though similar enough, the differences may prove to be incompatible. Further Betensky's (1995) method is intended to be used repeatedly with the same client over time to continue elucidating meanings, whereas the current study allows only a one-time exposure. Thus, combining two methodologies – one of which has been significantly adapted – may limit results.

Finally, another limitation is the researcher's own bias. As a second generational, visible minority, heterosexual woman who was raised in a bicultural home, the researcher enters the study with her own preconceptions on what it means to be a person of colour and how this influences identity, role meanings and relationship values. These are factors that may bias the meanings that emerge and the consequent interpretation. As the

researcher, I am intrinsically connected to the phenomenon in question – a position which Moustakas (1994) encourages. Thus, engaging in the epoche and bracketing bias through acknowledgement is of great importance and may diminish this risk (Moustakas, 1994).

**Validity and reliability.** Within the social sciences validity and reliability are the criteria used to evaluate research (Neuman, 2004). Validity is the extent to which a study measures what it is intended to measure, and reliability is the extent to which results are repeatable (Neuman, 2004). However, in qualitative research these constructs are commonly replaced with the concept of trustworthiness: the extent to which findings are “true”, credible and therefore worth noting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) therefore recommend substituting credibility for validity, that is, the extent to which results are believable. Indeed, in phenomenological research the concern is the accuracy of presentation and the reader's confidence is gained through accurate descriptions of the phenomenon itself (Polkinghorne, 1989). The researcher can achieve this by presenting alternative analyses and demonstrating why these analyses are less likely, by ensuring transcriptions represent what was actually said, and by avoiding misrepresented textural descriptions (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Triangulation, the use of multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories, is another way to ensure credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One last way to increase credibility is through member checking, taking the data back to co-researchers to test its accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the current study, triangulation was employed through the use of multiple theoretical lenses, methods and



co-researcher information. However due to time limitations member checking was not possible.

Instead of reliability, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest dependability: the need to account for changes within the research setting. This can be accomplished through acknowledging bias, truthfully recording what occurred, and ensuring that all “reasonable areas” within data collection and analysis have been explored (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yet as phenomenological research is dependent on recounting personal experience, it is unlikely that the same story would be told exactly twice (Backhouse, 2007). The only way to rule out this variable entirely would be interviewing further and over time.

## **Findings**

### **Self-reflection and Epoche**

The researcher engaged in the aforementioned principle of the epoche during data synthesization, that is the “bracketing” of biases, presuppositions and judgements (Moustakas, 1994). This act of self-reflection served to focus the researcher on what was actually emerging from the data, rather than what she wanted to see (Moustakas, 1994).

When interviewing, the researcher's intentional engagement in self-reflection meant refraining from asking leading questions or those related to themes that had emerged in previous interviews. The researcher noticed that this became more difficult as the interviewing process continued and the phenomenon began to emerge. However, being aware of this lead to an awareness of bias. In these moments the researcher would pause and reformulate the question, or intentionally expand the way in which she was listening in an effort to hear everything that was being said. In addition, the researcher

also noted impressions or reactions post-interview.

In relation to researcher biases as a person of colour, another notable aspect of the epoche became apparent. During one interview, the researcher noted a subtle internal alignment with the partner who belonged to a visible minority group. This was not a debilitating pull but reflective of what it meant to be a researcher in a racialized body asking about cultural identity. In response to this reflection, the researcher re-read the transcribed interview with this bias in mind and discovered she had been aware of a racial identity dynamic in the couple, and not just in herself. Thus, self-reflection enabled the researcher to truly bracket bias and move on to analyze the data with fresh eyes (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Themes**

The textural / structural descriptions derived from each co-researcher's transcribed interviews were combined by the researcher to form a composite statement describing the phenomenon as a unified whole (Moustakas, 1994). Thus, the following core themes and sub themes, shown in italics, emerged from the couples collectively to represent the essence of their lived experience of family roles within a bicultural reality.

**Sociocultural norms and influences.** The influence of sociocultural norms on the formation of identity and values was apparent in all three couples. Being raised in differing sociocultural environments was described, unsurprisingly, as influential. One co-researcher shared that her now mother-in-law assumed that their cross-cultural relationship would cause much conflict. In response her partner stated, “We grew up my mom always saying...marry a white French Canadian women...[she said] you have to be

careful cause there's going to be lots of challenges in your relationship...that's the voice of the past...the experience of growing up in a small town in Saskatchewan where French Canadian Catholic meant race...”.

Thus, growing up in a particular environment influences thoughts and assumptions about the world and these sociocultural perspectives are assimilated: “When I was little I didn't expect to have a mother-in-law...straight from the village who doesn't speak English or French...I was picturing someone, you know...white you just assume that it's something you just kind of get..I mean what do we really have in common really other than you? Like really nothing...like totally different”.

Sometimes sociocultural norms are not so overtly expressed but felt in other, more subtle ways. “...I am Cameroonian and...I believe that this society, Cameroonian culture, teach people to be lazy like, '[We] always have our time...we can't push things to be done. Oh we have tomorrow and the day after'...From generation to generation that increased...so now the whole society is really stuck”. This co-researcher acknowledged that the above perspective was one of many.

Co-researchers described that where, how, and with who we live impacts what we value. We pick up on these implicit values through our sociocultural environment and according to co-researchers, these affect expectations and understandings on constructs such as love, desire, faith, and family. In one co-researcher's experience, “it was just naturalized” that heterosexual desire was the sociocultural norm, “...I think that somehow there's a value like 'Oh well we should all have lovers' and this image of a lover was somehow very particular”.

However, it did not matter whether the co-researchers accepted or rejected the values and beliefs transmitted through sociocultural norms; each acknowledged the influence. Further, that influence was extremely varied as each couple (and each individual within the couple) came from very different cultural contexts: "...I grew up in a very close knit, small church and it's also my social life for the most part...I was partly raised that when you don't feel like going...push through...".

It becomes easy to see how these *norms can directly influence family expectations*. Each co-researcher shared experiences in which such expectations within their family of origin had been communicated either explicitly or implicitly: "I think it is somehow typical...of maybe a lot of Asian cultures to just uh, just to be a little more passive...like it's sometimes, I don't know, being a bit assertive...could be seen as rude or could be like...bossy or not considering the other person".

These norms consequently lead to *internalized role meanings*. That is, the family expectations each individual felt were transmitted to certain roles – each loaded with meaning, like the role of perfectionist within this co-researcher's Taiwanese family, "...Being a perfectionist too was also valued...you go through either school or just relationships with family...and then also showing people that you're working hard and like nothing's good enough...I don't know if my parents or family necessarily...[said], 'Oh you have to do this' but..somehow it was communicated that this was a good feature".

Of course it becomes difficult to tease apart whether these familial expectations are due solely to one's particular family of origin or cultural influences. Either way, these internalized role meanings were accepted or countered within the couples, each striving

to create a compatible partnership. One co-researcher from a rural town said, "...Growing up on the farm the men were outside the women were inside, right, and I feel like my dad never...did anything inside the house, he just laid around you know...And those are the kinds of things that I am trying to counter as a guy here, as man in our family".

Therefore, some internalized roles stemming from sociocultural influences and family expectations were considered useful within the couple dynamic and others not.

**Different ways of viewing self and partner: Role profiles.** Role profiles served to illuminate co-researchers' differing ways of thinking about self and partner as each ascribed *different meaning and value to the four categories* (who I am, who I want to be, who is blocking me, and who can help me). In other words, partners took different approaches to categorizing, "...This is just who you are and who you want to be, it has nothing to do with anybody else...". In contrast, the co-researcher's partner stated, "...It's easy to know who I am...and it's easy for me to know who is blocking me from being who I am...who can help me starts to be difficult".

Couples reacted with surprise, confusion or delight at the different categorical meanings or values they both assigned, " I seem to be more positive in who I am than [my partner who has]...lots and lots of like stressed person! Doubter!". This co-researcher went on to describe how she also experiences stress and doubt, but she tends to not think about or categorize herself in such terms. Thus, the ways in which co-researchers thought about the categories spoke to the ways in which they experience themselves and their partners within relationship.

*Different role meanings emerged about the same role within each couple, not*

surprising as each individual has a particular interpretation of a role related to personal experience, couple history, family history, and sociocultural norms. In reference to the role “always late”, a co-researcher said, “...When he's off [work] he lives on the African time...everything will be done in 30 minutes even though, you know, it takes 40 minutes to get there” to which this co-researcher's partner responded, “[Our] meaning of being late is not the same”. He continued to explain the multiple meanings he ascribed to the role; namely that it was most important to be on time for an appointment, then his job, then his family. His partner had a very different way of ascribing meaning to the role.

In another case, a co-researcher said, “I know often times we balance each other out in some ways, it's like the person that [he] thinks is blocking him is the person that I think is helping me and vice versa”. The co-researcher's subjective definition influences role values, behaviours and the potential for conflict (a topic to be addressed later).

*One role encompassed many roles* within all the couples, as co-researchers described a multi-layered experiencing of family roles, “I guess [the role of Lover] just encompasses a lot of different things like the nurturer and the companionship and the exchange of ideas and sex and just being together in the world you know...”. This co-researcher's partner added about the same role, “Well to me it feels like something that you are but then something that you give...it's not just about being a physical lover but then just being there...it's sort of like a giver and taker all at the same time...”.

Parent co-researchers added that the selection of this summary *role was also connected to the life context* they found themselves in, “We put Nurturer both right at the top of Who I Am...I think it's the baby obviously, that we're both [recent] parents so that's

what we're thinking about all the time". In another example, "...I would say just because of the stage of my life at the moment Mother would probably be the one that is taking up the most important slot". Thus, role interpretation highlighted what co-researchers thought about their own self-construct.

Co-researchers described the actual process of completing the card sort as a multi-layered experience using words such as "really hard", "difficult", "interesting", and "fun". There was a sense that the card sort supported the "discovery of other parts" of one's partner or provided a different perspective. Completing the card sort was also described with a feeling of ambivalence, a feeling of being torn between roles and categories. Related to ambivalence was the experience of not knowing what to do with roles that "didn't fit", roles that co-researchers could not relate to.

**Cultural adaptation.** All three couples described developing an openness to the process of cultural adaptation as they combined cultural legacies within their homes through communication, a finding to be later addressed. However, recognizing both cultural differences and similarities requires *awareness* and, according to the co-researchers, awareness precedes adaptation: "You're in the water, right, with culture...and then you decide to be transplanted to some neutral water or one [partner] goes into the other water and then you realize like this water's different. That's only when you realize that you're fresh water and [your partner's] salt water and...it's only when you get transplanted out of your own normative range that these conflicts happen".

For these co-researchers the process of cultural adaptation is entered with thoughtfulness and attunement. They describe it as consciously growing with and

learning about their partner's cultural orientation, or *intentionality*. The act of adopting another's cultural perspective is framed with choice, “I have to adapt my logic to that [new] society, even if it's sometimes so hard. Because I was born [elsewhere] and I don't have the same values...”. This perspective of awareness and humility was conveyed as being a “specialist in the foot of another country”. There is respect and mutuality.

Cultural adaptation is an “active engagement”, a reaching towards cultural difference with open arms. It is described as eating the food, saying the prayers, interpreting the body language, understanding the norms “but not in a token way but in a real interested way” that conveys a desire to understand and bridge difference. Cultural adaptation shows that a partner is not “stuck” in his or her own cultural perspective. It is enhanced by the quality of curiosity, but it is always intentional.

**Potential for conflict.** The potential for conflict, related to the combination of two cultural systems, was encountered by all couples. It is difficult to navigate communication styles, language and ways of engaging in conflict within a couple at the best of times, but added to the bicultural couple are differing cultural perspectives and home environments which dealt differently with emotional needs. For each couple, *combining two cultural experiences increased the possibility of conflict* – but did not guarantee it.

Such conflict was often connected to the beginning of the relationship, a time in which there was more “misunderstanding” or “defensiveness”. Relating to differing communication styles and values one co-researcher said this, “On this point I have no doubt that culturally we are very different and I...think that a lot of way that I



communicate comes from my culture...we had this huge period to actually understand each other's styles of communication because this was a difficulty for a while". For example, growing up in a home where non-assertion was valued influenced one co-researcher who had "a lot of difficulty even figuring out what I wanted in a relationship".

Each couple described experiencing *conflict in relation to different role understandings* believed to be inherently connected to cultural values, as outlined earlier. Roles like "leader" or "caretaker" or "religious person" become more complicated when both ascribed different cultural meanings to them (of course many variables influence this meaning making process). Thus living these roles out and making decisions as a couple whether it be in parenting or where to eat were described as "challenging", "difficult" and "a clash" at various stages in each couple's history.

Moments of conflict related to combining parenting or communication styles are described as the loss of logic, stressful, anxiety-provoking, and frustrating. "From my culture...some children don't have anything to eat...like basic food so...and when my child says 'I want to eat something' my logic like just blows away". Thus, one facet of the parenting role – providing materially – is approached very differently when one witnessed extreme need than if one experienced a childhood of relative financial comfort. The conflict arises in how to make decisions collectively.

Negotiating conflict related to differing cultural experiences was described as an act of interpretation. Because co-researchers grew up in very diverse environments, they had to "learn how to actually interpret" not only each other's specific communication style but also the cultural meaning assigned to it. This process is of course no different

from that of other couples; but because internalized cultural identity runs deep, the potential to misunderstand is greater.

**Communication: Bridging cultures.** However, each couple also described many instances in which conflict was negotiated through the development of *strong communication*. Communication was described as an effort to “unpack, debrief and deconstruct” each partner's cultural perspective, a willingness to continue dialoguing and make sense of world views, values and beliefs. The emphasis was on trying to understand the other. As one co-researcher said, “...The best thing we have in our couple is that we are able to communicate”.

Communication was also described to be the development of *shared values through communication*. Couples defined the development of shared values as processing, talking through cultural difference or conflict, and compromising. Arriving at shared values was described as taking something that was valued by one partner and not the other, due to different cultural histories or experiences, and communicating until a common value emerged. Such values, varying according to each relationship, stemmed from “wanting traditions” for the couples themselves and their children (for the couples that were parents).

Working towards “better understanding” was also shown when both partners in each couple selected the same salient role – without consulting one another – and placed it into the same category. Those roles were “Nurturer”, “Lover” and “Even-Tempered Person” and they were described as important and valued within the relationship. Both partners within the couple ascribed similar meanings to this common role, implying also

that not all cultural values or role meanings differ. Couples suggested that over time these shared cultural values were developed by working towards common goals.

The shared values were about discovering common ways to “cross over the cultural difference” or *bridging cultures*. It was again described as intentional: “We're not...living out our culture kind of blindly and then it collides...It's more like 'Oh this is how I do it, this is how you do it I wonder where that comes from?'...there's a constant meta-analysis of our behaviours, our attachments, our...values”. This was akin to developing rituals that combined both cultural perspectives, creating space in the relationship for both individuals.

**Importance of Time.** Co-researchers described their relationship evolving over time and feeling more secure, attached and mature. *Time served to unify* through “having a history together [and] just sort of working through things together”. Of course this is true with all couples, not only bicultural dyads, but considering the degree of difference that was encountered and navigated in these couple's experiences, the “settling in” feeling described is worth noting. As one partner said, “So it's like a cocktail, you take [awareness and communication] and then plus time and you've got a drink...it takes years for that to happen...”.

The experience of developing more stability within the couple was supported by *each partner becoming more comfortable in his/her own cultural identity*: “...I think we're talking from a very mature part of our relationship where things are kind of smoothed out but I remembering when certain comments were made in [my partner's] family and I wasn't okay with myself yet you know”. The descriptions speak of change or growth.

There was a feeling of recounting earlier times related to building a cultural alliance, whether those earlier times were more stressful or not, it required intentionality and needed space to develop. "...Gay people have a different way...like there's always an extra thing in the relationship...that you have to take into account, not only gay people probably other sort of minorities or but there's this thing that you immediately form if you're okay with yourself". This co-researcher went on to describe that bond as a "political alliance of struggle", an awareness of opposing societal norms.

Though couples noted similarities throughout the course of their relationship, time within the relationship supported the binding process. "...Over time [our relationship] became more stable...it felt like 'Oh okay, we're really growing to know each other', and we developed ways of communicating and...just learned more about what each other enjoys...needs or wants". Again, this sentiment is often echoed by most long-term couples, but the experiences of binding together through bicultural difference is unique.

### **Discussion**

Based on the lived experiences of these bicultural couples, the essence of family roles is influenced by internalized cultural identity. Therefore, the meanings and conceptualizations of these roles are subjectively defined according to the individual's history, value system and world view. Further, findings suggest that combining two cultural legacies within one family is enhanced with the skills of awareness of cultural identity – including difference and similarities – and the ability to communicate through difference and misunderstanding.

However, as mentioned throughout, the researcher firmly asserts that there are

many influences on identity formation and therefore role meanings. Definitively stating that culture is the only influence on family roles within bicultural couples is neither the goal nor the implication. Instead, the researcher suggests that the phenomenon of family roles merits further study as several commonalities were found among co-researchers.

### **Connection to Expected Results**

The researcher expected to find more cultural differences than similarities in regards to family roles and had believed that this might be connected to conflict, but this was not necessarily true across the board. Though each couple developed shared values through communication and each couple experienced conflict due to cultural differences, two of the couples described less cultural conflict and more cultural similarities.

The researcher believes this difference to be related to length of time in relationship (two couples had been together for thirteen and fifteen years respectively, and the other couple seven). However, this finding could also be due to a language barrier during the interview: one co-researcher was not as fluent in English and thus conveying complex experiences was more difficult. Another possibility to account for this finding may be that the cultural origins of this couple were more varied. However, Bustamante et al. (2011) reminds readers that bicultural couples may “be more alike than different in their beliefs”, a useful fact to remember as often difference comes to mind first, rather than similarity (p. 156).

As expected, co-researchers approached the card sort with similar characteristics that Betensky (1995) noted in her clients during the creation of the phenomenon, “Concentration on the art work, purposefulness, involvement, excitement, inventiveness,

problem creating, and at times, problem solving” (p. 16). Each co-researcher approached the card sort with concentration and meaningfulness. Further, they appeared to be internally engaged as they attuned to their own perceptions and consciousness of their experience of a specific role.

However, a finding that was not expected was the number of instances of problem creating and problem solving. The latter findings were observed in *all* co-researchers when they came across a role that they either had a specific reaction to or could not relate to. In some ways, the researcher unintentionally set the stage for problem creating by giving the following directions: “You are going to place each card in one of four groups that best describe how you feel about yourself and your relationship right now...Be sure to place each card in one group only”.

Therefore, the researcher had to develop a response to the inevitable question, “What do I do with the ones that don't fit?” after realizing that problem creating and solving was inherently built into the card sort. It was suggested, then, that co-researchers should try to fit the role into one of the categories but if it couldn't then it should be put aside. The researcher stated that the role reaction would be discussed later in the interview. Though the amount of problem solving was not expected, the necessary adaptation provided more opportunity for problem solving and further insights into each interview. This may indicate that bicultural couples are adept problem solvers as they have encountered and negotiated cultural difference, or perhaps that they are more aware of cultural identifiers such as labels or roles.

### **Connection To Literature**

**Cultural and familial systems: Developing the couple culture.** It has been posited that culture shapes a specific group of people, influencing them to become more similar through sheer exposure and communication (Latane, 1996; Harton & Bullock, 2007). Further, the extension of this process – the “values, beliefs and practises” that combine to create culture – become internalized at a young age to form cultural identity (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 1997; Latane, 1996, p. 13).

Co-researchers strongly affirmed these perspectives on cultural influence in two ways. First, each described values and role meanings that were transmitted through their sociocultural environment growing up. Second, co-researchers developed *their own* “couple culture” by combining cultural values and legacies, thereby producing a dynamic process of influence that flowed between partners and even to their children, if it was the case. In other words, each couple was intentionally practising “multicultural flexibility”, the incorporation of another's cultural orientation (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 1997).

The experience of family roles inside this “couple culture” was complex and multi-layered as individuals approached roles from their own cultural framework, increasing the potential for conflict. Several researchers support this finding, suggesting that cultural difference heightens the risk for misunderstandings because it is the combination of many differences on macro and micro levels (Bhugra & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011; Ho, 1990; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). That is, there is the greater chance for couples to “vary more widely in more areas” than the same-culture couple (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006, p. 222).

Thus, both findings and the literature point to the need for cultural adaptation, or

adjustment within the bicultural couple (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000). Bustamante et al. (2011) state that healthy bicultural couples are those that approach difference with openness and a willingness to adapt, both qualities exhibited by co-researchers. In other research, the concept of adapting is framed as acceptance of cultural difference (Ho, 1990). According to Ho (1990), the need for such adjustment or acceptance may be obvious: the difference is always visible, at least in couples with a person of colour.

The skills required for cultural adaptation, according to findings, were related to the development of strong communication to “cross over the cultural differences” and the discovery of similarities like shared values or similar role understandings. Bustamante et al. (2011) describe communication and the recognition of similarities as a stress-decreasing asset for the bicultural couple, findings consistent with this study (Bustamante et al., 2011; Killian, 2001).

**Role profiles and identity.** The experience of engaging in the card sort highlighted co-researchers self-construct and world view. Ho (1990) affirms this finding by stating that bicultural relationships are an opportunity for partners to “understand and accept” themselves (p. 19). Because difference is built into the structure of the bicultural couple, individuals are put in touch with their own identity rather than taking their values for granted – a reality which was found in each co-researcher (Ho, 1990).

Further related to role profiles was the finding that co-researcher's experienced ambivalence as they felt torn between what meaning to ascribe to a role and, consequently, struggled to categorize it. Though Betensky (1995) does not mention ambivalence as a common response to the creation of a phenomenon in sequence two of



the method, Landy (1993) suggests that ambivalence is directly connected to role experiencing. Indeed role theory is built on the presupposition that human behaviour is “contradictory” (Landy & Butler, 2012), and holding multiple facets of roles enables individuals to withstand paradox (Landy, 2009).

Landy (1993) describes role ambivalence as “the clash of feelings engendered in the taking on and playing out of conflicting roles” and suggests that this phenomenon occurs when an individual feels torn between roles or conflicted by facets of the same role (p. 13). Thus, the finding of ambivalence in co-researchers response to the card sort may indicate that ambivalence is connected to cultural identity, especially with those who are visible minorities. That is, being strongly connected to majority society and placed outside of it through stereotyping, for example, may create a feeling of being both majority and minority. However, further study is needed.

### **Implications for Therapeutic Practice**

**Connecting the inner worlds of couples.** As aforementioned, the current study was approached from a research and not a clinical perspective; however, there are several therapeutic implications. Through the adapted use of role profiles, the current study shows how individuals were able to create a relationship between their inner world and that of their partner's, the ultimate goal of therapy. Imagine if such a couple was experiencing multiple stressors – like a job loss or a major transition – in addition to both the busyness of life and possible cultural differences. The possibility of disconnection would be much greater. However, in this study role profiles allowed partners to understand the other's perspective, culturally divergent or not, and the meanings

attributed to it creating connection.

**Cultural sensitivity: Understanding the bicultural couple.** As was previously mentioned, little research exists on the Canadian bicultural couple's lived experience and virtually none was found in the field of drama therapy. The findings of this study are a minor step towards elucidating the experiences of Canadian bicultural couples, directly connected to their therapeutic needs. Of course, each couple is different; it is not a matter of “one size fits all”. However, culturally sensitive therapists must understand how bicultural couples ascribe meaning to their experiences of family roles in order to assess and intervene therapeutically (May, 1998).

Further, certain aspects within the bicultural couple are understood to be common areas of conflict, for example communication and family interactions (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000; Bustamante et al., 2011). Therapist awareness is required in working with a culturally diverse clientele, but knowledge about the experiences of culturally different couples is needed (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006) and who is more knowledgeable than bicultural couples themselves? Thus, working therapeutically with bicultural couples begins with therapists understanding their own cultural positioning, then sensitively attuning to the experiences of the couple (Bhurga & De Silva, 2000; May, 1998) and asking how culture has impacted their relationship.

**Addressing negative role patterns.** Further, as addressing different interpretations of a singular role emerged as a core theme, the implications for this study and working with couples engaged in a negative role pattern are vast. A negative role pattern can be understood as two partners who have incompatible role meanings and find

themselves repeatedly locked in the same conflict. Wiener (2009), one of the only practitioners who developed an approach for couples within the field of drama therapy, posits that externalizing negative relational dynamics or patterns within the couple is of paramount importance. Wiener (2009) states that changing such dysfunctional patterns and “broadening the range of displayed social identities” is necessary in altering a negative relational cycle in the couple (p. 355).

Thus, use of the adapted role profiles with bicultural couples may help to elucidate the problematic role or roles, and then provide the framework through which both partners' interpretations of this role may be understood. In other words, the therapist may be able to both create empathy and expand perspective if differences are due, in part, to cultural difference. From there, multiple options would be available to the drama therapist in working to create cohesiveness and decrease conflict in the couple. For example, a therapist might ask one partner to take on the other's interpretation of the role or role reversal (Jones, 2007). Therefore, role profiles for bicultural couples may be used as a springboard to understanding negative role patterns or interactions.

**Role profiles and metaphor.** Throughout the role profiles application and the subsequent interviews, co-researchers used descriptive language, including metaphors, to express their experience of a role and their relationship. Further, couples related metaphorically to roles and often told stories in an effort to paint a picture of their experience. As drama therapy functions within the realm of story, metaphor and imagination, the study implied that the adapted use of role profiles may be a useful tool in therapeutic practice with bicultural couples.

Engaging with a role through metaphor is psychologically less threatening than addressing a role and the feelings attached to it directly (Landy, 2009). Within drama therapy, this is because metaphors provide distance from sensitive material, allowing clients to remain in subjective experiencing (Jones, 2007). Thus, bicultural couples experiencing relationship distress may benefit from the use of metaphors in therapy as they could remain at a safe psychological distance to a particularly triggering role.

### **Limitations**

Throughout these pages the researcher has asserted that multiple variables influence bicultural couples and the process of identity formation; however, these variables themselves proved difficult to navigate and presented a possible limitation. One limitation was the small sample. Though all couples were culturally diverse, each co-researcher acknowledged that they may not necessarily be representative of their culture.

Further, co-researchers were extremely diverse in regards to life context and identity. That is, having couples that were both opposite and same sex, and couples that both had or did not have children may have been a limitation. For example, two couples were parents and this greatly influenced their identities, role meanings and relationships to extended family. Yet, because this was not a common theme among all three couples, such experiences could not be included (what was included related in feeling and essence to all three couples). However due to the scope of the current study, including more participants or limiting participant criteria was not possible.

Lastly, the researcher suggests the continued revision of the sixty-two roles from role profiles as it still felt incomplete during its utilization. In other words, even after

adaptation the researcher noted roles that were absent, roles that may be perceived as gender stereotyped, or roles that did not speak specifically enough to co-researcher's world views. Possible suggestions include roles relating to language or roles that may be more abstractly perceived like "Cultural Educator".

### **Future Recommendations**

This study demonstrates a need to more fully understand the experiences of bicultural couples, as the essences that emerged on the role meanings brought valuable insight. The researcher believes that these findings merit in-depth further study with the ultimate goal of developing relevant theory on bicultural couples. The field of drama therapy is unfortunately lacking knowledge and experience with this quickly growing population, but in order to offer pertinent therapeutic support more must be known.

As aforementioned regarding participant criteria, it is recommended to select a sample of bicultural couples with as many similarities as possible to diminish variance by focusing on a particular population. Other factors might include number of years living together, socioeconomic status, first or second generation, and length of time in Canada.

Lastly, Sullivan & Cottone (2006) suggest that the multiple terms used to describe bicultural couples are problematic, as aforementioned, due to implications of race or issues of over-simplification. In support of this, one couple in the current study found the term bicultural to be unsuited to their experience and instead used words like "multiple influences" and "intersectionist" to describe their cultural reality. Thus, for future study the researcher would propose adopting the term "intercultural" rather than bicultural to encompass the many layers involved in the combination of two cultural legacies.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the current study was to explore the lived experiences of family roles within bicultural couples to contribute culturally sensitive knowledge to the field of drama therapy. Through a phenomenological lens, the researcher interviewed three bicultural couples and used adapted role profiles, combined with the phenomenological approach to art therapy, to describe the meanings of family roles in bicultural couples.

According to the experiences of co-researchers, family role meanings are defined and internalized through exposure to family and sociocultural environment. Couples from different cultures have similar and differing perceptions of family roles. At times, differing role meanings cause conflict. However, acknowledging difference leads to the creation of shared values, developed through intentional cultural adaptation and communication. Over time, what emerges is a unique and solid “couple culture”.

The current study suggests that cultural differences do impact family role conceptualizations within bicultural couples, and these meanings can emerge through the use of role profiles. Findings on the meaning-making process bicultural couples live are salient as their numbers continue to grow across Canada. The researcher believes this study expands the possibilities for culturally sensitive practices in drama therapy with bicultural couples and urges the field to adapt along with Canada's cultural landscape.

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## Appendix A: Recruitment Blurb

Dear Co-researcher's name / Community Member's name,

I am a MA Drama Therapy student at Concordia University studying the meaning and conceptualization of family roles in bicultural couples (ie, Mother, Father, Caregiver) and am searching for research participants. To participate you must (a) be in a common-law or married relationship in which both partners come from a different culture of origin, (b) be either first (foreign-born then immigrated) and / or second (Canadian-born to foreign-born parents) generational individuals, and (c) be between the ages of 25 – 50.

You and your partner will be asked to simultaneously complete a card sort instrument followed by an interview (with both partners) in your home or wherever you feel the most comfortable. The whole process should take, at most, two and a half hours. Unfortunately, I am unable to offer financial compensation.

Attached to this email, you'll find a document of informed consent which specifically outlines your rights and responsibilities as a research participant. If you wish to participate, please read the consent form carefully and then respond to this email (researcher's email address). I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lois Jones  
Drama Therapy MA Candidate  
Concordia University

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent**

### **CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CULTURAL MATRIX: EXPLORING CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON FAMILIAL ROLE MEANINGS IN BICULTURAL COUPLES**

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Lois Jones, drama therapy MA student, of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies of Concordia University (research's phone number / email address) under the supervision of Bonnie Harnden of the Department of Creative Arts Therapies of Concordia University (supervisor's phone number / email address).

#### **A. PURPOSE**

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to discover the meanings and conceptualizations of familial roles within the lived experience of bicultural couples.

#### **B. PROCEDURES**

- I understand that the research will be conducted in my home or wherever I feel the most secure.
- I understand that I am being asked to complete: 1) a drama therapy card sort instrument exploring familial and cultural roles and, 2) a one hour interview with my partner in order to further discuss these roles and how they relate to my cultural identity.
- I understand that a photo of the card sort instrument, and not of myself, will be taken upon its completion.
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed verbatim excerpts used within the final research study.
- I understand that my participation will involve my partner and myself in a two and a half hour time commitment.
- I understand that my identifying information (name, age, etc) will not be disclosed in the study, however, I may be recognized due to the fact that I am being recruited by someone I know (ie, friend / colleague / neighbour).

#### **C. RISKS AND BENEFITS**

- I understand that should I feel uncomfortable or upset during the card sort instrument or interview, I may request a break or withdraw at any time.
- I understand that I may experience an emotional reaction in discussing familial or cultural roles that may lead to a conflict within my relationship.
- I understand that I may experience a personal upset in discussing possibly sensitive issues related to cultural identity (ie, experiences of: acculturation, marginalization, racism, immigration, etc).
- I understand that participating in this study is also a celebration of my cultural heritage and the role I play as a multicultural member of Canadian society.
- I understand that participation in this study may lead to awareness and increased

communication with my partner as we explore our relationship as it relates to familial roles and culture.

#### D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential, meaning my identity will not be disclosed in the study results. However, I also understand that my confidentiality cannot be guaranteed: as I am being recruited through someone I know (friend / colleague / neighbour / etc), I may be identified.
- I understand that results of this study will be stored in Concordia University's library archival system and other graduate students or professors may have access to it.
- I understand that because this research is funded by a provincial body, a final copy of this study will be submitted to and read by the aforementioned funding body.
- I understand that the results of this study may be used in presentations or publications.
- I understand that the researcher must contact me in the future to gain my consent in order to use study results for a future research project (ie, PhD).

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about the proposed research, please contact the study's Principal Investigator:  
Lois Jones, Drama Therapy MA student  
Department of Creative Arts Therapies  
Concordia University  
(researcher's email address)  
(researcher's phone number)

OR

You may contact the Principal Investigator's Faculty supervisor:  
Bonnie Harnden  
Department of Creative Arts Therapies  
Concordia University  
(supervisor's email address)  
(supervisor's phone number)

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics and Compliance Advisor, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 [ethics@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:ethics@alcor.concordia.ca)

### Appendix C: Original List of Roles for Role Profiles

Adult	Father	Adolescent	Visionary
Beast	Daughter	Beauty	Believer
Sick Person	Orphan	Healer	Wife
Wise Person	Outcast	Critic	Son
Victim	Hero	Villain	Brother
Survivor	Vampire	Helper	Witness
Slave	Calm Person	Warrior	Suicide
Egotist	Free Person	Lover	Healthy Person
Child	Saint	Angry Person	Optimist
Elder	Artist	Mother	Rich Person
Average Person	Dreamer	Husband	Sinner
Clown	Ignorant Person	Sister	Doubter
Innocent	Rebel	Friend	Pessimist
Perfectionist	Fearful Person	Killer	Poor Person
Zombie	Special Person	Adolescent	Believer
Adult	Father	Beauty	Beast
Daughter			



### Appendix D: Adapted List of Roles for Role Profiles

Stressed Person	Wise Person	Minority	Boss
Cook	Disciplinarian	Dominant One	Non-white Person
Homemaker	Hero	Follower	Rich Person
Authority Figure	Even-Tempered	White Person	Always Late
Stingy Person	Gatherer	Religious Person	Dreamer
Poor Person	Supporter	Collectivist	Mother
Hunter	Perfectionist	Realistic	Organizer
Doubter	Slave	Father	Brother
Role Model	Son	Wife	Child
Survivor	Passive One	Role Enforcer	Workaholic
Daughter	Lover	Provider	Financially Responsible
Warrior	Earned	Elder	Adolescent
Care Taker	Husband	Majority	Helper
Stubborn Person	Assistant	Submissive One	Nurturer
Individualist	Adult	Calm Person	Leader

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

First co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>
Nurturer	Always Late	Assistant	Elder
Supporter	Stingy Person	Gatherer	Submissive One
Warrior	Stubborn Person	Mother	Survivor
Father	Authority Figure	Minority	Adolescent
Care Taker	Son	Wife	Even-Tempered
Rule Enforcer	Collectivist	Dreamer	Poor Person
Earner	Doubter	Religious Person	Follower
Perfectionist	Individualist	Passive One	
Helper	Hero	Daughter	
Financially Responsible	Rich Person	Child	
Lover	Calm Person	Slave	
Brother	Dominant One		
Provider	Disciplinarian		
Homemaker			
Husband			
Wise Person			
Organizer			
Leader			
Majority			
Boss			
Hunter			
Workaholic			
Realistic			
Role Model			
Cook			
Adult			

Uncategorized: White Person, Non-White Person, Stressed Person

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

Second co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>
Rule Enforcer	Dreamer	Brother	Workaholic
Disciplinarian	Passive One	Hunter	Always Late
Stressed Person	Submissive One	Collectivist	Doubter
Supporter	Role Model	Provider	Poor Person
Mother	Calm Person	Son	
Slave	Rich Person	Follower	
Dominant One	Even-Tempered	Elder	
Daughter	Cook	Stingy Person	
White Person	Wise Person	Authority Figure	
Stubborn Person	Survivor	Hero	
Boss	Individualist	Father	
Religious Person		Lover	
Majority		Warrior	
Realistic		Earner	
Wife		Non-White Person	
Helper		Husband	
Financially Responsible		Leader	
Perfectionist		Minority	
Adult		Assistant	
Gatherer			
Care Taker			
Organizer			
Nurturer			
Adolescent			
Child			
Homemaker			

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

Third Co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>
Realistic	Leader	Doubter	Hunter
Minority	Care Taker	Majority	Brother
Earner	Adult	Homemaker	Hero
Gatherer	Wise Person	Always Late	Elder
Even-Tempered	Calm Person	Boss	Wife
Nurturer	Role Model	Rule Enforcer	White Person
Collectivist	Workaholic	Disciplinarian	Slave
Follower	Child	Authority Figure	Supporter
Assistant	Organizer	Stingy Person	Poor Person
Non-White Person	Helper	Perfectionist	Provider
Lover	Dreamer	Religious Person	Father
Adolescent		Stubborn Person	Son
Financially Responsible		Individualist	Husband
Cook		Passive One	Warrior
		Stressed Person	Daughter
			Mother
			Survivor
			Rich Person
			Dominant One
			Submissive One

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

Fourth co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>
Stressed Person	Even-Tempered Person	Individualist	Nurturer
Non-White Person	Care Taker	Rule Enforcer	Hero
Workaholic	Homemaker	Passive One	Supporter
Assistant	Realistic	Disciplinarian	White Person
Follower	Elder	Stingy Person	Brother
Stubborn Person	Organizer	Rich Person	Poor Person
Doubter	Leader	Always Late	Wise Person
Survivor	<i>Not Legible / Hidden</i>	Religious Person	Mother
Earner	Role Model	Authority Figure	Collectivist
Gatherer	Calm Person	Boss	Dominant One
Minority	Financially Responsible		Father
Child	Provider		Dreamer
Lover	Helper		Adolescent
Daughter	Warrior		
Submissive One			
Perfectionist			
Cook			

Uncategorized: Majority, Hunter, Slave, Husband, Son, Wife

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

Fifth co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>
Nurturer	Brother	Hero	White Person
Supporter	Poor Person	Wise Person	Dominant One
Mother	Father	Collectivist	Adolescent
Dreamer	Husband	Hunter	Rule Enforcer
Wife	Son	Even-Tempered	Individualist
Care Taker	Religious Person	Elder	Passive One
Homemaker	Boss	Calm Person	Disciplinarian
Realistic	Assistant	Financially Responsible	Stingy Person
Organizer	Follower		Slave
Leader	Child		Majority
Adult			Stubborn Person
Role Model			Doubter
Provider			Rich Person
Cook			Always Late
Gatherer			Authority Figure
Helper			Stressed Person
Warrior			Workaholic
Non-White Person			Submissive One
Survivor			Perfectionist
Minority			
Earned			
Daughter			
Lover			

## Appendix E: Co-researchers' Completed Role Profiles

Sixth co-researcher's role profile

<b>Who I Am</b>	<b>Who I Want To Be</b>	<b>Who Is Blocking Me</b>	<b>Who Can Help Me</b>
Nurturer	Collectivist	Stressed Person	Realistic
Even-Tempered	Earners	Stubborn Person	Cook
Gatherer	Non-White Person	Boss	Assistant
Minority	Financially Responsible	Disciplinarian	Adolescent
Follower	Lover	Always Late	Child
Calm Person	Dreamer	Stingy Person	Workaholic
Helper	Wise Person	Authority Figure	Individualist
Care Taker	Passive One		Rule Enforcer
Leader	Mother		Submissive One
Adult	Daughter		Survivor
Role Model	Wife		Rich Person
Homemaker	Elder		Doubter
Majority			Religious Person
Father			Perfectionist
Husband			Warrior
Son			Dominant One
Provider			Slave
Supporter			Hero
White Person			Poor Person
Brother			Hunter

## Appendix F: Interview Questions

### Before Card Sort:

- What are your names?
- How old are you both?
- How long have you been together? How did you meet?
- If applicable: do you have children / what are the ages of your children?
- How would you define your cultural identity?
- What is your mother tongue? What language is spoken at home?

### After Card Sort:

- How was that process? Gut reactions? Surprises? Anything *unsurprising* or expected?
- What is your experience of being in a bicultural relationship?
- Is there a particular role in each grouping that seems to be the most important or prominent to you? How would you describe your experience of that role?
- How would you define the most salient or important roles for you in your relationship? What is your experience of that role?
- How might your culture of origin define this role? How would you define it? (If there are differences explore them). How would your partner define it?
- What is your experience in bridging two cultures together in one family?
- How would you describe some of the family values stemming from your culture?
- How do you think society views you as a bicultural couple? Your family?
- Many of these roles have to do with gender. How do gender roles influence or manifest in your relationship, if at all? How are gender roles defined in your culture?
- How did you find this experience?