

**FRIENDSHIP ACROSS CULTURES: EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF  
FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN IMMIGRANT AND CANADIAN WOMEN IN  
SOUTHERN ALBERTA**

**SAMAR M. IZWAYYED**

B.Sc. PHM

Damascus University, 1989

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree

**MASTER OF SCIENCE, HEALTH SCIENCES**

Faculty of Health Sciences  
University of Lethbridge  
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

## **Abstract**

This research offers an understanding of the intercultural friendship development process between immigrant and Canadian women. More specifically, the research identified factors affecting the two groups' intercultural relationship development and provided insight into their life experiences based on such contact.

Interpersonal relationship theories and cross-cultural research studies form the conceptual background of the research. Twenty-one in depth interviews were conducted with 12 immigrant women and 9 Canadian women, aged 18 years or older using person-centered interviewing as a data collection method. Thematic analysis revealed factors that influenced social interaction between the two groups at different stages of their relationship development. Language competency, knowledge about culture, self-disclosure, and cultural differences were the major factors that affected intercultural friendship development across the two groups. The thesis concludes with some suggestions for future research and how intercultural friendship between immigrant and Canadian women could be enhanced in the Canadian context.

### **Acknowledgements**

This project has been done with the help and support from many people to whom I owe my deepest appreciation.

First of all, I would like to express deep gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Oluwagbohunmi Awosoga for his incredible support and directions throughout my research journey. He has always been there for me and has always been patient to listen and give advice.

Also, I am deeply indebted to Dr. David Gregory, my research committee member, for his generosity and kindness, and dedicated assistance. I have been so fortunate to have him on my committee. He has broadened my knowledge and experiences by introducing me to the world of qualitative research. His support and inspiration is endless.

Sincere thanks and gratitude also go to my other committee member Dr. Glenda Bonifacio for her support, guidance, and advice throughout the research project. I would also like to thank her for taking time out of her busy schedule to provide me with feedback and support.

I greatly value the relationships I have formed with my supervisor and my committee members which have been inspirational, educational, and enriching.

An incalculable gratitude goes to my lovely family, my husband, Adli, my daughter, Nada, and my sons, Motaz and Malek, for their continuous encouragement and endless inspiration. I am so grateful for your belief in my strengths and goals. Without your efforts and sacrifices, I would not have succeeded.

## Friendship Across Cultures

A very truthful gratefulness is due to my mother whose distant emotional support and countless prayers have been of great aid through difficult moments.

Immense thanks to all the participants who generously devoted time to my study and shared their experiences and stories with me.

Much appreciation is acknowledged to the Lethbridge Public Interest Research Group (LPIRG) for providing me a research grant with regard to this project.

Last but not least, I would like to express my thanks to everyone who has made a contribution to the accomplishment of this work in various and important ways.

**Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my father's soul whom I used to rely on for support and encouragement in every hard moment in my life. He had always inspired me to continue my education but did not have the chance to see this work through to completion. God bless his soul and may he rest in peace.

# Friendship Across Cultures

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgement .....	iii
Dedication .....	v
Table Of Contents .....	vi
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Background Information .....	2
Immigrant Women: Canadian Context .....	3
Sociocultural Adaptation .....	5
Immigrant Women Friendships .....	7
Problem Statement .....	11
Purpose of Study .....	14
Research Questions .....	16
Sub-Research Questions .....	16
Significance of Study .....	16
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	18
The Nature of Friendship .....	18
Friendship Network Support .....	20
Friendship and Gender .....	21
Immigrant Women: Intercultural Friendship .....	22
Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development .....	23
Ethnic Identity .....	24
Acculturation and Adaptation of Immigrant Women .....	27
Similarity of Social Identity .....	29
Language Competency .....	31
Proximity/Maintenance of Long Distance Friendship .....	33
Neighbourhood Friendship .....	34
Conceptual Framework .....	36
Social Penetration Theory .....	40
Uncertainty Reduction Theory .....	42
Summary .....	46
Chapter Three: Methodology .....	47
Philosophical Stance .....	47
Personal Reflection .....	49
Study Design .....	50
Method .....	51
Participant Recruitment .....	52
Sample Inclusion Criteria for the immigrant women group .....	53
Sample exclusion criteria .....	53
Sample inclusion for the Canadian women group .....	53

## Friendship Across Cultures

Description of participants .....	54
Data Collection .....	55
Data Analysis .....	57
Data Management .....	59
Ethical Considerations .....	59
Confidentiality .....	60
Anonymity .....	60
Potential Risk .....	61
Trustworthiness.....	61
Credibility .....	62
Transferability .....	62
Dependability .....	63
Confirmability .....	63
Summary .....	63
Chapter Four: Results .....	65
Sociocultural Adaptation Challenges.....	66
Common Ground: Perceptions of Friendship .....	70
Factors Influencing Friendship Development.....	73
Language Barrier/Spoken English Skills .....	74
Language competency .....	74
Accent .....	76
Slang and Idioms .....	77
Knowledge of Different Cultures.....	78
Self-Disclosure.....	82
Openness of Communication.....	84
Trusting Each Other .....	88
Limited Topics of Conversation .....	90
Frequency of Contact.....	92
Perceived Similarities/Differences.....	94
Acceptance of Cultural Differences .....	94
Common Cultural Backgrounds .....	97
Commonality and Interest.....	99
Misunderstandings and Potential Tensions.....	102
Social Activities and Involvement.....	104
Telecommunication Facilities/Maintenance of Long Distance Friendships.....	107
Intercultural Friendship in the Neighbourhood.....	110
Intercultural Friendship Development Process .....	114
Initial Stage .....	115
Exploratory Stage.....	118
Stable Stage.....	120

## Friendship Across Cultures

Summary .....	123
Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion .....	127
The Impact of Social Adaptation Challenges .....	127
Friendship Perspective Across Cultures .....	129
Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development .....	130
Language Competency/ Communication Competencies .....	131
Knowledge about Culture .....	133
Self-Disclosure.....	135
Perception of Similarity/Dissimilarity .....	136
Relationships Maintenance .....	140
Intercultural Friendship in the Neighbourhood.....	141
Intercultural Friendship Development Strategies .....	142
Initial Stage .....	143
Exploratory Stage.....	143
Stable Stage.....	144
Summary .....	144
Chapter Six: Conclusion .....	146
Emergent Findings from the Study .....	146
The Impact Of Sociocultural Adaptation Challenges .....	146
Relying on Relationships with Former Immigrants .....	147
Impact of Ethnic Density on Formation of Intercultural Friendships.....	148
Intercultural Friendship Fulfillment.....	149
Opportunities for Meeting.....	149
Language Competencies and Communication Skills .....	150
Intercultural Friendship and Gender (Woman to Woman Friendship)....	151
The Bond of Rearing Children.....	152
Managing Conflict or Misunderstandings .....	152
Uncomfortable Social Activity Involvement .....	153
Frequency of Contact.....	154
Trust .....	154
Impact of Telecommunication Facilities and Maintenance of Long Distance Relationships.....	155
Intercultural Friendship in the Neighbourhood.....	155
Intercultural Friendship Development Process .....	156
Limitation of the Existing Intercultural Friendship Development Theories .....	157
Implications.....	161
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research .....	163
Conclusion .....	165
References.....	168



## Friendship Across Cultures

Appendices.....	182
Appendix A: Letter to Immigrant Services.....	182
Appendix B: Invitation Poster .....	183
Appendix C: Information Sheet.....	184
Appendix D: Informed Consent for Immigrant Women.....	185
Appendix E: Informed Consent for Canadian Women.....	187
Appendix F: Participant Demographics Information.....	189
Appendix G: Interview Guide for Immigrant Women .....	191
Appendix H: Interview Guide for Canadian Women .....	195
Appendix I: Demographic Information of Canadian Participants .....	197
Appendix J: Demographic Information of Immigrant Participants .....	198
List of Tables	
Table 1: Demographic Information: Canadian Women.....	54
Table 2: Demographic Information: Immigrant Women.....	55
Table 3: Different Perceptions of Friendship: Immigrant and Canadian .....	72
List of Figures	
Figure 1: Framework of Factors Impacting Intercultural Friendship Formation...44	
Figure 2: Intercultural Friendship Development Stages .....	116
Figure 3: Factors influencing Intercultural Friendship Development.....	132

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Societies worldwide are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. People of different cultural backgrounds will increasingly come together as neighbours, colleagues, or coworkers, and intercultural interactions are becoming the norm. Although many advantages come with living in a multicultural society like Canada, people in such environments also experience many challenges. For example, when people from culturally diverse backgrounds, such as immigrants, come in contact with members of the host society, they normally find it difficult to interact and socialize with them. Forming intercultural friendships facilitates integration between immigrants and members of the host society. Of importance, bicultural experiences and intercultural understanding strengthen flexibility and facilitate women's integration into the host society.

Friendship networks of immigrants in Canada present an important source of assistance and support for resettlement and integration in a new environment. Immigrants who more readily make friends upon arrival in their new environment are more likely to experience positive early adjustment to the host society. A social network often assists in reducing loneliness among newly-arrived immigrants and promotes a sense of belonging (Zhao, Xue & Gilkinson, 2010). In addition, friendship networks have the potential to positively impact immigrant women's settlement and social integration into a new environment. On the other hand, absence of friendship among immigrants, in many cases, leads to feelings of alienation and isolation. These experiences affect the emotional and psychosocial well-being of many immigrant women (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2006).

Although many studies have explored the challenges faced by immigrant women

## Friendship Across Cultures

during their early settlement in a new society, the nature of intercultural friendship development between immigrant and host society members, and its impact on the social integration and the adaptation of immigrant women, has been largely ignored by communication researchers. This study attempts to address this knowledge gap and to further understand intercultural friendship and its potential impact on resettlement and social integration of immigrant women into Canadian society.

### **Background**

Migration is the movement of people from one country or place to another. Many people in the world, whether by coercion, choice, or necessity, move from their country of origin to another. Recently, more people than ever are moving to live abroad: population migration and labor mobility have significantly increased, with immigrants often permanently settling in new regions of the world. Based on United Nations (2013) statistics, the number of international immigrants worldwide has significantly increased to reach 232 million immigrants in 2013, as compared to 175 million in 2000 and 154 million in 1990. With an increased average of 2.8% per year between 1990 and 2013, North America has had the fastest growth in migrant stock. Women comprise a large and growing component of international migration, which represents approximately 48% of the international migrant stock worldwide (United Nations, 2013).

In the last few decades, cultural diversity has increased in Canada because of increased emigration from around the world. The ultimate goal of many immigrants is to enter the labour market and to improve their standard of living and family situation. A significant increase in the immigrant population in Canada was observed over the years. Thousands of immigrants come to Canada every year and make it their new home. It is

## Friendship Across Cultures

estimated that more than 280,000 immigrants entered Canada in 2010, and it is projected that the immigrant population will continue to increase by about 25% by the year 2017 (Chui & Maheux, 2011). Immigration will be one of the main sources of population growth in Canadian society by the year 2035. As cited by Chui and Maheux, (2011), more than half of the immigrant population in Canada is made up of women. About 52.3% of the immigrant populations in Canada were women, constituting 27.4% of the total female population in Canada.

According to Alberta Immigration Progress Report 2011, in 2010 Alberta was the fourth largest immigrant-receiving province in Canada followed by Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec. The number of immigrants in Alberta has increased from 20,716 arriving in 2006 to 32,640 immigrants in 2010. Most new immigrants who settled in Alberta over the same period were in the economic class category which accounted for 60.5% of this group; sponsored family members accounted for 28.4%, and refugees accounted for approximately 8.6%. Most immigrants to Alberta were destined for urban areas. The city of Calgary was the top destination of immigrants for the period 2006 to 2010. On average, over a third of new immigrants came to Alberta with university degrees. In contrast, 1/10th on average arrived with trade certificates or non-university diplomas (Government of Alberta, 2011).

### **Immigrant Women: Canadian Context**

Immigration is primarily associated with economic betterment and reuniting individual family units. Chain migration occurs in a sequence, when the movement of one person causes others to follow. Immigrants enter Canada under three categories as defined in 2002 by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA): an independent

## Friendship Across Cultures

economic category in which immigrants enter the country as skilled workers, business-class entrepreneurs, and investors; family class; and refugee class. In 2008, approximately 65,567 people came to Canada under the category of family class, and of this number, 59.3% were women. (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008b).

There are a large number of immigrants residing in Canada, with more arriving each year. Immigrants, under Canadian legislation, are either permanent residents (landed immigrants) or citizens by naturalization (the citizenship process) (Chui & Maheux, 2011). A permanent resident or landed immigrant is an immigrant whose status to live in Canada permanently is granted by immigration authorities. Some immigrant women are visible minorities in Canada. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non- Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” Using this definition, regulations specify the following groups within the visible minority population: South Asian, Arab, Black, West Asian, Chinese, Southeast Asian, Filipino, Latin American, Korean, and Japanese ( Chui & Maheux, 2011).

According to Statistics Canada (2006), immigrant females are well educated. Nearly 26% of visible minority women over the age of 18 have a university degree. Additionally, almost 35% of immigrant women between the ages 25 to 54 were university degree holders. However, based on the 2006 Census, immigrant females are usually more vulnerable to unemployment. About 8.4% of the immigrant women aged 25 to 54 desired to be in the labour force but remained unemployed. This unemployment rate was higher than that of immigrant males (6.2%). Young immigrant females were more likely to be unemployed than those in older age groups (Chui & Maheux, 2011).

### **Sociocultural Adaptation**

Challenges and hardships often accompany the decision to leave one's homeland. Migration is a non-normative life event that can be stressful, as it leads to a process of adjustment on both a personal and a collective level (Berry, 2003). Regardless of their reason for immigrating, many immigrants experience similar adaptation challenges in their resettlement process (Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). Culture has been found to have a significant influence on shaping an individual's behaviours. Immigrants who experience greater differences between their home culture and the new culture may face many hardships and adaptation challenges during their early settlement process (Kalek, Mak, & Khawaja, 2010). Successful adjustment to a new society depends on how individuals, who have been raised in one cultural milieu, manage to adapt to new environments that result from immigration (Martins & Reid, 2007). A sense of belonging and identity are closely linked to the process of adaptation.

As a result of settling in a country that is not their own, immigrant women usually face extensive life changes, often including learning a new language, encountering differing cultural values, social rules, and policies, and material environments. As immigrant women move to new environments, they have to cope with these different cultural, social, and economic challenges. Even basic elements of life, such as food, weather, accommodation and local language, may be problematic for them. Because of these challenges, women may develop problems, such as cultural shock, stress, or homesickness (Schmitz, Jacobus, Stakeman, Valenzuela & Sprankel, 2003).

Migrant women in most cases become disconnected from their familiar social institutions and cultural practices. In addition, they often experience separation from

## Friendship Across Cultures

friends and family members as sources of support (Martins & Reid, 2007). Many immigrants experience loneliness in light of the lack of social networks, especially friends, in the new society, which can lead to alienation and isolation from the host society, especially during the first few years of their immigration (Khan & Watson, 2005).

Immigrants can experience anxiety in their sociocultural adaptation, which is described as their ability to fit in or to carry out effective interaction in a new society. They often feel insecure and uncertain, as they are unsure how to behave in the new society. Within a culturally and ethnically diverse country like Canada, contact of people with different cultures and ethnicities can be one of the greatest challenges of social settlement within the Canadian social context. Reducing uncertainty and anxiety is necessary for intercultural adaptation. Several studies examine how interaction with host members promotes intercultural adaptation (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987). Kim's (2001) study showed that contact between immigrants and their host society members can foster their social adjustments in the new country. Relationships with host society members, in general, are important factors influencing acculturation, social support, satisfaction, and success in social integration.

Communication plays a significant role in the adaptation of immigrants to their new society (Kim, 2001). There are important communication factors that adversely affect resettlement and adjustment processes of immigrants, for example, language competency. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with Canadian cultures keep many immigrant women from either communicating or establishing relationships with their Canadian counterparts, and might also limit their social activities and social integration.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Many immigrant women experience isolation, loneliness, and in many cases depression as a result of their disconnection from host society members (Choudhry, 2001).

### **Immigrant Women Friendships**

When immigrant women leave their home country, they sense the loss of important social ties. Networks of family and friends are dislocated during the process of immigration, which may reduce emotional support, as well as tangible support. Loss of network support can be a source of stress as immigrant women face the challenges of rebuilding their social support system in the new society. Studies showed that most immigrant women experience stress as a result of the lack of social inclusion which is considered to be a source of psychological support during the first few months of immigration (Martins & Reid, 2007; Rashid, 2011; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). Establishment of an interpersonal network is one of the most critical and difficult problems facing the recently arrived immigrant (Schwarzer & Hahn, 1995).

Upon arrival to Canada, immigrant women are more likely than male newcomers to experience isolation because of socio-cultural and linguistic barriers (Mulvihill, Mailloux, & Atkin, 2001). As compared to males, immigrant women are less likely to be employed (CRIAW 2003; Man, 2004) and, as a result, have fewer opportunities to interact with host society members, thus affecting the acquisition and learning of the dominant language. Additionally, fewer chances of contact and communication between immigrant women and host society members reduce the opportunity of improving their language competency, a vital skill for facilitating friendship between individuals. For immigrant women, increased friendship with host society members means more opportunities to learn the language and learn more about the host culture. In addition,



## Friendship Across Cultures

intercultural friendships enhance social integration of immigrant women in the new environment and can lead to a high level of satisfaction and positive views of the host country. For host community members, intercultural friendship exposes them to different people from dissimilar backgrounds and cultures, which can potentially enrich their life experiences and knowledge about people from around the globe.

Adjustment difficulties and hardships experienced by immigrant women in their relocation journeys have been a major subject of investigation for decades (Flaskerud & Uman, 1996; Todd & Hoffman-Goetz, 2011). However, the impact of intercultural relationships between immigrants and host society members on the early adjustment of immigrants remains limited in the literature, although such interpersonal relationships are influential in an individual's life.

When women relocate to a new environment, their social networks with family and friends become affected. A study conducted by Aroian (1990) suggests that immigration may impact the social networks of immigrants. Loss of social ties, social status, and social identity are common experiences for immigrants. Changes in the social dynamic in particular can make immigrant women vulnerable to emotional strain, psychological trauma, and mental distress (Schmitz et al., 2003). In addition, loss of existing social connections and the inability to form new networks in their host communities affect the social life of many immigrant women. These experiences can lead to feelings of alienation, isolation, and diminished well-being.

Despite these problems, immigrant women still often build friendships and other social networks after arriving at their destination (Akram, 2012). To obtain needed social support, newly-arrived immigrant women must seek out social ties upon arriving in the

## Friendship Across Cultures

new community. Studies have demonstrated significant evidence for the direct effect of support networks on immigrant well-being (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2006). Specifically, an immigrant's ethnic community has been found to provide vital social support during early adjustment in the new society and it can also protect psychological well-being (Finch & Vega, 2003). The presence of host society people in the support network can assist the integration and the adjustment of immigrants in their host society (Martínez García, García Ramírez, & Maya Jariego, 2002). The process of developing new social networks is difficult and lengthy and many immigrant women face social exclusion as a consequence of their race, language, religion, or immigrant status (Hynie, Crooks, & Barragan, 2011).

Friendship networks of recently arrived immigrant women present an extremely important source of assistance and support (Kemenade, Roy, & Bouchard, 2006). Immigrant women who readily make friends upon arriving in their new environment are more likely to report better health (Zhao et al., 2010). This may be mainly related to the fact that friendship often helps reduce feelings of loneliness among immigrant women; it also promotes a sense of belonging. Exclusion can lead to emotional distress and excessive feelings of loneliness among immigrant women. In addition, friendship networks have the potential to impact positively on immigrant women's settlement outcomes and integration into their new environment. Friends can provide helpful advice on employment, housing, and health care access (Kemenade et al., 2006). Host society members can help as a main source of information and can facilitate the access of public services. Studies have found that immigrant women rely mostly on their ethnic group as a source of support to overcome challenges during their early adjustment in the new society

## Friendship Across Cultures

(Rashid, 2011). However, many immigrant women remain isolated in Canadian society and, as a result, have not developed friendships with their Canadian counterparts.

In the last few decades, information communication technology has fostered the formation and maintenance of social ties among people who share common interests regardless of their residential locations (Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Immigrant women have benefited from this technology in maintaining meaningful relationships with distant family and friends, who act as their primary sources of support (Bakardjieva & Smith, 2001). Moreover, the Internet is an important source of information about social environment and economic opportunities for many immigrant women in their new communities. Researchers document that women can fulfill their particular needs and find advice and support through a variety of websites and newsgroups (Koerber, 2001). Obtaining services and support through the Internet can limit face to face interactions between immigrant women and host society members and, as a result, negatively affect the creation of potentially emotionally satisfying relationships. Rashid's study (2011), have found that telecommunications has facilitated the connection and maintenance of immigrant women's long distance relationships, however, it has played an important role in hindering friendship formation between immigrant women and host society members.

Several studies with immigrant women have suggested that they prefer to form friendships with other immigrant women, as it offers them a sense of comfort and a sense of solidarity (Thomson & Hoffman, 2012). According to Martins and Reid (2007), any friendship benefits immigrants by serving as sources of information and emotional support as well as facilitating their adjustment process. However, building new

## Friendship Across Cultures

friendships with host society members also encourages an understanding and appreciation of the dominant culture in the host country and is vital for offering support and for information diffusion.

Although a few studies (Hynie et al., 2011; Martinovic, van Tubergen, & Maas, 2011) have focused on the phenomena of friendship among immigrant women, none have examined the dimensions of friendship between Canadian-born and immigrant women. There is a dearth of knowledge about the role of friendship on the adaptation and social integration of immigrant women in their host communities in Canada. Thus, in order to gain a better understanding of the formation of friendship networks between immigrant and Canadian-born women, it is necessary to examine their experiences within the sociocultural context that shapes their social networks.

### **Problem Statement**

Societies all over the world are becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Increased cultural diversity compels groups who have different beliefs, languages, values, and skills to be in contact with each other. However, our current knowledge of how people who have different cultural backgrounds develop interpersonal relationships with one another remains limited.

There is a need for people to develop an understanding of other diverse people and cultures in increasingly multicultural societies such as Canada. Moving from one society to another usually requires that immigrant women adapt to new cultures and values, encounter a new language, rebuild their social networks, construct new friendships, and adjust to a new environment. For immigrant women, forming friendship with the members of the host culture is an important activity. They need friends for help,

## Friendship Across Cultures

social support, and the sharing of common interests.

Women's friendships are considered as important sources for support and identity development. Indeed, evidence shows the positive influence of female friendships on women's well-being (Knickmeyer, Sexton, & Nishimura, 2002). Kanas et al's study (2011) revealed that contacts with natives of the host country facilitated the successful integration and adaptation of immigrants into the new society. Also, intercultural connections foster social integration, reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict and assisting immigrants in learning the dominant language (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch, & Combs, 1996).

Successful integration of immigrants depends significantly on how often they interact with their host community members and the form of reception they receive (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Immigrants may experience certain difficulties interacting with the greater society as well as with their neighbours. These challenges are often influenced by the differences between these groups of individuals in terms of beliefs and cultural values (Brown & Hewstone, 2005).

Several studies have shown that immigrants have negative expectations about possible successful integration and interaction with majority group members at the destination because of fear of being rejected or discriminated against (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005). These expectations, in turn, negatively affect their preparedness and attitudes toward the formation of friendship with other people (Tropp, 2007). This is particularly common among newly-arrived immigrants. These immigrants tend to have fewer or no friends at

## Friendship Across Cultures

their destination as compared to immigrants who have lived at the destination for a longer period and have established relationships.

Immigrant women who live in smaller urban centres and rural communities in Canada face additional challenges in building their networks (Zehtab-Martin & Beesley, 2005). Rural societies in Canada differ from larger cities not only in the services they offer for new immigrants, but also in the demographics of their population, which is usually less ethnoculturally diverse than that of the bigger cities. There are fewer opportunities for immigrants who live in smaller communities to access immigration services, communicate with their extended ethnic community, and develop a network of social support. In addition, newly-arrived immigrants may find it even more challenging to build social ties with people who reside outside their ethnic community. Previous studies have revealed that such intercultural contacts play an important role in the successful adjustment of immigrants in their new environment and with respect to networking (Kanas et al., 2011).

Studies indicate the importance of friendship in women's lives (Block & Greenberg, 2002). Difficulties involved in establishing new friendship networks in the host society often tend to adversely affect immigrant women's well-being. In particular, a lack of friendships and isolation because of socio-cultural and linguistic barriers make many immigrant women more vulnerable to several psychological problems (Schmitz et al., 2003). Positive facilitation of intercultural friendships requires more than simply increasing the possibilities for contact or interaction. It needs to concentrate on how to enhance the quality of intercultural friendships and how to make such relationships work.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Upon conducting a literature review for this research study, I found that the nature of immigrant women's friendships development was ignored by communication researchers. To date, few studies (Hynie et al., 2011; Martinovic et al., 2011) have explored friendships between immigrant and Canadian women. Most studies that have explored the experiences of immigrant women have focused on the effects of certain social and economic factors on the development of acculturation. Thus, this study attempts to bridge this knowledge gap and to increase our understanding of intercultural friendship and its potential impact on resettlement and social integration of immigrant women in Canada.

It is vital to identify the factors that influence the formation of friendships between immigrant women and Canadian women. Also, research on intercultural friendship is still in its early stages, and remains insufficient and limited in its theoretical and methodological perspectives in examining different aspects and dimensions of intercultural friendships (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Therefore, the study of intercultural friendships has theoretical significance in extending findings of intercultural theories to intercultural settings (Gudykunst, 1985).

### **Purpose of Study**

Developing intercultural friendships is not an easy task because people from different cultures and societies are less likely to share the same worldviews, have the same patterns of beliefs, and perceive the same verbal and nonverbal norms than members of the same culture. Most intercultural friendships face challenges that are largely absent in intracultural friendships (Chen, Gudykunst, & Mody, 2002). Research on the cultural grounding of friendship has demonstrated cross-cultural differences in

## Friendship Across Cultures

friendship patterns such as obligation, expectation, mutual trust and duration (Bennett, 1991; Lee, 2008). Studies also suggest that cultural differences may hinder the initiation and/or development of intercultural relationships (Kudo & Simkin, 2003).

Friendship research has been enacted among several disciplines for many years. Most of these studies, however, have explored friendship from an intraculture perspective. Despite the clear importance of intercultural friendships in the increasingly multicultural world, there remains a lack of research that focuses on communication between people from different cultures (Chen et al., 2002; Lee, 2008). Intercultural research attempts to understand the factors that influence the interaction between members of different groups. The importance of researching intercultural friendship is a new area of concern but appears to be growing as a result of the increase in intercultural contact, especially in diverse countries such as Canada where many communities are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse given the influx of immigrants. This study aimed to help fill the gap in the existing literature regarding intercultural friendships between immigrant women and their host society counterparts.

The objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of friendship development between immigrant women and Canadian women. It is also important to identify potential challenges involved in friendship formation and the ways cultural differences and communication diminish or enhance the prospect of friendship.

Specifically, the goals of the study were the following: 1) to understand the importance of friendship in helping immigrant women adjust to the demands of living in a new community; 2) to explore how the difficulties immigrant women experience in adjusting to a new culture affect the formation of intercultural friendships; 3) to identify the



## Friendship Across Cultures

support-seeking strategies that help immigrant women to build their friendship and social networks with Canadian-born women; and 4) to identify the factors that enhance or hinder the willingness of native Canadian women to develop friendships with immigrant women.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women?
2. What is the impact of intercultural friendship on the social integration and health and well-being of immigrant women in Canada?

### **Sub-questions.**

1. What factors influence the formation of intercultural friendship in different stages of friendship-development between immigrant women and Canadian women?
2. What are the factors influencing the willingness of Canadian women to develop friendships with immigrant women?
3. What is the effect of neighbourhood support on the formation of friendship between Canadian and immigrant women?

### **Significance of Study**

Exploring friendship between immigrant and Canadian women provides insight and understanding of the experiences that immigrant women face in rebuilding their new social lives in the receiving society and how these experiences can affect their adjustment process. To date, no study has explored friendship between immigrant and Canadian women and its respective influence on social integration. Most studies that explored the

## Friendship Across Cultures

experiences of immigrant women focused on the effects of certain social and economic factors on the development of social adaptation. Thus, this study attempted to bridge this knowledge gap and to increase our understanding of how intercultural friendship can facilitate resettlement and integration of immigrant women into Canadian society.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

In this chapter, research that has explored the experiences of immigrant women during their adjustment to a new country and intercultural friendship formation are addressed. This chapter will begin by discussing the important role that interpersonal friendships play in peoples' lives, and will consider those factors that influence the development of interpersonal friendships in particular, factors shown to promote the development of intercultural friendships.

#### **The Nature of Friendship**

Friendship is among the most significant relationships an individual experiences. Friendship is defined as a “voluntary interdependence between two persons over time, that is intended to facilitate social emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance” (Duck, Hay, & Hobfoll, 1988, p. 395). Friendship is the essential way in which individuals meet their social and emotional needs.

Friendships play an important role in the development of social skills and personal competence. It provides opportunities for interaction which gives life meaning (Wiseman, Adams, & Allan, 2000). Interpersonal friendships reduced social anxiety as they function as stress-buffering mechanism (Cohen, Sherrod, & Clark, 1986) and they provide a means of expressing feelings and resolving conflict (Berndt, 1982). Friendships are different from blood- bonds or legal arrangement relationships as they are voluntary and chosen rather than inherited or allocated. Furthermore, issues of flexibility that characterise many friendship networks make it unique from other types of relationships.

## Friendship Across Cultures

The sets of relationships change as people involved in them move throughout their life course in response to this mobility. As a result, bonds those were once lasting, whether formed in the community or the workplace, become less permanent than they used to be. Moreover personal networks transform as people change locations. This not only leads to a change in people's networks but also fosters new ways of retaining former connections, for instance replacing face-to face communication with electronic technologies such as Skype and Facebook.

Interactions between persons over a period of time and the interdependence existing between them are the main factors facilitating friendship formation. Frequent interaction and shared activity are needed to maintain a relationship between people (Duck et al., 1988). Absence of interaction can be a reason for termination of relationships between friends as friends usually spend much of their time together. Frequent contact between individuals, either in the workplace or neighbourhoods, facilitates friendship development between different groups or individuals.

Friendship development has two main aspects: intimacy and self –disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Friendships differ in terms of the extent of intimacy between friends. A friend could be categorized as an “acquaintance” if the friendship intimacy between the friends is generally low while could be considered as a “very best friend” if the friendship intimacy between the friends is mostly high. Intimacy has been considered as a main aspect and key expectation of friendships (Fehr, 2000). As a relationship develops, people become more willing to share personal information and express their full range of feelings. Commitment and private and personal sharing are all

## Friendship Across Cultures

characteristics of friendship (McGill, 1985). Friendship sometimes develops into intimate social relation depending on the individuals involved.

The significant role that friendship plays in individuals' lives has been the focus of many studies. Fehr, (1996) found that individuals who actively participate in friendships and those who are "socially integrated" might live longer. Close relationships can play an important role in helping an individual adjust emotionally and socially (La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Liu & Chen, 2003). People's sense of belonging is enhanced in addition to their social integration when they receive support from their friends. More than in other relationships friendship bonds transfer companionship and emotional aid (Wellman & Wortley, 1990).

### **Friendship Network Support**

Support network refers to the ties individuals has with others and the underlying benefits of the relationship. Such network often comprises individuals who share certain characteristics in common; for example, family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and others. Receipt of support from any of these individuals has important implications on major life-course transition such as migration to a new country.

During the early transition period of immigration, the immigrant often leans on existing social networks in the host countries to facilitate their integration into the society. Through their social networks, immigrants are able to have easier access to, for example, employment, education and other basic needs in their host communities. Interactions with family members, friends, and peers have been found to be a main source of both practical and emotional support for immigrants. However, the absence of support in the host country put many immigrants in challenging (e.g., feeling of social isolation)

## Friendship Across Cultures

situation during the initial stages of their arrival. They usually live without the social supports they were accustomed to in their homeland. Thus, most newcomers need to rebuild disrupted social networks in their host communities (Hagan, 1998).

Many newcomers to Canada today rely on friends and family for support to overcome settlement difficulties, rather than formal health and social service organizations (Statistics Canada; 2004). During settlement, familiar sources of support such as friends and family, the existence of an ethnic community and a strong sense of belonging may enable newcomers to gradually enlarge their social networks and lead to help-seeking and opportunity within the wider society (Beiser, 1999).

### **Friendship and Gender**

It is a widely accepted view that males and females communicate differently in interpersonal relationships and that the differences are consistent with differences in instrumental and expressive gender roles. Compared to males, females develop higher levels of closeness and intimacy (Williams, 1985) and place a greater emphasis on disclosure and discussion of feelings; males usually emphasize on shared activities (Caldwell & Peplau, 1982). Even when the focus is not limited to friendships, women tend to rate their interpersonal interactions as more intimate than men (Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985) and women are more likely to disclose than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992). Traditionally, men have been found to be initiators of social relationships and sources of material resources, whereas women have been on the receiving end, benefiting from a range of support including emotional, appraisal and logistic support.

Women were more depressed than men if they did not have a friend in whom to confide, but women who do have such support often report lower levels of depressive

## Friendship Across Cultures

symptoms. Men's depressive symptomatology was not related to having a friend confidant. Similarly, women who did not have a same-sex best friend in whom to confide were less satisfied with life than women who did have a friend confidant and men in general. Having a best friend who gets on their nerves was negatively related to men's life satisfaction and positively related to women's. Thus, friendships to some greater extent, affect individuals social and economic well-being, as well as their health status, particularly among women.

### **Immigrant Women: Intercultural Friendship**

Intercultural friendship is defined as the friendships between immigrants and host society members or friendship relations between individuals who belongs to different ethnic groups. In this study intercultural friendship will be defined as friendships between immigrants and Canadians. Developing interpersonal relationships with someone from different culture is not an easy task for immigrant women, because women from dissimilar cultures are less possible to share the same worldviews, values, beliefs, and norms than members of the same culture.

The importance of female friendship networks to immigrants' well-being is well documented. Several studies on acculturation have found that immigrant women often receive encouragement and support from their family and friends during their process of resettlement (Finch & Vega, 2003). Whether having relatives living in the host country or overseas, immigrant women usually seek support from their family and friends (McMichael & Manderson, 2004). These supports often help many immigrants to overcome challenges; particularly those concerning acculturation during their resettlement process. Researchers found that women look for intimacy and emotional

## Friendship Across Cultures

support in relationships with other women within different contexts such as workplace and social communities (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996; Mansfield, Theisen, & Boyer, 1992).

Previous research (Berry, 2006) suggests that discrimination against minorities discourage them from being actively involved in the dominant culture. Immigrant women who experience any form of discrimination are usually discouraged from making friends or interacting with the members of their host community. As a result, they struggle to form friendships with others who do not share common ethnic identity.

### **Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development**

Individual characteristics are essential determinants of intercultural contact. Individuals from minority groups vary in the extent in which they have connections with members of the host society members. Age, ethnic group, migration generation, gender, income, and educational level are highly related to the readiness for intercultural friendship (Martinovic et al., 2011).

Differences between ethnic groups play an important role in intercultural friendship. For example, European immigrants who have better language skills and similar cultural practises with Canadians may have a higher chance of communicating and socializing with members of the host society members as compared to other groups of immigrants such as South African immigrants. Therefore, they usually have more relations and potential friendships with host society members. Second generation immigrants and younger people usually have more intercultural contacts as compared to the older generation. The main factors are better language skills (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2005) and their participation in schools where they meet the native residents.



## Friendship Across Cultures

Immigrant women usually participate less in activities and have less opportunity to be employed which can reduce their chances to be in contact with host society members. Working allows for the development of positive attitudes towards natives and as a result increases the chances of forming intercultural friendships. Income and educational level are other important factors that can facilitate contact between immigrants and Canadians. Immigrants with higher incomes and those with higher education have more trust in others and are more open to contacts (Sigelman, Bledsoe, Welch, & Combs, 1996). There are several factors that affect friendship formation between immigrant women and their host community members. Immigrant women who have higher educational levels have better chances in the mainstream job market than members with lower educational levels. Such opportunities enable immigrant women to interact in society thus increasing their chances of meeting and bonding with people from other groups. More particularly, immigrant women who do not work and do not speak the destination language are less likely to interact with the dominant group.

In addition to individual characteristics such as age, income, length of stay in the new society, and level of education, there are other socioeconomic factors influencing friendship formation between immigrants and members of their host community. These factors are detailed below.

**Ethnic identity.** Interaction between people is influenced strongly by the cultural and ethnic background of the group where one assumes to belong (Ting-Toomey, 2012). Ethnic identity refers to an individual's perception of being part of an ethnic group and how they feel towards their ethnic group(s). This concurrently provides a sense of belonging and membership to a particular group (Cameron, Sato, Lay, & Lalonde, 1997).

## Friendship Across Cultures

One way of indicating one's ethnic identity is to correlate more effectively with in-group fellows and correspond more strongly to their norms, particularly if their norms command avoiding the out-group (Abrams, Rutland, & Cameron, 2003).

Previous research shows that, in a dominant culture, ethnic identity has a major role in creating strong cultural bonds and a sense of emerging identification (Rumbaut, 2008). In some cases, ethnic identity can be extremely strong, especially if there are many differences between the host and immigrant's culture. These differences normally lead to difficulties in acculturation among immigrant women (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997), which often get intensified when a particular ethnic group begins to discriminate against others (Chao, 1997).

Ethnic minorities with high involvement in their heritage group perceive themselves to have more knowledge about the rules that control social interaction and govern the group. Therefore, minorities with high involvement in their heritage group might prefer to interact with other individuals within that group rather than initiate interactions with others. In contrast, minority group members who show signs of adapting to the majority culture (e.g. language use, and style of dress) can be more appealing to majority group members (Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). As a result, they have greater opportunity to interact and communicate with the majority group and create meaningful relationships with members of the host society.

Undeniably, any changes caused by acculturation, can actually relate to changes in an individual's cultural identity. Examples of such changes can be shifting linguistic preferences or changing beliefs that characterised the individual. The more immigrants

## Friendship Across Cultures

interact with the host social environment and get exposed to its ideals the more likely that their identity will shift.

Since Canada embraces multiculturalism that ensures the freedom of choice for Canadians to decide which group they want to identify with, people are encouraged to maintain their cultural heritage while at the same time developing a strong national identity (Canadian Heritage, 2002). Furthermore, as immigrants maintain their cultural identity for several years, they start to see Canada as a multicultural country, which allows them to practice their cultural heritage as well as the Canadian culture but the more immigrants are involved with their ethnic group, the more they realize the importance of preserving their cultural heritage.

Ethnic minority immigrant groups are usually in the situation of struggling to maintain traditions and cultural values which might be different from the dominant culture's values. This may be attained through the preservation of in-group behavior. That is, involvement with people of their own cultural group. They may also seek interaction with the broader community. This might be achieved throughout the growth of out-group behavior; that is, engagement with other ethnic groups members, specifically with the dominant group in the host community.

Immigrant women who are concerned with sustaining their culture and maintain their cultural identities may prefer to relate with friends of the same culture background. Immigrant women who are strongly rooted in their cultural heritage would be more likely to join cultural organizations and develop friendships primarily with members of their cultural community. On the other hand, immigrant women who think it is important to learn and adapt to the host community's traditions normally establish ties with other

## Friendship Across Cultures

members from different ethnic groups. The more immigrant women adapt host community traditions the greater the chance that they will form intercultural friendships.

**Acculturation and adaptation of immigrant women.** Acculturation is a process of adjustment to another culture that involves learning, development and competence in adapting to the new environment and facing new challenges (Berry, 2006). In other words, it is an adjustment of a culture as a result of contact with other people with their cultural beliefs and values. Acculturation causes changes in identity, attitudes, and values. Acculturation refers to the process of changes for immigrants as well as for host citizens and the effects of their eventual adaptation (Berry, 2003). When immigrants positively adapt in the new society they develop coping skills which can help them in developing capacity and interest in creating relationships within the new environment. The higher their degree of acculturation, the more likely they are to form intercultural relationships (Hanassab & Tidwell, 1998; Torres & Rollock, 2004).

Usually people migrate from one part of the world to another looking for a better future, but as a result of facing a number of migration and adjustment challenges they experience acculturation difficulties such as low social status (Yeh, Kim, Pituc, & Atkins, 2008), language barriers (Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, Wallisch, McGrath, & Spence, 2008), employment problems (Khan & Watson, 2005), racism and invisibility (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008), and loss of social support networks (Jibeen & Khalid, 2010). Several studies conducted on “acculturation” reveal that acculturation can be a challenging and a complex process that may lead to “acculturation stress” (Berry, 2001). This particular stress results from stressors in the acculturation process, especially that of feeling marginalized by the dominant culture (Antshel, 2002).

## Friendship Across Cultures

Modes of acculturation refer to ways of adapting to the new society and constitute one of the most investigated concepts in the literature. Berry (1997) has classified four types of acculturation or acculturation strategies that are mutually exclusive: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. Firstly, assimilation which is defined as the adaptation process, suggests that immigrants are widely exposed to the social attributes of the dominant society to the extent that it is very difficult to distinguish them from other members of the group. Secondly, the integration process is when the immigrants become active in the host society, but at the same time, preserves unique ethnic identities. Integration is considered a socially desirable response in the acculturation process and promotes an ideal form of multiculturalism. Thirdly, separation is the resistance of immigrants to actively participate in the host culture. This occurs when they stay away from any relations with the host society while strictly maintaining their ethnic identities and their traditional style of life. Finally, marginalization is the refusal of immigrants to identify with either their own ethnic group or that of the host culture. Rather than a mode of acculturation, marginalisation can be viewed as a psychopathological process that leads to isolation and alienation of immigrants.

Lalonde and Cameron (1993) argue that since immigrants choose to enter the host culture they should pursue active participation in that culture. This assertion suggests that assimilation and integration are the only applicable acculturation strategies. It is suggest that how frequently minorities interact with the host culture directly influences successful integration (Berry, 1999). Berry (1984) promoted multiculturalism suggesting that the dominant culture should enhance the opportunity for immigrants' successful acculturation by providing the supports necessary and by respecting diversity and the idea

## Friendship Across Cultures

of multiculturalism. Hence, diverse groups will be accepted in the host culture and vice versa, rather than expecting all cultures to be homogenous. There is a strong relationship between the expectancies of the host society and the adopted acculturation strategy. For example, expectations of integration can lead to a melting pot approach while the strains of separation can result in isolation and marginalization (Huntington, 2004).

Immigrant women's attitudes toward different ways of acculturation can essentially be considered as adapting and coping strategies in a new community. Usually, immigrant women with highly perceived bicultural competency have a better ability to function in the new community and more often expected to become involved in out-group behavior (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

The more immigrant women are able to adjust, the more their social contacts grow. Acculturation can affect the immigrant women's social integration, facilitating forming new social relationships and building friendships with host society members. In addition, it helps immigrant women in accessing more resources such as information, support, and social networks.

**Similarity of social identity.** It is widely acknowledged that the composition of social group that people interact in their daily life plays a substantial role in forming the composition of their broader social context (Feld & Carter, 1998). People prefer social ties with others who are similar to themselves in relation to socio-demographics (e.g., age, level of education, religion, sex or lifestyle), behavioural and intrapersonal characteristics (Mollenhorst, Völker, & Flap, 2008). People might search more thoroughly or longer within a certain context to find a person who matches their preferences, if they are looking for an associate to start a strong relationship.

## Friendship Across Cultures

The effect of the social composition of the meeting context on similarity in personal relationships could be in two opposite directions. If one wants to meet a similar person, and the context is full of similar others, the context will have a positive (or stimulating) effect on similarity in the relationship. For example, since people are structurally inscribed in schools according to their age, schools are full of others of the same age, making associations with similar others in that respect easy. Due to a generally strong correlation between level of education and occupation, work places are likely to provide potential network members with the same level of education. The opposite applies if the context is full of dissimilar others: the context then has a negative (or constraining) effect on similarity.

Intercultural friendship for example, consists of people with different culture and backgrounds, which makes association with similar others with respect to cultural context less likely. The stimulating or constraining effect of social context on similarity in personal relationships is larger for friendships than for other relationships.

A strong factor influencing the choice of an who immigrant woman to be friend is shared cultural identity (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Usually upon arrival, immigrant women benefit from contacts with individuals of the same ethnicity who provide them with information, knowledge, and other essential skills which facilitates their adjustment to the new environment. Immigrant women who live in more ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods have higher chances of meeting people with similar ethnicity and as a result they are less likely to seek out relations with the majority group. On the other hand, in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods, members of the host

## Friendship Across Cultures

society may feel threatened and maybe less willing to form social ties with ethnic minorities (Coenders, 2002).

Research has shown that women depend on their co-ethnic networks and tend to form friendships within co-ethnic groups to fulfill their support needs (Barnes & Aguilar, 2007). Women's interactions with co-ethnic groups are related to their own preferences, and also could be related to the limited opportunities to meet people from other ethnic groups. Who an individual socializes and connects with is not completely a personal decision. Whether people succeed in connecting with the type of others they favour depends on their opportunities to meet those particular others.

Meeting opportunities have a robust effect on the social composition of people's personal networks. For immigrant women to be able to form social ties with the dominant group there should be available opportunities for them to meet (Blau, 1977). Moreover, to have the opportunity to form social ties with the dominant group, the dominant group must be willing to interact with the minority group. The chance of forming ties with the dominant group members decreases when they are not willing to interact with the minority groups.

**Language competency.** Language is a key tool for social communication. Communication in different language can provide barriers to broad and intimate communication and shared understandings that characterize friendship. Successful relationship initiation and development between individuals linked with tactful emotional support, and self-disclosure that required sophisticated language skills especially in oral communication. Being proficient in the dominant language gives immigrants greater chances to interact with other ethnic groups and broaden their ability to interact with



## Friendship Across Cultures

them. Additionally, immigrants become more familiar with the host culture when they learn the language of the host country (Kalmijn & Tubergen, 2006).

Speaking the dominant language provides immigrant women with an opportunity to meet and interact with members of the host society, facilitating their intercultural friendships. Language skills are important since they play a central role in immigrants' interethnic contacts and are considered a fundamental aspect of immigrants' integration. Post-migration language proficiency of the host country determines the strength of intercultural friendship between immigrant and host society members.

English and French are recognized as the two official languages in Canada. As Canada attracts immigrants from different countries around the world, English or French are not the first languages for most Canadian immigrants. Learning the dominant language is one of the most difficult challenges that most non-English speaking immigrants have to face in the process of adjusting to the new society. Studies have shown that many immigrants do not speak the language of the destination country adequately (Glazer, Portes, & Rumbaut, 1991).

Immigrants' language skills depend on individual and background characteristics, such as education, age at migration, and group size (Stevens, 1999). Researchers have documented that immigrant language skills are better amongst immigrants who are higher educated, and those who arrived at a young age (Martinovic et al., 2011). Also, when the language of the origin country is similar to the official language of the host country, the second language is more easily acquired. Researchers have also found that learning the second language is more challenging when the ethnic group is comparatively small. This limits their opportunities for same group association and limits the number of people who

## Friendship Across Cultures

can speak their native language, compelling them to use the dominant language instead (van Tubergen & Kalmijn, 2009).

### **Proximity/Maintenance of Long Distance Friendship**

With the advancement of technology, the formation and maintenance of friendships among individuals who are geographically distant has become increasingly easier. Recent technological developments have changed individuals' abilities to form and maintain social ties across greater physical distances (Wellman, Haase, Witte & Hampton, 2001), while simultaneously reducing the need of face-to-face interaction (Edwards, Foley, & Putnam, 2001). This is may be especially true for immigrants who benefit from the use of telecommunication to keep long distance connections with their families and friends in their country of origin.

Although the overall ratings for intimacy between long-distance friends and those who are geographically closer are similar, there are a few qualitative differences between these two types of friendship. Friendships of those who live in close proximity tend to be typified by frequency of interaction while long-distance friends are seen more as trusted confidants (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Fehr (2004) also found that individuals tend to rate their geographically close friendships highly on providing help, while long-distance friendships tend to receive lower rating in this dimension. This difference is likely due to practical issues since long-distance friends may want to provide instrumental help but are unable to do so due to the physical distance. In short, a friendship characterized by geographical closeness, foster good friendship and often serves as a source of instrumental and emotional support, whereas long-distance friendships provide mostly emotional support.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Telecommunications through Skype and Facebook provide enormous benefits to immigrant women in maintaining their long distance relationships (family and friends) and play a significant role in adjustment during the early stage of acculturation. While beneficial in providing needed support, the use of telecommunication may impede friendship formation between immigrant women and their Canadian counterparts (Rashid, 2011).

### **Neighbourhood Friendship**

A positive neighbourhood is one that is perceived to offer quality and a good environment to promote a satisfying life. Through the adaptation process in the new surroundings, where immigrants migrate and where they select to plant new roots, can greatly influence their experience in Canada. The ethnic composition of the neighbourhood and the city as a whole, affect the formation of intercultural friendships between immigrants and members of the host society. In a dense ethnic neighborhood, individuals selectively seek to communicate with people of similar background. Therefore, immigrants who reside in neighborhoods with high numbers of people from a similar background may have less preference to develop friendship with people from different backgrounds (Fong, 2000).

The proportion of immigrants in a neighborhood affects the integration process of minority groups and their patterns of friendship with the majority group. Living in a neighbourhood where social and cultural practices are familiar reduces the initial stress of having to operate in a culture that is foreign, and provides a buffer against feelings of social alienation (Miyares, 1997). In addition, ethnic communities may play an acculturative role in helping their members adjust and fit in to the host society (Kivisto,

## Friendship Across Cultures

2001). Moreover, an ethnic neighbourhood provides the basis for a strong social network, which gives people access to several resources ranging from emotional support to information about employment and housing.

The positive effects of ethnic residential concentration arise from the presence of specific facilities and institutions that are geared to the needs of the ethnic community. Compared to low ethnic dense neighbourhoods, those with high concentration of ethnic groups may foster the delivery of some culture services because of the existence of large group of immigrants with similar backgrounds and needs in one region.

Besides the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood, other neighbourhood features can also affect intercultural friendship. Physical characteristics such as squares, streets, shopping malls and parks can create opportunities for intercultural contact, and as a result facilitate the formation of friendship between minority and majority groups. Also, parks and shopping malls can facilitate the contact between the minority groups and individuals from outside the neighbourhood.

Conversely, living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods may limit contact with host country members and thereby reduce integration. Immigrants living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods will have fewer chances of meeting with host society members and as a result they have fewer opportunities to contact with them. It is the same for native born: those who live in ethnic concentrated neighbourhoods will have more contact with immigrants due to the greater chances of meeting them than natives who live in low ethnic density neighbourhoods. Residents in dense ethnic neighborhoods may be less likely to develop friendship ties with people of different backgrounds as most immigrants tend to interact with others who are similar to them in race and ethnicity.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Several studies have found a relationship between ethnic residential concentrations and fewer social ties and less frequent contact with members of the ethnic majority group (Briggs, 2007). Gijsberts and Dagevos (2005) studied the impact of the ethnic composition on the intercultural friendship in neighbourhoods. They found that minority groups who live in cities or neighbourhoods with a higher concentration of ethnic groups and a higher share of minorities usually have friends from their own ethnic group. Additionally, they found that in neighbourhoods with more native-born residents, minority groups have higher contact with them and develop higher language skills (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2005). Neighbourhood-based social networks are usually of significant importance for immigrants as they deliver social resources (Pinkster & Volker 2009) which reach far beyond the social and spatial borders of a neighbourhood.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Intercultural friendship comprises voluntary relationships between individuals who belong to different cultural groups. Individuals involved in intercultural relationships have the commitment to be emotionally supportive and to proactively provide mutual assistance. Close intercultural relationships convey a sense of caring, support, and ease of communication among culturally distinct individuals (Li, 2010). Intercultural friends, specifically those who have been friends for a longer period of time, usually enjoy each other's company and make a point of taking time for each other for no reason other than the maintenance of the relationship itself. However, the formation of intercultural friendship is characterized by challenges that are largely absent in intracultural friendships because of the cultural differences in the former (Li, 2010).

## Friendship Across Cultures

A number of social theories and models have been used to investigate the development of social relationship between individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Among these include the Social Penetration Theory (SPT; Altman & Taylor, 1973), the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gudyknust, 1985) and Lee's (2008) model of interpersonal relationships development. These theories have defined different factors that influence the process and stages of intercultural friendship development. For example, SPT explicates the roles of self-disclosure, intimacy, and communication in the development of interpersonal relationships. In addition, URT posits that strangers go through certain steps to reduce uncertainty about each other and to decide whether one likes or dislikes the other. These steps include eliciting and providing self-disclosure (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). URT and SPT conceptualize friendship formation as a function of effective communication and self-disclosure between those involved in a given social relationship. Lee's model (2008) also offers explanation of the stages through which individuals pass as they develop friendships with others.

As explained by these theories, the formation of friendship between individuals with different cultural beliefs and values is often influenced by many interrelated factors. Gudyknust (1985) identified three main factors that characterize intercultural relationships: differences in cultural norms and beliefs; language differences; and multicultural experiences. For example, immigrant women who have experienced cultures other than their own tend to easily form or develop friendships with members of their host community (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Indeed, cultural differences have the potential to create obstacles in the development of relationships among individuals who

## Friendship Across Cultures

have different exposures. As Gudykunst (1983) argues, individuals are more careful in developing friendships with others who have dissimilar cultural beliefs. Conversely, cultural similarity leads to a greater likelihood of successful formation of friendship and effective communication among individuals involved. For example, cultural factors likely to influence intercultural friendship between immigrants and members of their host community may include differences in beliefs about sex roles, social structure, and support (Gudykunst, 1983).

Language has been found to influence the formation of intercultural friendship, acting as both a barrier and a facilitator of effective communication between individuals involved in such relationships. The lack of language skills exacerbates fears of creating misunderstandings and often discourages non-native speakers from pursuing, initiating or prolonging contact. Second language competence increases an individual's ability to cope with uncertainty during intercultural friendship (Berger & Bradac, 1982). This suggests that immigrant women's English proficiency may facilitate their communication and interaction with Canadian women and in turn, may facilitate the formation of intercultural friendship among them. Language competence potentially increases immigrant women's confidence in interacting with their host counterparts. Immigrant women who cannot speak English may appear more hesitant to interact with others.

In addition, knowledge about the host culture enhances confidence to approach members of the host society, and creates an encouraging environment for the development of intercultural friendship (Redmond & Bunyi, 1993). This multicultural knowledge to some extent increases the confidence of new immigrants in approaching their host communities' counterparts. Individuals with greater knowledge of the host

## Friendship Across Cultures

culture are more likely to form intercultural relationships. Barker and her colleagues (1991) found that Asian students experienced more social difficulties than native students studying in Australia because of lack of social and multicultural experiences. As explained by Kim (2001), understanding of the cultural values of the host community, to a certain extent, facilitates formation of friendship between immigrants and local people.

According to uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), the reduction of uncertainty in intercultural relationships plays an important role in the maintenance of such friendships. Self-disclosure can be defined as the process of revealing personal information that others might not be aware of (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2002). Self-disclosure is considered one of the main interactive processes, employed to reduce uncertainty and improve the relationship (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). In order to enhance a relationship, information disclosed to the other person has to reach a greater level of depth and breadth (Altman & Taylor, 1973) through effective communication (Nicotera, 1993). As the cultural differences increase, communication problems tend to also increase (Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2007) which can undermine or prevent self-disclosure. When people have little or no knowledge about others, they tend to show little interest in disclosing their identity during conversation, thereby affecting the possibility of developing friendship. For example, first time interactions with strangers are difficult precisely because the individuals involved in such conversations are often uncertain of what is expected of them and how others will respond to them. However, reduction of uncertainties facilitates interactive and open relationship, and this subsequently, increases interpersonal attraction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).



## Friendship Across Cultures

The environment in which one lives also determines the likelihood of intercultural friendship. Frequent interaction and shared activities in a social context are salient facilitators of such relationships. Müller (2006) noted that the more frequent people interact the more likely they will develop intercultural friendships. Such friendships are also influenced by the characteristics of those involved (Gareis, 2000). Individuals who possess desirable qualities such as social competence, empathy, resilience and flexibility, patience, and open-mindedness may easily develop intercultural friendships in a new environment compared to those who do not have such qualities (Gudykunst, 1991). As well, other factors also influence friendship formation; for example, people are more likely to become friends when they like each other, and engage in social activities that increase self-disclosure.

The section below provides a detailed explanation of the theories that form the basis of this conceptual framework in relation to the factors influencing the formation of intercultural friendship.

**Social penetration theory.** SPT suggests a theoretical association between self-disclosure and relationship development (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Altman and Taylor (1973) explained the roles of communication, self-disclosure, and intimacy in the development of interpersonal relationships. They declared that the development of relationships is based on the level of self-disclosure. In other words, interpersonal relationship communication progresses gradually and orderly from relatively shallow to greater depth of penetration of, as well as relatively narrow to greater breadth of penetration of, personal disclosure as relationships develop. This means that individuals are involved in increasingly intimate self-disclosure as their relationships develop.

## Friendship Across Cultures

SPT proposes four stages through which intercultural relationship can be developed: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, and stable exchange. At the orientation stage, interactions are rather superficial and people reveal only limited information about themselves. They act in socially desirable ways and are cautious not to disturb societal expectations. The second stage is known as exploratory affective exchange, and occurs when personalities begin to emerge. People begin to explore each other; they reveal more of their individual personality and become less cautious. This is typical behaviour between casual acquaintances and friendly neighbours. In the affective exchange stage, an even deeper level of self-disclosure takes place through penetration of each partner's core selves. Relationships at this stage are more friendly and relaxed. Personal idioms and private intimate expressions are exchanged, and these are typical behaviours among close friends. The final stage known as stable exchange is assumed to be the highest level that one can achieve in a relationship. This stage results in complete openness and spontaneity. In this stage, individuals become more intimate, and they are able to accommodate the feelings and behaviors of the other easier and without much disagreement.

According to SPT, the process of intercultural relationship begins from mere friendship to intimacy (Altman & Taylor, 1973). SPT further assumes that people explore and disclose superficial, nonintimate aspects of themselves during the initial stages of a relationship and they gradually probe and disclose more personal, intimate aspects of their lives to another person. Thus, interaction between individuals moves from mere friendship to acquaintance and later to friendship and beyond, with deep and more extensive interpersonal exchanges. SPT also suggests that the level and rate of

## Friendship Across Cultures

development of social relationships are affected by the interpersonal rewards that result from such social interaction. The greater the absolute amount of reward, the faster a relationship will grow and the more intimate it will become. For example, the more one perceives a relationship to be emotionally rewarding, the greater the likelihood that such an individual will strive to maintain the relationship.

**Uncertainty reduction theory.** URT explains interpersonal relationships (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and examines the initial interaction between strangers from different cultures (Douglas, 1991; Gudykunst, 1985). The underlying assumption of this theory is that people try to reduce uncertainty about others when they expect future interactions with another person (Berger, 1979). It further posits that strangers go through certain steps to reduce uncertainty about each other and to decide whether one likes or dislikes the other. These steps include eliciting and providing self-disclosure. That is, when strangers meet they are often more reluctant to disclose their full identities during the initial interaction. Thus, when people are unable to successfully reduce this uncertainty, communication outcomes such as trust, attraction, and the level of familiarity needed for closer ties becomes problematic (Douglas, 1991). Initial interaction between strangers influences friendship formation, as well as the outcomes of such relationships.

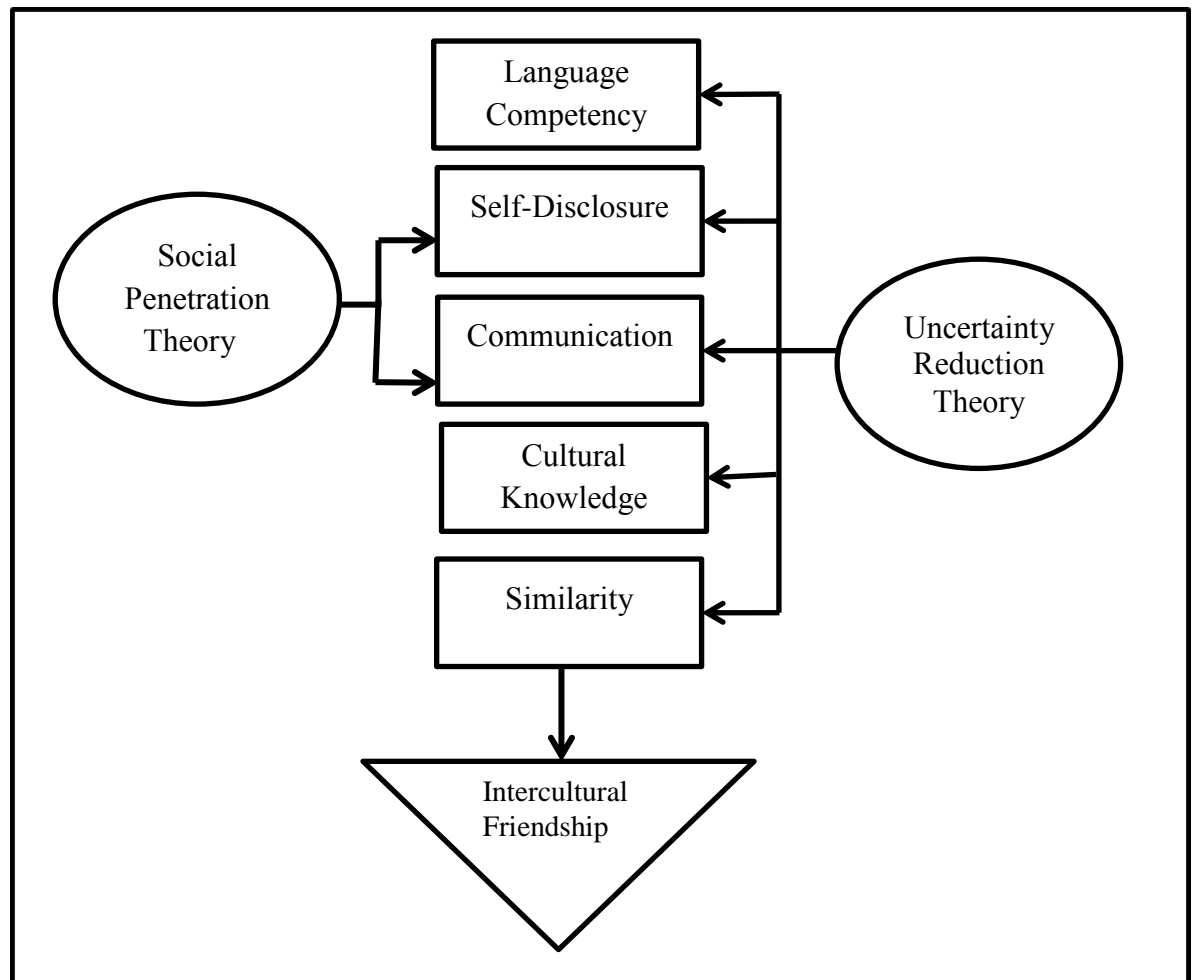
URT identifies several factors that interrelate with the level of uncertainty such as the amount of communication, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, information seeking, and intimacy level of communication content, reciprocity, and similarity. Later on, this theory extended by emphasising the influence of acculturative factors such as language on the intercultural friendship formation (Gudykunst, 1985). This theory suggests that positive associations promote intimate communication and rewarding attitudes towards

## Friendship Across Cultures

those involved in the relationship. This in turn reduces uncertainties that usually characterize intercultural relationship.

Lee's (2008) model proposes that intercultural friendship formation involves three stages: initial encounter, interaction, involvement and two transitional phases. Lee explained that in the initial encounter stage, people meet each other for the first time and after that they start exploring each other's cultural differences. In the first transition phase, needs or interests are evaluated by those involved in the relationship to determine whether to continue or discontinue the relationship. The second stage is often characterized by mutual interactions and negotiation of social roles in the relationship. Information about each other's personality and life flows in, and the participants start to bond with each other. At this stage, personal characters such as tolerance and being positive are realized to reinforce the interaction between each other. If they become more familiar with each other, their friendship stage will advance to a more intimate relationship. In the final stage, roles and rules are much better accepted and each person becomes more informed about the likes and dislikes of one another, which enhance the formation of friendship. This study uses a conceptual framework as shown in Figure.1 that draws on social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), uncertainty reduction theory ((Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gudykunst, 1985) and Lee's (2008) model to explore factors that affect friendship formation between immigrant women and members of the host community in Canada. The formation of intercultural friendship is influenced by many factors ranging from individual and contextual level characteristics. For example, similarities in demographic attributes, such as language and socioeconomic status,

facilitate friendship formation between immigrant women and local women. Having a mother tongue similar to that of the host society reduces communication barriers, and



**Figure 1. Framework of Factors Impacting Intercultural Friendship Formation**

subsequently increases immigrants' willingness to engage with their host members. In fact, the realization that one shares a common socio-demographic characteristic with another person may serve as a conduit to reduce the uncertainties that often characterizes the initial stages of friendship formation between immigrant women and Canadian women. In addition, similarities in cultural values and norms between immigrant and host society may promote and sustain intercultural friendship development. More so, prior

## Friendship Across Cultures

knowledge of the host culture with regard to acceptable social behaviors and attitudes make immigrants more likely to engage and socialize with other people in their host communities, and thus leading to friendship formation. While many individuals find it difficult to disclose their 'true' identity to people they often consider as 'strangers', such disclosures help to reduce tensions between immigrant and host society members thereby providing a conducive situation for the development of intercultural friendship. The anticipation of reciprocal rewards from friendship also promotes its formation.

In summary, self-disclosure, language competencies, knowledge about other cultures, and similarity, have been identified by SPT and URT as the main determinants of intercultural friendship formation. Other factors that have been found to influence such friendship formation include personality characteristics. For example, personality traits that are more likely to facilitate or hinder the formation are empathy, patience, resilience and flexibility, open-mindedness, and preparedness for change (Gudykunst, 2004). Also, environmental factors such as frequency of interaction and social activities may influence the likelihood of intercultural friendship development between immigrant and their host community members, which in this study, are Canadian women residing in Southern Alberta.

The SPT and URT provide useful concepts that form the basis of this conceptual framework. In brief, these theories examine how sociocultural factors may influence friendship formation between immigrants and Canadian women. It also explains the processes through which relationships or friendships develop among individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Intercultural friendship creates enabling opportunities for immigrant women to learn about their host society's culture. It facilitates better sociocultural adaptation, social integration, greater satisfaction, and more positive views of the host country. As explained by Gudykunst and Ge (1988) intercultural relationship can facilitate newcomers' adaptation to a new society. For example, immigrant women who are able to make friends with local people upon arrival in their host country may experience an easier integration into their new society. In addition, friendship characteristics such as information sharing and emotional support provide immigrant women with a sense of security and knowledge about the host culture. It has been found that interactions with members of the host culture significantly enhance successful adaptation into the host society (Gudykunst & Ge, 1988).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, relevant literature on friendship and intercultural friendship development was reviewed. Also, intercultural friendship development theories that served to guide this study were presented. A conceptualization of the factors influencing intercultural friendship formation, derived from these theories, was also developed.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The following chapter provides an overview of the organizational aspect of the research process, including the research methodology, research methods, and a brief description of philosophical stances. Also, ethical considerations and a detailed description of the research methods, including data collection and analysis procedures, participants, setting and recruitment procedures, and personal reflection are provided. The chapter ends with detailed explanations of methodological issues, such as reliability, transferability, and peer debriefing.

### **Philosophical Stance**

Every researcher has a particular belief system or worldview that influences the conduct of research. The philosophical stance of a researcher informs the methodological approaches and theoretical orientations of the research enterprise. It provides the researcher a foundation from which to understand and to interpret the world.

As understanding human perceptions and actions over a period of time was the main focus of the research questions of this study, the interpretive approach is particularly relevant to studying intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women. Therefore, this study was guided by the interpretivist research paradigm, an approach that provides a deep insight into “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). Interpretive research assumes that reality is constructed socially, and the researcher helps to reveal this reality (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). This approach is constant with the formation of the social world that is characterized by interaction between the



## Friendship Across Cultures

participants and the researcher (Mingers, 2001). The interpretations of the researcher play a significant role in this type of study, bringing “such subjectivity to the fore, backed with quality arguments rather than statistical exactness” (Garcia & Quek, 1997, p. 459).

Interpretivism acknowledges the difficulty in making research objective and value-free. In terms of this view, a single objective reality does not exist, at least with respect to the world of lived experiences.

The worldviews and basic beliefs of researchers lie behind their theoretical perspective. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that the researchers need to make both their ontological and epistemological assumptions explicit before starting on any research project. Answering the ontological question: “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108), is the first step in the description of how researchers might approach a research question. The ontological assumption of the interpretive researcher is that social reality is specifically and locally constructed through human action and interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Neuman (1997) states that “social reality is based on people’s definition of it” (p. 69). This means interpretive researchers do not identify the existence of an objective world. In contrast, they see the world confined by a specific time and a particular context. Therefore, the epistemological question: “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower and would-be knower and what can be known” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108) must be answered. The interpretive researcher epistemologically assumes that “findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Moreover, “understanding social reality requires understanding how practices and

## Friendship Across Cultures

meanings are formed and informed by the language and tacit norms shared by humans working towards some shared goal” (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991, p.14). Taking the previously described philosophical assumptions into consideration, I identify myself as an interpretive researcher.

### **Personal Reflection**

My motivation for conducting this research arises from my experience as an immigrant woman in Canada. The transition of leaving one’s homeland is difficult and stressful. For a better future, my family and I immigrated to Canada a few years ago. As experienced by many other immigrants, adapting to the Canadian environment during my resettlement process was a very challenging and stressful experience.

Living in a diverse multicultural place for the first time was not easy. Being an immigrant with different cultural values and traditions, I felt more alienated and isolated when I first encountered Canada and Canadians. Of particular importance, I felt more separated from my family and friends back home. Since I have very strong relationships with my family and friends, being separated from them was upsetting and caused me considerable emotional stress. Building new relationships was difficult for me and not having social relationships had a negative impact. Lacking social interactions in Canada and missing my family and friends I felt alone and isolated. Learning English was necessary to facilitate interaction with others, as language was a main barrier to communicating and adjusting to the new culture. Finding employment was another challenge for me, as pharmacy regulations in Canada did not recognize my credentials and I could no longer work as a pharmacist.

## Friendship Across Cultures

This lived experience has provided me with deeper insights into the stressors impacting immigrant women. In conducting this research, I find myself in a unique position to address the research questions from both the insider position, as an immigrant woman, and the outsider position, as researcher. Despite facing these challenges during my early resettlement stage, I have managed, over the years to build new relationships with Canadian women which have played an important role in helping me to adapt to mainstream culture in Canada. Also, my other immigrant women friends and I share our challenges and experiences in terms of adjusting to a new society. Most importantly, having intercultural friendships is an astonishing experience for me; interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds indeed broadens my worldview. Certainly, intercultural friendships contribute to my life in both personal and professional contexts.

### **Study Design**

An exploratory descriptive qualitative research approach was applied in this study to explore immigrant and Canadian women's perceptions about the factors that influence the development of their intercultural friendships. The qualitative exploratory descriptive design provides a holistic approach to describe and identify a phenomenon in depth and arrive at the meanings behind it (Creswell, 2012). The aim of qualitative research is to discover facts by describing real life, rather than confirming truths or claims that already exist. In addition, it seeks to understand individuals' behaviors, traditions, and culture in deep and detailed inquiry to enable people who have not experienced the same situation to understand it (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2009).

### **Method**

Qualitative research was appropriate for use in this study because its goal is to know how individuals co-create meanings with each other and how they live with those shared meanings in their relationships (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A qualitative design is a research process that "involves the collection, integration and synthesis of nonnumeric narrative data" and is "also used for theory generation and formulation of hypotheses" (Talbot, 1995, p. 56-57). Meadows et al. (2001) state the fact that "qualitative research is a particularly useful approach to research when the purpose is to understand meaning and perception from those under study" (p. 1452). Qualitative researchers conduct the study in a natural setting and build a whole and complex representation of the phenomenon of interest through rich description and in-depth explanation. Researchers attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Creswell, 1998).

A simple qualitative method, person-centred interviewing (Hollan, 2005; Polakoff & Gregory, 2002), was used in conducting this study. The person-centred interview has been used as a methodological approach to data collection and analysis and has gained popularity in social studies. Person-centred interviewing is a collaborative method in which researchers develop an understanding of how meaning is created and implied for various social groups. As the goal of this study was to elicit personal experiences from immigrant and Canadian women over their life course, the person-centered interview was used as a method of data collection (Hollan, 2005).

### **Participant Recruitment**

In qualitative research, a purposive sample is usually applied. Participants are intentionally selected from people who are expected to be the most willing and able to shed light on what the researcher is studying (Frey, Botan, & Krebs, 2000). The sample for this study was recruited from a small city, located in southern Alberta, with a population of about 90,000. Alberta is one of Canada's provinces that is located in the west side of the country and receives a large number of immigrants every year.

This study comprised two groups of participants; immigrant women, and native-born Canadian women. A convenience purposeful sample of twelve immigrant women and nine Canadian women was recruited for the purpose of this study. This small sample allowed sufficient time for more in-depth interviews and for a focus on the experiences of these participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Gliner and Morgan (2000) state that a "better quality control can be obtained if one has a reasonable amount of time to devote to the assessment of each participant rather than trying to spread oneself too thin over a larger group" (p.145).

In order to recruit the sample of immigrant women, individuals who worked in an immigrant services center and interacted directly with immigrants were contacted. A letter identifying the aim of the study and a request for the support in accessing potential participants was provided to an immigrant services center (see Appendix A). Following the approval from the immigrant services center and the Human Subject Research Committee (HSRC) at the university, a poster (Appendix B) was used to advertise the study at the premises of the immigrant services center. Participants who met the inclusion criteria of the study were asked to contact me via e-mail or phone through the contact

## Friendship Across Cultures

information provided in the poster. Key informants were asked to distribute an invitation letter with brief information about the study, on my behalf, to prospective participants (see Appendix C). The Canadian women were recruited through an invitation poster, placed on different bulletin boards at the university, inviting Canadian women to participate in the study. The posters entailed a brief description of the inclusion criteria for prospective participants as well as researcher contact information.

Snowballing and “word of mouth” was another recruitment strategy for both groups of women. For those women who agreed to participate in the study, I asked them to share a copy of the poster and the information sheet with other women who meet the sample criteria.

All the participants were selected based on the following criteria:

**Sample inclusion criteria for the immigrant women group.** Participants in this study were landed immigrant women and were permitted by immigration authorities to live in Canada permanently. All women were 18 years and older, and lived in Canada for one year or more. Participants had at least one close Canadian woman friend. Participants had to be comfortable being interviewed in English, and they demonstrated a willingness to participate in the study by signing the consent form (Appendix D) prior to participation.

**Sample exclusion criteria.** Immigrant women who immigrated to Canada as refugees or whose status was other than immigrant because they have different challenging experiences.

**Sample inclusion for the Canadian women group.** Canadian women, who were Canadian citizens by birth, and aged 18 years or older, had at least one immigrant woman

## Friendship Across Cultures

friend and were willing to participate in the study by signing the consent form (Appendix E) prior to participation.

### Description of Participants

No potential participants were obtained through the immigrant services centre. Eight participants (five immigrants and three Canadians) were recruited through the university, while the rest of the participants were recruitment based on snowball sampling and “word of mouth”. A total of 21 participants were accrued, twelve were immigrant women from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds (Kenyan, n=1), (Colombian, n=1) (Nepalese, n=1), (Sri-Lankan, n=1), (Indian, n=1), (Sudanese, n=1), (Lebanese, n=2), (Jordanian, n=3), and (Syrian, n=1), and nine were Canadians. The average age of the immigrant participants was 37 years old and they had lived in Canada between 2-37 years. The average age of the Canadian participants was 45 years old. Most of the participants were well educated. All of the participants had at least one active intercultural friendship experience. The duration of intercultural experiences among the participants ranged from one to five years. More detailed demographic data are presented in tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1. Demographic Information: Canadian Women**

Participants	Age Range	Religion	Level of Education	Employment
Canadians (9)	25 - 64	Christian (8) Muslim (1)	Bachelor Degree (3) High School (1) Post-Secondary (2) Graduate Degree (3)	Yes (8) No (1)

**Table 2. Demographic Information: Immigrant Women**

Country of Origin	Age Range	Religion	Level of Education	Employment	Length of Stay in Canada (years)
Africa (2) South Asia (3) Middle East (6) South America (1)	20-48	Christian (2) Buddhist (2) Muslim (8)	Less than high school (1) Diploma (1) Bachelor Degree (10)	Yes (5) No (7)	2 - 37

**Data Collection**

In-depth, semi- structured person-centred interviews were conducted to gain a greater understanding of immigrant and Canadian women’s experiences of forming their social relationships in a multicultural society. This interviewing technique is widely used in qualitative data collection as it provides rich and in depth useful information (Hollan, 2005). All of the 21 interviews I conducted were face-to-face and lasted about 60 - 90 minutes on average which enabled data saturation to be achieved.

I met with each interviewee at places of their preference which were private and quiet enough, where they felt comfortable and where no one could listen to or disturb our conversation. Usually qualitative data is collected in ordinary, real world settings (Polit & Hungler, 1994). Four interviews were conducted on the university campus. One interview was conducted at the public library. Two interviews were conducted at the researcher’s house. Fourteen interviews were conducted at the participants’ houses.

Prior to the interview, I explained the context and purpose of my study, the common topics of the interview questions, the expected time of the interview, and my expectations that the input of their experiences and opinions be as detailed as possible. Also, I informed the participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could



## Friendship Across Cultures

withdraw from the interview and study at any time, without providing any reason and without any negative consequences. However, none of the participants withdrew from the study. Also, I explained the benefits of participating in the study and clarified the potential risk. Next, I asked their consent to tape record during the whole interview, to transcribe it, and to use some of their answers in writing up the thesis. I obtained their written approval, and made sure that they understood their rights in the interview, and the confidentiality of all the information they gave. Demographic information such as nationality, age, level of education, marital status, and employment was also obtained (see Appendix F)

To build up rapport with the interviewees, and create a comfortable and friendly environment, I began the interview asking about general daily topics or general personal information. Then the interviewees were asked to share in detail their perspectives on intercultural friendships, and their experiences of intercultural friendship development, by identifying factors influencing the formation of such a friendship. During the interview, I engaged with participants by enquiring using mostly open-ended questions, which were generated from my experiences as an immigrant woman and from the existing literature (see Appendix G and Appendix H). Most naturalistic researchers conduct semi-structured interviews by planning questions in advance and refining probing questions on site (Frey et al., 2000). During the interview, I listened attentively to the participants' responses and tried to ask for clarification or explanation as appropriate. In addition, I wrote some notes which helped me probe topics further. English was the language used for the interviews because it was the only common language I shared with

the interviewees. For validity purposes, I tried to avoid any misunderstandings resulting from English language by explaining any confusing questions to the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

The aim of data analysis in qualitative research is to define the categories, relationships and assumptions that represent the respondents' view of the world in general, and of the topic in particular (McCracken, 1988). An interpretive approach to data analysis concentrates on making sense of research participants' experiences, so that the researcher is able to understand their meaning. Through data analysis most researchers will "organise" the data by coding text and breaking it down into more manageable chunks, retaining the meaning of the data and the context in which it was collected (Miller, 2000).

In this study, I used thematic analysis as a method of data analysis. Thematic analysis can be used within different theoretical frameworks, as it is not united with any pre-existing theoretical framework, and can be used to achieve different things within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can report the meanings, experiences and the reality of the participants. It can also be a constructionist method, which explores the ways in which realities, meanings, events and experiences effect of a range of discourses operating within society. Therefore, thematic analysis can be a technique which works both to unravel the surface of reality and reflect reality (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Flexibility is one of the advantages of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is basically independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches.

## Friendship Across Cultures

The process of thematic analysis begins when the analyst starts to look for patterns of meaning and issues of possible interest in the data. Analysis involves a constant moving back and forth between discrete data and the entire data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 15-23), thematic analysis involves five steps: (1) familiarising yourself with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; and (5) defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Data in this study was gathered and analyzed concurrently. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis steps. Prior to data analysis, each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim to transform the oral conversation into a written discourse that helped in analyzing the data. Consistent with thematic analysis, the interview transcripts were analysed using an inductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Each interview transcript was reviewed independently and read from beginning to end so as to check for consistency and accuracy and to understand the participant's "story". In order to become familiar with the data, I read the transcript many times to familiarize myself with it. The transcriptions were further analyzed to generate categories and themes, following the thematic analysis steps suggested by Braun and Clarke as a method for analysing, identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data. During the analysis, I looked for ideas and comments arising from the data (interview transcript) that spoke to the research question and the objectives. Key concepts, categories and themes that reflected the participants' views on the central concept of the study were developed. Repeated ideas that reflected the participants' views on the intercultural friendship concept were highlighted in the transcript. Participants' quotes were grouped into meaningful categories and then rearranged into themes (Tuckett, 2005). A final report

## Friendship Across Cultures

was generated from the themes to demonstrate the concise, coherent, logical interpretation of the story that the data tells about immigrant and Canadian women's intercultural friendships.

### **Data Management**

A computer-based qualitative software program, NVivo9, was used to manage the data. The use of the software is efficient in data management. It helps keep track of data from multiple sources and increases access to the data. It allows the researcher to import documents from word processing programs and code them easily (Polit & Beck, 2006). All audiotapes and transcriptions were saved on the researcher's computer and were identified by a code that was only known by the researcher. The signed consent forms were stored separately from transcription data, so that it was not possible to associate a name with any given responses. A password protected folder was created for the electronic copies of transcribed interviews. The electronic copies of transcribed interviews did not contain any identifying information regarding the participants. Because of issues of confidentiality, all participants' real names were replaced by pseudonyms that they selected. The immigrant participants were named: Arwa, Bunu, Shamim, Rashmi, Batoul, Deema, Linda, Randa, Noor, Rania, Eman, and Shadia. Canadian participants were named: Martha, LaRee, Marlene, Aurora, Samantha, Suzy, Anne, Sara, and Carla.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study followed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (Racine et al., 2010). Before proceeding with any data collection, ethics approval was obtained. As per the University's policy, any research

## Friendship Across Cultures

involving human subjects requires approval by Human Subject Research Committee (HSRC). This policy aims to create a framework in which the researcher and participants understand rights, responsibilities and each other's 'roles to ensure the study is conducted ethically, with mutual respect and maximum benefit. Based on this policy, approval was obtained from the HSRC prior to proceeding with the study.

Signed consent explaining the aim of the study to the participant was obtained, assuring the participant that their information would be kept confidential. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without providing any reason and there would be no negative consequences. All the participants from both groups completed the interview; there were no cases whereby participants withdrew from the study. Participants were assured that their personal information would be destroyed and would not appear in the study. Permission to audio record interviews was obtained from the participants. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and the real name of the participants did not appear in the transcripts; their pseudonym was used instead. My supervisor and committee members accessed the transcripts which had the participants' pseudonyms. The confidentiality and anonymity of each participant was assured verbally and in writing.

**Confidentiality.** As a consideration of the confidentiality of each participant's data, all transcripts, audio tapes, field notes and memos were kept secured in the researcher's office, in a locked cabinet at the University. Data files on the computer were saved under the researcher's password thereby limiting access to the researcher.

**Anonymity.** The identity of each participant has been protected by using pseudonyms that were chosen by the participants to replace their real names in the

## Friendship Across Cultures

transcript, the recorded audio tape, the computer program, and in the written report. After analyzing this data for the purposes of the study, it will be saved in a secure location, and, in five years will be destroyed by shredding or deletion from the computer. All data collected on audio tape will be kept for 5 years and after that will be deleted.

**Potential Risk.** As a result of telling some sensitive stories about immigration challenges through the interview procedure, psychological discomfort was expected in the immigrant women group; however, during the data collection, no case of discomfort was reported while the interviews were conducted.

### **Trustworthiness**

Guba and Lincoln (1981) indicated that in order to be considered worthwhile, all research must have "truth value", "applicability", "consistency", and "neutrality". The knowledge in the naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm is different from the nature of knowledge within the rationalistic (or quantitative) paradigm. Therefore, each paradigm needs paradigm-specific criteria for addressing "rigor" (term used often in the quantitative paradigm) or "trustworthiness", the corresponding term in qualitative research. They mention that, in the rationalistic paradigm, the criteria used to determine rigor are reliability, external validity, internal validity and objectivity. In contrast, they suggested that, in the qualitative paradigm, the criteria to ensure "trustworthiness" is credibility, auditability, fittingness, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). These criteria were quickly refined to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They proposed specific strategies to be used to attain trustworthiness such as peer debriefing, negative cases, persistent observation and prolonged engagement, member checks, and audit trails (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Meeting the established criteria

## Friendship Across Cultures

helps to distinguish ‘good’ and ‘bad’ research, then testing and increasing the trustworthiness, quality, reliability, validity and rigor will be significant to the research in any paradigm.

**Credibility.** Credibility means generating confidence in the truth value of the research findings. All texts are local, and all researchers write themselves into the text, and, thus, "truth" has a local quality (Saukko, 2005). Lincoln (1995) suggested some strategies to strengthen credibility which include prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member-checking. Credibility in this study was established through the following techniques:

*Peer debriefing.* My supervisor and thesis committee members reviewed the findings of the research to ensure accuracy of the accounts.

*Member-checking.* Member-checking was employed by sharing the generated themes and final report with some participants from both groups who had a significant experience of intercultural friendship to determine if they were accurate and to confirm the research findings.

*Triangulation.* Data collected from multiple sources of data, i.e., interviews and field notes, to achieve credibility

**Transferability.** Transferability involves an in-depth detailed account of the researcher’s work. This account allows readers to judge the work’s applicability to other people, places, time, and contexts. The use of thick description in order to strengthen transferability is recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). “Thick description” (Geertz, 1973) involves a broad and careful detailed description of human behaviour. Also it explains the context, cultures, histories, and politics that shape the behaviour in a way

that becomes more meaningful to the reader. To facilitate transferability of the research findings, I explained women's experiences and stories in deep detail in order to facilitate transferability judgement of applicability to others who might apply the study to other settings.

**Dependability.** Dependability seeks to determine if the findings could be produced again. The consistency of data is achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes (Campbell, 1997). In this study dependability was addressed through the detailed and clear description of the study from problem identification, research participants' selection, interview transcripts, data analysis, and discussion. The study fostered dependability by using acceptable and reliable data collection and analysis procedures. For example, data analysis was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method, which is one of the most widely accepted approach for qualitative data analysis. In addition, all the research methods were validated by my supervisor and thesis committee members.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability seeks to demonstrate that the research findings are accurate and not a result of the researcher's biases, personal interests, or agenda.

Conformability, in this study, was achieved by using participants' quotes.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the rationale for using an interpretive and qualitative approach in this study was provided. Details of the recruitment process, participant's descriptions, and the setting of the study were explained. Sources of the data were described, including interview questions. The interview process was summarized and a number of ethical



## Friendship Across Cultures

concerns were discussed. The organization and management of the data was clarified.

Finally, strategies used to increase the validity and reliability of the findings was discussed.

## Chapter Four

### Results

In this chapter, I present the findings of the study. The focus of this study was to seek an understanding of intercultural friendship development between immigrant women and local Canadian women. In particular, the impact of intercultural friendship on the early adjustment, social integration, and well-being of immigrant women in their new society was explored. Additionally, this research identifies factors impacting the formation of friendship between both groups of women.

Two groups comprised of twelve immigrant women and nine Canadian women, living in a small western city in Southern Alberta, were interviewed. Immigrant women participants were from different ethnic groups. Two participants were from Africa, three from South Asia, eight from the Middle East, and one participant was from South America. Most of the participants were highly educated. Out of 12 participants, only five were employed. All of the participants had lived in Canada for more than 2 years. Canadian participants were all Canadian citizens by birth, most of them educated and employed. All the participants were 20 years and older. Detailed demographic information about the participants can be found in Appendix I and J.

A total of six major themes emerged from the interviews. These themes are as follows: (1) sociocultural adaptation challenges (2) friendship perception (3) factors that influence formation of intercultural friendship such as language competency, cultural knowledge, self-disclosure, and similarity/dissimilarity (4) maintenance of long distance friendship (5) friendship within neighbourhoods, and (6) intercultural friendship development stages. These themes are explained in detail in the following sections.

### **Sociocultural Adaptation Challenges**

Adjusting to a new culture and society and establishing networks far from home require tremendous effort. Immigrant participants' early adjustment experiences influenced their interaction with local Canadian women and the strategies that they followed to successfully adapt to the new society. Immigrant women who actively involved themselves in the community upon arrival reported to have more easily developed relationships with Canadians. In contrast, immigrant women who remained isolated from the host society identified that it was more challenging to make friends with Canadians, given the fewer opportunities to interact with them.

Leaving their homeland and adjusting to a new society with a different language, values, and beliefs were major challenges for most of the immigrant women. The majority of immigrant participants reported that they faced culture shock especially with regards to the English language. For example, Eman, a 33 year-old immigrant from Jordan, stated that moving to Canada was not an easy process for her because she faced many difficulties in her early adjustment stage:

*“The language, the culture, the beliefs and being away from my family, my friends and my relatives; everything was difficult at the beginning. I felt a big difference in the culture when I arrived here and the language was a bit of a barrier.”*

Most of the immigrant participants identified that their poor English skills were a major barrier during their adjustment to Canadian society and formation of relationships.

Because of language barriers, these participants found it challenging to initiate friendships with Canadians. For example, Linda, a 40 year-old Colombian woman, explained how the lack of her English skills affected her communication with the host members in her first stages of resettlements:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I would not be able to have a full conversation like I am right now so the problem was probably language. Even though I tried to express myself, at that time, I wasn't fluent in English and I don't think that was any way to communicate very openly.”*

During their first months or years, most immigrant women spoke about their loneliness and isolation from Canadian society. Almost all of the immigrant women mentioned that they came from a society where they had many friends. For example, a 45 years old

Kenyan woman, Arwa described her loneliness upon her arrival to Canada:

*“I felt very lonely. The loneliness makes you want to go home. You come from a very social environment to an environment where you know nobody. You can be living in an apartment and just see people come and go. You don't see anybody. You just hear footsteps. You feel really isolated.”*

Wearing a hijab, as Rania a 30 years old Lebanese woman mentioned, was another reason for isolation as her different appearance might be a concern:

*“Because I wear a Hijab, my case was different. Unlike people in bigger cities, where it would be more common, I don't think people here are used to seeing women wearing veils. I don't think people mean to make me feel isolated. They're just curious about knowing where I come from and why I wear this thing on my head rather than just trying to stereotype me or just see me as inferior.”*

Also, most of them mentioned that they experienced a separation from family and friends and a loss of social support that was contrary to their homeland experiences. These changes affected their well-being and impacted them psychologically. Deema, a 44 year-old Jordanian woman, explained how separation from family and friends back home negatively affected her:

*“I get sick. Honestly, I think I suffered from thyroid because I couldn't take it. Only two people were close to me. Whereas I used to live in a family of ten and we had lots of relatives and lots of friends. So I came from a very social environment to a two-person circle of family and friends. It was very difficult. It made me sick.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

As a result of not having their credentials recognized, along with increased household burdens and less help from families, most of the participants declared that they found themselves having no other choice but to sacrifice their careers and provide more time to their families and children. For example, Shadia, a 35 years old pharmacist woman who immigrated six years ago from Syria, reported that she was compelled to stay home in the first few years after immigrating to Canada because of the more responsibilities she had with no family to rely on for support and to take care of her children:

*“You’re trying to be with your kids, get the language and study for your exams and they’re not easy exams. They’re tough and we had to deal with them. Plus, you don’t have the support. You don’t have friends; we don’t have family so that was really tough for us.”*

Immigrant women were excluded from employment in Canada in their early settlement years and this decreased their chances of developing relationships with Canadians. Thus, unemployment affected the opportunities to improve their English proficiency and make friends with Canadians.

As a result of these challenges, most of the immigrant women struggled to adjust and connect socially with Canadians. For this reason, friendship with Canadian women did not develop easily during the early adjustment period of their immigration. For example, it took Eman about two years to start developing relationships with Canadian women:

*“Maybe after two years of being here, I started to interact with some Canadian people. They are very nice to me and we chat and sit together at the university campus but we don’t have a really deep relationship.”*

Linda declared that most of her friends were immigrants in the first few years of arrival in Canada:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“My first friends were immigrants. I didn’t have any Canadian friends. After 5 years of immigration is when I can say I made friends with a Canadian in Toronto.”*

Most of the participants reported that they depended on family members or friends who had previously immigrated to facilitate their early adjustment to Canadian living. Relying on family members or friends upon arrival can provide a source of support. However, association with family members or immigrant friends may impede the connection and interaction with Canadians and, as a result, delay their social integration in the host society. For example, Eman observed that:

*“I still don’t have lots of Canadian friends maybe because I have a sister, a brother and a sister-in-law here. We meet together and spend time together. This is a kind of compensation for not having Canadian friends. I have many immigrant friends here from my culture and we gather. So I do have some friends from different cultural groups and we have some similarities but I don’t really have many Canadian friends.”*

While immigrant participants perceived adaptation challenges negatively, Canadian women admired the bravery of the immigrant women who left their home country with little knowledge of the English language, culture, climate, and job opportunities in Canada. Canadian women described immigrant women as unique people. For example, a 42 year-old Canadian graduate student, Sara, explained how she appreciated the bravery of her immigrant friends:

*“I guess with the people that I am closest to, who are immigrants, it would probably be that they are strong because I think it takes a lot of bravery to leave so much behind. Even if what you are leaving behind is horrible, you don’t know what you are getting into. You just have hope in what you are getting into.”*

Recognizing immigrant women’s vulnerability motivated Canadian women to want to develop a close relationship with them. For example, Suzy, a 64 year-old Canadian woman reported:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I still relate to the ones that are away from their homes and feel lost to a certain point because they have their own ways and their own country. I just appreciate that.”*

Adaptation challenges isolate immigrant women from their host society and delay their social integration with Canadian women in the first few months or years of immigration. Canadian women in this study considered immigrant women unique individuals for what they left behind and all the challenges, such as language barrier and culture shock that faced them in settling into a new country. This attitude increased their willingness to connect with immigrant women in terms of providing essential emotional and instrumental support needed in their early adjustment period.

### **Common Ground: Perceptions of Friendship**

To explore the effect of culture on the perception of friendship, participants were asked to define the meaning of a close friend and how they perceive this friendship. There were more similarities than differences in the ways participants (immigrant and Canadian) defined and characterized close friends, suggesting some common views across cultures. In the interviews, the most frequently mentioned descriptions of close friends included: a person who is around in good and bad times, a person you can share your experiences and feelings with, a person who has your back and is always supportive, a person who can understand you, a person you can trust, a person who is like your family member, a person you can laugh and have fun with, a person you want to spend time with and talk to, and someone you can open deeply to.

Based on these descriptions, most participants consider their close friends as special and as an irreplaceable person who has responsibilities to be emotionally

## Friendship Across Cultures

supportive, provide assistance, enhance the confidence of the other, and stand up for the other. For example, Batoul, an immigrant, revealed:

*“Friendship to me is a safe haven. If you have a friend you know that they have your back. You can count on them when you need them.”*

Rania, a 30 year-old Lebanese woman, perceived close relationship as:

*“Friendship, to me, means that they accept me as I am and they accept me even if they don’t agree with my ideas. Friendship also means that they don’t judge me and they’re open to me. If there is anything they are not sure about me, they would just come and ask me.”*

Similarly, Marlene, a Canadian, defined a close friend as:

*“It means you can open your heart to them. You can talk to them about your joys and sorrows. Their doors are always open if you need them and vice versa.”*

Sara, another Canadian, defined close friendship as:

*“I think close friends will have your back. To have your back means they will support you, even in the bad times. They’ll make sure you are okay. They’ll stand by you. So friendship, I think, should be reciprocal, it’s giving back. It’s about acceptance and definitely about some forgiveness. And really, close friends are like family.”*

When the participants were asked to talk about their intercultural friends, the most common characteristics they used to describe them included: being open-minded to understanding their intercultural differences, supportive, having a big heart, and being helpful, sharing and caring. For example, many immigrant participants explained how they were offered support and help from their Canadian women friends. This included receiving help with learning English, childcare, information about immigrant services, and employment. Arwa described her close Canadian friends as being helpful:

*“They are very supportive. If you have any challenges at work or with children, they are there for you.”*

Suzy explained how her immigrant friend had helped her:



## Friendship Across Cultures

*“My Singaporean friend helped me do my son’s wedding. For three days we had a wedding and she helped me make all this stuff. I just couldn’t believe all the strange things that we made but we did.”*

Although there were many similarities regarding the notion of intercultural friendship between both groups, immigrants’ perceptions of friendship were characterized by strong obligation, commitment, expectation, and practical help. Canadians, on the other hand, tend to regard intercultural friendships as a function of socializing, activity-sharing, fun seeking and cultural learning. These differences are shown in Table.3

**Table.3 Different Perceptions of intercultural Friendship:  
Immigrant and Canadian**

<b>Immigrants’ Perceptions of Intercultural Friendship</b>	<b>Canadians’ Perceptions of Intercultural Friendship</b>
Obligation	Socializing
Commitment	Fun-Seeking
Expectation	Activity-Sharing
Practical Help	Leaning about other cultures

Carla talked about some differences of the perceptions of intercultural friendship:

*“I feel that Nadia really makes a commitment and I find that many women from collectivist cultures make a commitment to the friendship. In a North American culture, I have been brought up to be quite independent, and we have our nuclear family. I’m used to spending time with my husband and my three kids, but we don’t have a wide circle of close friends, and you can see we are very individualistic.”*

Shamim was another example of how immigrants and Canadians differ in perceiving intercultural friendship:

*“Canadian women do tell me they are ready to help me, but they usually give priority to their own work. Canadian women are not that open and forward. If we need help and they already have something planned they most likely won’t give the priority to us. With immigrant ladies, it’s the other way around. Even though*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*they have plans of their own, they leave them to come help us. They go out of their way to help you.”*

Martha also explained that having an interest in learning about other cultures was a reason for her to initiate a relationship with her Polish friend Amanda as she stated:

*“Initially, Amanda was with me in high school. We were both new, so we were trying to get to know friends and that was the way we connected initially. She was from a different culture. I wanted to learn about that. I went over to her house and her parents were so excited to get to know me and wanted to share their culture with me. That’s how that connection began, wanting to share and learn about each other.”*

The most common characteristics of close friends as mentioned by the both groups include being supportive, understanding, non-judgmental, sharing good and bad moments, being open, and having a big heart.

### **Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development**

Factors identified by the participants that encouraged or impeded intercultural friendship development included English communication skills, knowledge about the host culture, self-disclosure, and shared similarities. A lack of language proficiency precluded immigrant women from interacting with Canadian women. Knowledge about culture—that is, understanding other people’s culture—can help an individual develop an interest in creating intercultural relationships with those from different backgrounds. Self-disclosure is based on the rate of information shared between members involved in an intercultural friendship and fosters the development of intercultural friendship. Lastly, similarities in culture and language increased the chances of friendship development between individuals. Several factors in intercultural friendship development were identified, by participants from both groups. They shared their views on how these factors impacted the development of friendship with intercultural friends. Knowledge

## Friendship Across Cultures

about culture and self-disclosure are likely to support intercultural friendship development, whereas cultural dissimilarities and lack of sufficient language proficiency sometimes hamper the growth of intercultural friendship.

**Language barriers/spoken English skills.** Immigrant women were aware that building a successful relationship with Canadian women required competency in the use of the English language. Language is a primary tool that assists in understanding the culture and the life of the new country. A lack of fluency in a common language makes communication difficult between individuals who speak different languages. Three categories comprised this theme: a) language competency; b); accent; c) slang and idioms.

*Language competency.* English competency was found to be a factor that most significantly influences the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women, particularly during the initial stages of friendship development. As a common international language, most of the immigrant participants reported having some English background before immigrating to Canada. However, they were not fluent in speaking English, which made it difficult for them to be fully involved in conversations. Others reported having a poor level of English before immigrating to Canada. This resulted in their attending English classes to improve their language competency, which helped them start interacting with native speakers. For most of the participants, English was an obstacle that they had to overcome in order to communicate with Canadian women. Some immigrant participants mentioned that the language skills they acquired enabled them to become involved in daily conversations with Canadian women, including discussing subjects involving work, children, and family. However, building intimate

## Friendship Across Cultures

relationships required an increased depth of discussion, which challenged immigrant participants. For example, when Rania was asked about the effect of language on her relationship with Canadian women, she explained how difficult it is to express her feelings and thoughts in a deep conversation with Canadian women:

*“For example, when people start to stigmatize or ask me why I wear a Hijab and I want to start to go into deep conversation about my philosophies in about life or my ideas, it’s hard for me to explain.”*

In contrast, confidence in English was not a barrier for immigrant participants like Batoul whose conversational English had reached a highly advanced level at initial intercultural encounters. Batoul evaluated her English as fluent:

*“Language wasn’t a really big problem. Luckily, I was okay when it came to language. I didn’t have any problems communicating.”*

Some immigrant participants became optimistic in communicating with Canadian women after taking English courses and gaining confidence in communicating in English. Bunu revealed:

*“The first time, it was really hard and I felt very nervous. When I first came here, my English was really poor and I didn’t even understand simple words. At that time, I felt very nervous, but when I met some Canadian friends we spoke slowly. I’m better now. I went to college and studied there for 15 months.”*

Language competency seemed to be a challenge, not only for immigrant participants, but also for the Canadian participants. For example, Carla, a Canadian, sometimes felt frustrated when she visited her immigrant friends because they were unable to enjoy an interactive conversation given her friend’s incompetency in English. She felt that this was the main reason that they did not develop closer friendships

*“They are really lovely people. I like them, but it’s exhausting to try and figure out the language and that is a barrier because it takes more time. At the end of the night, I am exhausted because I am the one talking; I am directing everything. I think communication is a barrier. We have an expression that says: someone is*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*high maintenance, which means you have to put in a lot of work and I think some Canadian women may find immigrant friendships high maintenance. If you are trying to be friends with someone who doesn't speak a lot of English, it's high maintenance. It's hard to find something to talk about."*

Immigrant women who were fluent in English appeared to have a better chance of developing close intercultural friendships with Canadian women compared with those who had poor or moderate English. Lack of English competency influenced the amount of information immigrant women revealed when communicating with their Canadian counterparts. For participants, to reach an intimate level of exchange, such as emotional disclosure, they had to deal with more developed levels of English expressions. Accordingly, such exchanges would not be possible without a certain level of English proficiency.

**Accent.** The term accent refers to situations where a person's pronunciation of a language is different from how it is spoken by the native speakers. An accent reflects the unique background and identity of each individual (Hordnes, 2013). However, having an accent may cause some difficulties in communicating with native English speakers. Usually, when immigrants speak a second language, it is normal for them to use the rules of their native language, which can differ from the English language and may not sound correct to Canadians, thus making it difficult to understand. This can cause frustration for the speaker, as they are then asked to repeat what they have said or to find another way to explain what they mean.

Despite being able to communicate in English and having good English proficiency, Arwa reported that her accent was a barrier. This in turn, led her to adapt her communication style by moderating her accent and slowing her speech:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“The language was not a big barrier. I think the accent was a barrier because you say something, and they don’t understand what you are telling them. In the beginning, I could hear what they were saying but when I speak fast they didn’t understand. I learnt to speak slowly, so they could hear what I am saying.”*

Also, Rashmi explained how she could not understand Canadian English:

*“I understand them. I can speak their language, but sometimes the accent is different, so they don’t understand my accent. My pronunciation is different. I have a British accent and they don’t understand. Sometimes I don’t understand their pronunciation; they speak Canadian English.”*

For Samantha, a Canadian, accents did not necessarily hinder friendship development, as she would ask her immigrant friends to repeat their speech to understand their accent:

*“Sometimes I think there’s a language barrier just in terms of understanding an accent, but it still wouldn’t stop me. I think you just need to clarify, so if I don’t understand somebody, I just ask them to repeat what they’ve said.”*

As an English teacher, her experience encouraged Ann, a Canadian woman, to form friendships with immigrant women:

*“I can imagine that perhaps language could be a barrier, but perhaps my work as a teacher earlier makes me more sympathetic and understanding of communication issues and also the accents. I have a lot of experience with that as a teacher, and I find language interesting and I am always interested in new languages.”*

**Slang and idioms.** Idioms are expressions with meanings that are not predictable from the usual meanings of their constituent elements. Using idioms can be an efficient way of expressing ideas in an exciting way. However, it may not be an effective means of communication when talking to someone who has a different culture and language. Although individuals may be familiar with idioms from their language, they may interpret them differently when encountering foreign idioms. This may cause a misunderstanding of the intended meaning. Some immigrant women in this study found it difficult interacting with Canadians because of differences in idioms. For example,

## Friendship Across Cultures

Martha had to teach her immigrant friend some of the slang that she used in her communication with Canadian friends:

*“I think, between me and my Canadian friends, we have the same language. When we were in high school, we would use slangs and short forms of communication but with my friend Amanda, I had to teach her about those types of words.”*

Noor also stated that sometimes it is hard for her to understand her Canadian friends when they use idioms in their conversations:

*“When they talk to us, they have to speak slowly so we understand them. Sometimes they say idioms and slangs, sentences we don’t understand.”*

In general, developing intercultural friendship often depends on the English language skills of the non-native English speakers. Having excellent language skills increases the confidence among immigrant women in communicating in English with Canadian women, and as a result, enhances the formation of intercultural friendship between both groups. Both groups reported having language challenges in developing their intercultural friendships; however, language barriers and differences did not necessarily stop either party from investing in or developing a stronger friendship.

**Knowledge of different cultures.** Of interest, cultural differences were an impetus for initiating relationships between immigrant and Canadian women. Participants from both groups demonstrated the importance and the meaning of having intercultural friends; it gave immigrant and host women the opportunity to learn about other cultures. They would exchange information with respect to cultural values, foods, languages, beliefs and traditions. Good examples were illuminated through Rashmi’s comments:

*“I think we need intercultural relationship because if we separate totally, it’s not good. Because this is a multicultural society, we should respect each culture.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Knowledge about other cultures was a major motivation for Samantha to engage in relationships with immigrant women:

*“I think the fact that someone might be from another culture provides another dimension where there is more for me to learn from somebody. They might have a different sort of wisdom than I do so I just like hearing different points of view and their willingness to share that.”*

Marlene revealed that learning about her intercultural friends’ culture helped her to understand them better:

*“I think it’s important to get to know their culture so you can understand them better. When you know their background and where they come from, it helps you understand why they act the way they do.”*

Batoul also explained how here Canadian friends were able to understand her differences and this helped them to understand each other better:

*“It’s just compatibility. We actually understood each other. Even though I was different, they were able to listen. They were interested in sitting down and listening and getting to know me. We both felt we were compatible, and we enjoyed each other’s company.”*

Intercultural friends have helped each other learn about one another through comparing and contrasting cultural dimensions. Participants indicated that it was entertaining to talk about the differences or similarities between their cultures. As Aurora stated:

*“I think it’s great to have friends from other countries and cultures, because you get to know about people’s different views, experiences and stuff.”*

Emerging from the interviews, language, religion, and food were central subjects in the cultural discourse between individuals. Learning the others’ language and culture illustrated a willingness to share and appreciate each other’s culture. For example, respondent from both groups indicated that talking about food or experiencing different types of food was fun and an easy way to move towards other’s culture. For example, Marlene stated:



## Friendship Across Cultures

*“We would also go shopping together, and I would find out what foods she liked and she would see what I liked. Then I learned words in her language, and we would laugh.”*

Arwa also, explained that her Canadian women friends enjoy trying her cultural food:

*“Most of my friends don’t mind the culture. They want to try things out. If they visit, they will ask me to cook something cultural. For example, if they taste something like Kenyan bread, they will ask me to make it because they enjoy it. They like to learn about our culture. Those who don’t feel comfortable with cultural differences don’t form lifelong friendships, only temporary friendships just for a few months.”*

Participants in both groups reported that they showed interest in learning about their intercultural friends’ cultures. For example, Shamim explained:

*“We share religious stuff, our different food, information about back home and about our family and kids. Culture and families are different because we have different ways of living so we share feelings about that.”*

Noor, a 33 year-old immigrant graduate student, explained how she tried to learn about the host culture through her friends:

*“It’s how to deal with things about the culture sometimes. For example, what do I do if somebody dies or passes away? I ask questions about their culture when I don’t know exactly how to deal with it. I only ask these two because I am kind of close to them.”*

Samantha, a 50 year-old Canadian teacher, stated that she learned about her immigrant friends’ culture and religion:

*“We would talk about culture or religion and just the way of life in the country they originated from.”*

Most of the participants in both groups declared that they were able to understand their intercultural friends’ cultural values and beliefs and tried to adjust their values closer to those of their friends. For Carla, a Canadian woman, the key to intercultural friendship was getting to know each other and value each other’s culture and way of life. It was a

## Friendship Across Cultures

matter of accepting and respecting these values; a strategy to which both intercultural friends agreed.

*Carla: "I think to really have a good intercultural relationship with an immigrant woman, you must know about culture and be willing to make adjustments yourself. It's interesting. I just adjust and make it fair between our cultures. I think Nadia also makes some adjustments."*

Overall, most Canadian participants expressed that cultural learning was the best part of their intercultural friendship, as Carla described:

*"We know ourselves through our relationships, and if we don't have relationships, we can't know ourselves. We would be very self-absorbed. I just find that I learned so much about the other people or other person, but they also teach me about myself, and that's the value of an intercultural relationship."*

Being interested in the other's culture was not the only important factor in developing intercultural friendship; in addition, prior intercultural experiences by some participants are important and influential in developing intercultural friendship. Such experiences tended to increase the respondents' willingness to develop a friendship with an individual from another culture. Some participants explained how previous intercultural experiences have made them more receptive to people from other cultures. For example, Rashmi stated:

*"Sri Lanka is a tourist country; many foreigners visit. I lived in a tourist area. I was a doctor in a tourist area, so many foreigners came to get treatment from me. When I came here seeing a foreigner was not a big deal because I treated them and talked to them. I had this experience, which helped me develop relationships here."*

Aurora also declared that having prior intercultural experiences helped her understand her immigrant friend:

*"I kind of have a Mexican background too, so sometimes when we talk about culture we talk about that. Maybe I can't relate to something you're saying from my Canadian perspective but from the Mexican perspective, "Oh, yeah. That happens in Mexico, too." It's kind of like my second perspective."*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Shamim also explained how her previous experience in intercultural friendship in her country of origin had helped her in building her new relationship in Canada:

*“I used to have intercultural friendships back home in India too and I don’t find any differences there because I used to have friends from other religions and other cultures. I felt the same.”*

Linda also related to the impact of prior exposure of Canadians to different cultures can have on their willingness in accepting and connecting with immigrant:

*“Some Canadians are interested in meeting people from other cultures while other people cannot relate. I think people who are very open and have been travelling a lot are willing to connect with different people, but I found that people who have been in this small square don’t want to connect with other cultures. They probably haven’t been exposed to multiculturalism but my friend has been. These are the people that are interested and open to start a friendship.”*

As reported by participants, both, Canadians and immigrants, intercultural friends helped each other learn about different cultural values and traditions through comparing and contrasting aspects of other’s culture. They indicated that it was entertaining to talk about the differences or similarities in their cultures. Canadians highlighted that sharing cultural differences, such as food, religions, and customs expanded their appreciation of intercultural differences. Indeed, the newfound appreciation and respect served as a helpful foundation from which to create more meaningful relationships. Also, previous multicultural experience played a significant role in facilitating intercultural friendship development.

**Self-disclosure.** Self-disclosure is one of the most important factors in the development of close relationships. Self-disclosure is a major interactive technique that helps to reduce uncertainty in the development of intercultural friendship. It is a process of revealing and sharing personal information about oneself to another. Although

## Friendship Across Cultures

individuals from different cultures disclose differently, self-disclosure is still an essential part of developing intercultural friendships. In addition to values and belief, the more information exchanged between intercultural friends, the more chance to learn about each other's characteristics and behaviours. It is also believed that the breadth and depth of revealed information between members reflect the degrees of closeness in friendships. Self-disclosure is an ongoing process, as the rate of information revealed increases as relationships develop. Randa spoke to this notion:

*"I did share private and personal things with my Canadian friend at the university and this definitely made us closer."*

When participants were asked to define their perception of a close relationship, self-disclosure was considered, by most participants, as one of the basic elements necessary for forming friendship. Participants disclosed more to their friends than to their acquaintances, and considerably more to their close friends. Self-disclosure helped participants move from one stage of their intercultural relationship to another, by coming closer to each other as more layers of the core of the self was revealed. Being open with her Canadian friends helped Bunu share her feelings:

*"Being open is important because if I just keep everything how can I get to share my feelings? If I'm open, it becomes really easy for me to communicate."*

In relationships, women usually develop higher levels of closeness and intimacy and are more likely to disclose than men. Women prefer to reveal more to women friends because women tend to have more in common and tend to be better listeners than men. Also, some sensitive topics are limited to women and cannot be shared at the same level with men. For this reason, the level of intimacy in a friendship between women is different from that of men. The crucial role of self-disclosure in women's relationships,

## Friendship Across Cultures

in particular, is related to providing social and emotional support in times when it is needed. This is considered intimate and is usually not appropriate with men.

Linda explained how lots of commonalities between women can be a reason for them to connect regardless to the differences in their backgrounds:

*“Women will understand each other because we connect regardless of what culture we are from. Being a woman, I guess, is different than being a man. You can share frustration with women friends but you can’t share it with male friends. I think this is a good thing. As women, we can understand each other. Women are sensitive and can understand each other.”*

Similarly, Samantha clarified the importance of her friendship especially with women:

*“I think women friends provide a different point of view. They support you and they probably understand you emotionally better than men might.”*

Marlene also emphasized the idea that women always have more in common regardless their backgrounds which can help in building relationships:

*“Women are willing to listen. Immigrant or Canadian, we have more in common.”*

Variables influencing participants’ self-disclosure in intercultural friendships included: a) openness of communication; b) trusting each other; c) limited topics of conversation; d) frequency of contact.

***Openness of communication.*** Receptiveness and willingness to openly communicate with culturally dissimilar individuals, despite differences of language and values, might be realistic strategies to facilitate mutual understanding. Openness of communication was a crucial element of self-disclosure that facilitated the development of intercultural friendships. The more information that was shared between intercultural friends, the more they learned about each other and about each other’s cultures. Through sharing experiences, participants were able to identify more similarities and obtain a

## Friendship Across Cultures

better sense of their friend's background. In terms of the intimacy of disclosure, all participants reported that they normally do not disclose details to acquaintances but only to close friends. Most of the Canadian women reported that being open and friendly were the main factors that helped them in building intercultural friendships. Suzy explained how her immigrant friends' openness had helped her in understanding them and to learn about their stories:

*"Their openness helps you to get to know them better and understand what they went through. You get to understand how hard it was for them."*

Rania also demonstrated the importance of openness in developing understanding between intercultural friends:

*"I am a really open person. I don't mind anybody coming to talk to me. With the Canadians, I usually try to be friendly and open to any questions. They might think that people who wear Hijab are really strict and not open. I try to smile at them to get closer to them. I start conversations or ask about things in their lives so they feel comfortable about me and probably start asking me questions."*

All the participants mentioned that they share less personal matters or discussed less abstract topics with people who were not so close. Aurora said:

*"I probably wouldn't talk about having a problem with something. I wouldn't talk to my acquaintances. I only talk to people who I trust and who I think would give me good advice and support, just my close friends."*

Participants usually disclosed issues arising in their lives to their close friends for the purposes of seeking support, advice, or sometimes as a way to express thoughts. In the sharing process, participants often referred to their past personal or cultural experiences that might be difficult to share with friends from a different background. For example, Noor explained:

*"With friends from my culture we talk about our country. Sometimes when you talk about your feelings in English it's not like when you talk about your feelings in your own language. You talk to somebody who understands the ways of your*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*culture. If I talk to somebody who doesn't know my values and culture, they will not help me. It's just useless to talk to them. Why would I talk about private things to somebody who is not going to help me? So I don't talk to them or bother them with my stories."*

Also, Arwa explained how it is difficult to reveal about her personal problems to Canadian friends because their advices might be different and not applicable in her culture:

*"Family issues, such as a problem with your husband or your children, are solved differently in the different cultures. Therefore, we'd rather keep those issues to ourselves or call and seek advice from people of the same culture"*

Most of the participants (Canadians and immigrants) indicated that they were more comfortable in divulging personal information to friends who were familiar with their life history as a result of growing up together or at least having a similar background. Rashmi explained:

*"Actually, I am more open with immigrant women, especially immigrants that come from my country Sri – Lanka maybe because of similar the culture and language. We speak our home language which makes us closer. I disclose more to immigrant women friends because they understand me more. Canadian women friends are very good but sometimes I feel a little distant from them and there is a barrier between us.*

Anne also mentioned that her best friends are Canadians because of the fact that they have known each other through many stages of their lives and for longer time compared to immigrant friends.

*"I have five close girlfriends that I talk to and have been friends with for twenty years. We talk about really personal stuff. We've lived together. I didn't set about to find these friendships but I think it's because we either went to high school or to university together and maybe it's in that very formative stage of development, like late teenagers and early twenties probably, where we made those really important friendships."*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Secret- sharing often brought two friends much closer because the act demonstrated that the message receiver was trustworthy, nonjudgmental, and capable of keeping confidential information. A few participants, like Carla and Linda, reveal secrets to their intercultural friends:

Carla: *“I think that she may use me sometimes as a confidant because it’s not appropriate in her culture to express things in a public way. In my culture I can express something like a problem with my oldest daughter. We can talk like that but in some cultures they keep it to themselves.”*

Linda: *“I share with them happiness and disappointments.”*

During the participants’ sharing process, culture and religion were the most common information shared, as Samantha said:

*“I think their openness to friendship really helps me and their openness about their culture. I think I would be uncomfortable if I felt like I was going to offend somebody or that I may not understand something about them and through my misunderstanding they might be hurt and that would build a wall. But I find the women I know are very open about sharing their culture and religion so I never feel like I am judged for not understanding. I am just seeing a willingness to share.”*

Also, Batoul reported that she was able to disclose more about herself to her Canadian friend as their relationship develops:

*“With time I was able to open up to her and share stories about my family, my culture, my religion, and myself.”*

The volume of information shared in intercultural friendships increased as relationships developed toward closeness. However, personal and private topics were the least commonly shared subjects with intercultural friends for most of immigrant participants.

For example, Eman noted:

*“If I am frustrated, like if I face some challenges at school and I need help I go and speak to her. Things I would share are the challenges I am facing by being here, and the challenges I encounter as a student but I don’t share for example, what’s going on between me and my husband. We didn’t get to that point.”*



## Friendship Across Cultures

Participants' comments in both groups showed the importance of sharing and expressing feelings in open communication between intercultural friends. This helped them understand and explore each other's culture. However, cultural differences and language barriers precluded some participants from having high levels of sharing and openness with their intercultural friends. Hence, participants were more willing to share with friends from the same cultural or language background.

***Trusting each other.*** Establishing trust in a cross-cultural relationship was crucial to developing such a relationship. For most of the participants, friendship was a relationship built on mutual trust. A certain degree of trust had to be established between immigrants and Canadians before newly-arrived immigrants were willing to share information about their life experiences. Linda said:

*"I think the most important thing is for us to respect each other and trust each other. That is the foundation of a relationship."*

Openness was the reason for Aurora to trust her immigrant friend, Aisha:

*"She was probably the one who opened up a little bit more when we first met and that made it very easy for me trust her."*

Being open, providing support and spending more time together were found to be the most significant reasons that helped the participants build trust with their intercultural friends. Samantha stated:

*"I guess in terms of trusting a friend it's just their openness and their willingness to listen and willingness to share."*

For Linda, trust was built over time as the longer she spent time with her Canadian women friends, the more she came to trust them:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“Well we have been friends for five years now and I think with time you build trust. Friendship doesn’t happen right away. You cannot connect with someone right away. It takes time and experiences to build friendships.”*

Shamim clarified the importance of frequent contact in building trust with her Canadian friends:

*“Maybe by daily contact, we learn about them. By meeting them every day, we get to know how they are and that’s how we can trust them.”*

Similarly, Anne mentioned that building trust between friends comes with time and with a feeling of security:

*“Like any friendship, it comes with time. When there is a sense of security, you know you can trust someone with your secrets and get help if you need it and this comes with time but also through conversing.”*

Some immigrants were not able to build trust in people around them when they first immigrated because of their uncertainty about their behaviours or because of the lack of English skills, which made it hard to understand them. For example, Deema stated:

*“I was the one who did not trust people around me because they acted differently, spoke a different language and ate different food. Everything is different so it was not easy for me to just get along with people.”*

Along with building trust in people, the degree of effort that participants were willing to invest in forming intercultural friendships also influenced the development of intercultural friendship. For example, Sara made the following observation:

*“When immigrant people come to a small place, they often want to go to bigger cities. Sometimes you think: ‘Do I invest a lot in that friend or this person or they are going to leave?’ You see each other occasionally but there is something about how much do you invest in those relationships and how long they are going to last? To build a friendship you need time, energy and work and although it can be fun and fulfilling work, it is still work. So how much energy do I put in, when I have limited time and limited energy, in a short relationship that can’t pay me back?”*

Building trust was reported as being an important element in fostering friendships between immigrant and Canadian women. Strategies that were identified to promote trust

## Friendship Across Cultures

between intercultural friends included being open, providing support, and spending time together. On the other hand, uncertainty about individuals from different cultures and language barriers affect the level of trust with intercultural friends.

***Limited topics of conversation.*** In this study, interest in another culture was an important factor in promoting and engaging cultural exchange. As intercultural friendships developed, the nature of shared conversational topics changed. For example, in the participants' initial stage of developing intercultural friendship, the information shared was limited to superficial topics. However, as the participants began to show interest in developing the friendships, they started to reveal more personal information. Culture was reported to be a popular topic by both groups. Participants would exchange information with respect to cultural values, food, languages, beliefs and traditions. Participants declared that the subject of culture naturally flowed in their conversations.

Some participants in both groups reported that they avoided topics that required a deep understanding of their culture, experiences or their life history when conversing with their intercultural friends. They were aware that foreign partners were unlikely to understand their thoughts, as Arwa justified:

*“There are problems that if you share with immigrants they will understand you better so you are willing to share more with them. They understand you fully. Canadians can be there for you but you don't tell them everything because they don't really know what's going on in your life. It's not good to abandon your Canadian friends for something that they don't even understand.”*

Rashmi added to the limited topics they could share with their Canadian friends:

*“When I talk to people that come from my country, we talk about politics but with Canadian friends I don't talk politics, only day-to-day topics.”*

Sara related to the difficulties in having a full conversation with immigrant women without giving them some background information about the conversation's topic:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“It just makes it less layered because you have to stop sometimes. I would talk with an immigrant person and then realize that it probably doesn’t make sense to them. Then I would say: ‘Well to understand this, you have to know that.’ Then I have to tell them some kind of story in order to explain what my first story was.”*

Some topics were unsuitable to discuss because of cultural norms and were therefore restricted in intercultural conversations. From her experiences, Aurora explained:

*“We definitely have different values about things and in Canada we talk about some social issues much more openly than in Kenya. We just see things differently but I wouldn’t say it’s a difficulty.”*

Despite the differences in cultural values regarding the family, most of the immigrant participants treated disclosure of family issues and personal relationships as private information that was improper in intercultural or intracultural friendships. In contrast, Canadian women explained that they usually disclosed their personal issues to a person whom they considered to be a close friend. Randa reported that she shares different topics with her Canadian friends but not the private ones as she keeps it within the family:

*“I share things that are day-to-day things and stressful situations. I don’t really share anything too private.”*

Carla explained how revealing personal stuff is different culturally:

*“In my culture, it’s very common to talk to a close friend or a psychiatrist if you had a problem. Many of my immigrant friends will talk to a family member or a relative to keep it in the family and that’s how they try to deal with their problems. Whereas you notice that North Americans would go to a therapist and it’s safe so I would say it’s the same with Nadia. I can talk to her.”*

The English competency of immigrant participants determined the potential topics of disclosure. Therefore, for participants with limited English skills, the possible topics for conversation and disclosure were often limited to the ordinary and superficial topics that could be exchanged easily and did not require fluent English, as Rania illustrates:

*“We usually chat. She asks about my life, my school, my husband and my family and I do the same. She is a very thoughtful person. She is very educated and*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*likes to talk about thoughtful topics and subjects. I am educated as well but because of the language barrier I cannot talk to her on the same level that she talks to me. I prefer not to open in depth topics. I think the hardest part is talking in depth and explaining more complicated things. I would rather just talk about superficial things and this keeps the relationship from developing into a much closer one.”*

Sharing the pleasure of humor creates a sense of closeness and connection between friends and this can define the quality of solid and successful relationships. A sense of humor creates a positive bond in relationships. This bond appears as a strong buffer against stress, disagreements, and disappointments in a relationship. Since jokes can be culturally specific, it is usually difficult to interpret them into another language without missing part of their unique meaning. Therefore, participants avoided telling jokes to their intercultural friends. Rashmi notes:

*“When they tell jokes I cannot understand them. Sometimes they laugh at a joke and I don’t understand.”*

Aurora also explained how it is sometimes hard to understand her African friend’s jokes:

*“Sometimes it is not as obvious to me but she tries to explain things to me because I don’t understand. I know if she was telling the joke, sharing the story or video with one of her friends from her ethnic background, it would be a lot easier for her than trying to explain it to me.”*

Topics shared between members in intercultural friendships might be limited due to cultural differences or a lack of language skills needed for deep or intimate conversations. Unfortunately, the limited topics available for discussion can restrict the level of disclosure between intercultural friends and, as a result, the closeness of these relationships.

***Frequency of contact.*** Cross-cultural contact offers people chances to meet one another and, as a result, allows for the development of intercultural friendships. Having opportunities to contact each other frequently assists partners involved in a relationship to

## Friendship Across Cultures

get to know one another further and to disclose more, therefore facilitating the development of intercultural friendships. Daily interaction can break a social boundary and lessen cultural differences in intercultural relationships. For example, Anne showed how daily contact with immigrant women helped her develop her intercultural relationships:

*“We would meet each other often because we were in class together so it gave us a chance to interact and get involved in social activities together. We had the initial professional relationship and the personal relationship developed out of that.”*

Rania, an immigrant, explained how a limited contact with her Canadian friend affected their relationship:

*“My neighbour, Kari, is the one who made the intention to talk to us. I still remember the day we met her. Unfortunately, she had to move to another house six months after we met her so from that time we didn’t stay in touch regularly. I think if she had not moved the relationship would have been much stronger.”*

Linda’s comments appear to explain not only the importance of regular contact, but also the difficulty of keeping regular contact because of their responsibilities or activities such as family commitment, studying, or work. For example, explained:

*“My friend is already retired and very busy. Even though she is retired, she goes out to different places. Sometimes we don’t see each other but after it has been a while, we call each other.”*

Sara, a Canadian, also complained about having a limited time for contact with her immigrant friends out of the classroom:

*“I’ve been friendly with just whoever’s been in the class and I never go further than that. It was just because everyone is usually busy and you don’t have time to just say, for example: ‘Everybody come over this Saturday afternoon.’”*

Opportunities for contact between people are essential to the initiation of a relationship like friendship. Frequent contact is needed for individuals to build trust and

## Friendship Across Cultures

develop knowledge about each other's personalities and cultures. The more time they spent together, the more their uncertainty about each other's behaviours and values decreased. This helped them decide if they were willing to proceed in their relationship. Also, as intercultural friendships develop toward closeness, they gradually become more reliant on affection than on the frequency of contact because of the time needed for such contact.

**Perceived similarities/differences.** In intercultural friendships, more differences can become apparent than similarities between friends. However, some participants emphasized that they did not view the discussion of their differences as a negative influence on their friendship; instead, it was beneficial for them to compare different points of view with respect to the same issue. For example, Aurora expressed:

*"I think it's really interesting when Aisha talks about Kenya like the things she does there and how things are different between Kenya and Canada. It's really interesting. I have never been to Kenya but I get to understand a little bit of the culture through talking to her. We also talk about how things are different here and in other countries. We have both been to other countries, as well, so we talk about different places. It's interesting."*

**Acceptance of cultural differences.** Cultural differences represent how the dissimilar cultural norms and values between immigrant and host society members affect the development of intercultural friendships. Cultural differences emerge when intercultural friends compare their cultural values, beliefs, or languages. Participants do not assume those with a different cultural background will understand them or their cultures the way members of their ethnic group do. Deema explained this:

*"They might not understand what I'm talking about, why I do certain things in a certain way, why I don't eat some stuff or why I don't drink. Maybe because I act differently they would think of me as weird but this is fine according to my beliefs and my culture. It doesn't look fine for them so that's why I don't think I should get very involved in their culture."*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Randa explained how culture and differences in values, including religious, decreased her chances in developing close relationships with her Canadian friends:

*“My friendships in high school were okay. However, the older you get, the more you realise you are different and the more you realise that you’re not like them. As far as getting along, we got along but you notice that you’re different. When you want to go out to a restaurant, they want to drink and you don’t drink. They have boyfriends and you don’t have a boyfriend. They knew it but it would distance us from each other so our friendship would always reach a point where you could never be as close as you want to be.”*

Marlene also related to the difficulties of building friendships with immigrant women because of cultural differences:

*“It’s a little more difficult to form friendships with immigrants because of the cultural differences but you get to love them just like your Canadian friends.”*

Sara related to religious differences:

*“Religion feels exclusionary as well, but in a different way, because at least if the other person has a religion, which I have a religion, at least we both acknowledge that there is something higher than ourselves so that right there is a commonality as opposed to someone who doesn’t believe in anything higher.”*

Rania also explained how culture and language differences affected her relationship with Canadian women:

*“I still feel that I am not comfortable being with them for a long time because in the end, there is something missing between us. There is this chemistry that’s not happening because we are from different cultures, we speak different languages and sometimes they cannot understand what I want to say.”*

Although cultural differences appear to influence the development of friendships between immigrant and Canadian women, participants were quite accepting of cultural differences. Participants in both groups accepted and respected their intercultural friends’ cultures by being more cautious and careful in order not to offend them based on their culture. For example, Rania reported:



## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I think, in the Canadian culture, everyone lives in their own world. They don’t like to interfere in other people’s business, which is really common nature in our culture where it’s okay to ask: ‘How was your day?’ or ‘What are you doing?’ or ‘Why didn’t you come yesterday?’ These questions, to them, mean that you are interfering with other people’s business. I think this is probably one of the areas in which I now know how to approach them. I cannot ask certain questions that are completely normal to me.”*

Aurora also explained how she and her immigrant close friend were able to accept each other’s cultural differences:

*“We are aware that there are cultural differences between the two of us. We might have different assumptions about things and sometimes I ask Aisha questions about what she thinks about something and if our thoughts are different but I think we are good enough friends that I feel comfortable asking her and she is always happy to answer my questions about Kenya.”*

Acceptance of cultural differences enhances the willingness of Canadians to interact and form relationships with immigrant women, as Samantha observed:

*“I think having people or having friends from different cultures just makes your world even bigger so I am always happy to learn about other cultures and make friends from other cultures because it helps me learn and widen my world.”*

Overall, the degree of acceptance of cultural differences between immigrant and Canadian women impacts their comfort levels in interacting with intercultural friends. Being open-minded and respectful of other individual’s values and beliefs was identified to facilitate intercultural interactions and, as a result, initiate and maintain intercultural friendships. Thus, cultural differences were particularly important for the initiation of intercultural friendships. As immigrants are expected to acculturate, immigrant women found cultural differences a challenge in the initiation of their relationships with Canadian women, especially those whose culture differed from the mainstream Canadian culture. However, from the Canadian participants’ perspectives, the differences were interesting to them and motivated them to further develop intercultural relationships.

## Friendship Across Cultures

***Common cultural backgrounds.*** Dissimilarity of cultures was found to contribute to difficulties in communication and relationships between different cultural groups. Cultural similarity, on the other hand, gives attributional confidence, that is, it makes explanations and predictions of behaviours easier and therefore increases interpersonal attraction during initial encounters, paving the way for deeper involvement. Because one of the functions of close relationships is to affirm self and identity, it is understandable that immigrant women from cultures dissimilar to the host culture often bond with immigrant women from the same country. Arwa related this idea:

*“Maybe because it’s the same culture and you can just walk in and talk and we have more in common. We share challenges and that is a way of support. We both need that support and so we become friends. It’s interesting because we are friends with people from Sierra Leon from Sothern Africa, it doesn’t necessarily mean from the same country. We have some friends from Philippines, the one I met at the playground. They are Filipinos. They came in trying to find a job and it was so hard. The kids play and you share your challenges on the side and then you become friends like that.”*

Shared cultural backgrounds contributed to the comfort of establishing a mutual understanding, better trust, and a deeper sense of closeness. Participants in both groups reported that they preferred to form friendships with women from the same background who share the same language, experiences, challenges, values and beliefs, and even the same food. Most participants mentioned that shared cultural background alleviated the concern of cross-cultural misunderstandings. Knowledge of cultural norms reduced the fear of unintentionally making mistakes and being perceived in a less than desirable light.

Rashmi explained:

*“I have more Sri Lankan friends because they belong to my culture and religion. When we get together, we eat the same food, we speak the native language and we sing our songs but when we have to get together with Canadians, it is a little bit different. I don’t drink. I don’t take alcohol but I see that there is no difference here. Males and females drink alcohol and their*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*speech is so much different. Because I don't belong to this culture, when they talk sometimes, even though I know English, I cannot understand what they saying because they were raised here."*

Samantha also reported that forming friendships with Canadians might be easier than forming friendships with immigrants:

*"I think it may be a little bit easier. I think with Canadian women, you are still careful because again you don't ever want to push yourself on someone if they don't want to be your friend but I just think, it's easier not to have those barriers or I don't even know if I'd say it's a barrier but just something that makes it just a little more difficult."*

Communication between women from the same ethnic group flows naturally and is not interrupted by having to explain cultural differences or to give background information about a topic. Noor stated:

*"With friends from my culture, we talk about the past and how things are in our country. We laugh, we talk about silly things and we laugh at funny jokes. If I say a joke from my culture to a Canadian, they wouldn't laugh. We have different things to share and if I say something, they understand it easily because we have the same background. If I talk about something related to my culture, I have to make it clear for the Canadian. I have to talk slowly. I have to give them solid information for them to respond to me which is sometimes hectic."*

In addition, individuals feel more relaxed to communicate in the same language. For these reasons, participants tend to disclose more to their intracultural friends because of the assumption of greater understanding based on shared cultural beliefs and values, as Deema validated:

*"I have good deep friendships with people from my culture. They are closer to my culture. Although they are not from the same country, they would speak the same language and some of them actually don't speak Arabic like I do but they are very close to me because their beliefs are almost the same and their culture is very close to my culture so they became very good friends of mine. From Canadian culture, I have good friends but not as deep as the ones I have from my own culture."*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Interacting with other immigrant women from the same ethnic group with similar cultures is also perceived to be important for immigrant women. It provides a setting where ethnic and cultural values can be rehearsed and expressed and helps immigrant women to maintain their cultural identities. Eman's statement supports this observation:

*"I have many immigrant friends and we gather. We share the same language, culture, and beliefs. We even share the same food and clothes. When we celebrate in our gatherings we share all these things together and we enjoy being together. I do have friends among different culture groups and we share similarities but I really don't have many Canadian friends."*

Shadia also clarified the importance of having immigrant friends to ease her adaptation to the new society:

*"When I moved here, I felt very lonely. I wasn't able to adjust to the life here and I had my daughter who was six or seven months. For two months, I felt really lonely. I wanted to move back until I met my immigrant friends and I got to know them, then life for me became way easier. They were very supportive."*

According to participants, a shared cultural background contributed to greater ease of assuming understanding, trust, and self-disclosure, and greater self-disclosure facilitated the development of relational closeness with individuals who have the same culture and linguistic backgrounds.

***Commonality and interest.*** The information gathered about an individual in the initial meeting would be used for selecting future friends. Commonality is a good starting point for developing friendship and is important for initiating friendships during the acquaintance-to-friend phase. When an individual finds something in common during the process of exploring what the other person likes and dislikes, one tends to form a friendship with that person. Participants explained how they often chose to emphasize their shared similarities rather than be concerned about their differences.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Participants also reported that having something in common with their intercultural friend played a significant role in bringing them closer to each other and eased the development of their relationship. For example, Linda, an immigrant, reported that having something in common is very important in developing a relationship:

*“I think you start building the relationship when you have some connections with people or commonalities. When you don’t have anything in common and different values and lifestyles, I don’t think a relationship will initiate but when you find people with mutual interests, you may become willing to build this relationship.”*

Samantha also commented on having same interest between friends they can bond on:

*“I think it’s often based on common interest. Typically, over the years, it has been kids, work, hobbies and things like that. I think you need to have the same interests. I think it’s all the same and some people you mesh with and like instantly and others may not interest you as much but for me it wouldn’t be based on their culture.”*

Most of the participants in both groups confirmed that as a human being in the first place and as a women secondly, there is always something in common that connects them, such as having the same interests in some activities such as cooking and shopping. Women generally like to share their cooking experiences and learn about ethnic dishes. Marlene and Rashmi emphasized the idea of commonality between women:

Marlene: *“Similarly, we are women, mothers and we love family. Women have many things in common regardless of culture such as love for family, cooking, cleaning etc.”*

Rashmi: *“Even though culturally we are different, sometimes the hopes, talks, the ideas are the same as mothers and sometimes as females, women have the same expectations and same hopes.”*

Anne explained that there are many universal goals that are shared by everyone regardless of culture:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I think people have different beliefs but I think everybody wants the same thing. In other word, no matter how you get to the end result everybody has the same goals: safety, health, love, security and happiness.”*

Additionally, having children around the same age can be a good reason for women to spend time together and develop a good relationship, which can later develop into a close friendship. Another example of having something in common is religion and beliefs, as women can meet through their religious organizations. Arwa stated:

*“We met most of them at church, some at work and some just in the neighbourhood. When you go to the playground and the kids are playing together you form friendships with the parents of those your kids are playing with.”*

Anne also explained how having kids might facilitate her connection with immigrant friends who also have kids of the same age:

*“Because we have kids, we interact out of interest because we want the kids to play and we also enjoy each other’s company; then, a more intimate relationship develops out of that.”*

Several participants (Canadian and immigrants) reported how having shared interests or goals greatly facilitated the development of their intercultural relationships. Interacting with women from different cultures led them to perceive similarities in others’ behaviors or interests, which helped them go further in their intercultural relationships. By identifying their similarities, participants believed that they were close to their intercultural friends who could understand them in that particular shared area. For example, Carla, a Canadian, liked her immigrant friend, Nadia, the first time they met; she felt they had something in common to connect them:

*“Nadia has a kind of energy that attracts me, it’s a spiritual thing. Because of that, I already knew our friendship was going to be there. The connection that I have is a spiritual connection so I am drawn to her energy. There was a friendship because we had the same kind of yearning for the spiritual connection.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Although participants involved in intercultural friendships spoke about having more differences than similarities, in order to establish a successful relationship, they tried to bond with their intercultural friends by emphasizing their commonalities such as personalities, children and child rearing, interests, religion, and values.

***Misunderstandings and potential tensions.*** Most misunderstandings between participants could result from the negotiation of culture or language differences. Having different lifestyles, different values and beliefs can be problematic in developing a relationship between Canadian and immigrant women, as Samantha mentioned:

*“I think that forming a friendship with a woman from another country might be more tentative because you may not understand their dialect or their culture so I may approach it more carefully than a friendship with someone in Canada because I wouldn’t want to offend or push myself on somebody that maybe didn’t want to form a friendship. I just think it’s not knowing about other cultures, maybe, that might make me just be a little more cautious but it wouldn’t prevent me from forming a friendship”*

Sara also explained how she feels overwhelmed dealing with immigrants from different cultural background which affected her willingness to interact with them to avoid any misunderstanding or offending anybody:

*“As the white person that means there are four or five different cultures I have to try to figure out. That can feel really overwhelming and you almost start to feel territorial. I think: I better not say that because I don’t want to offend that person. This person wants us to do this because this is how they did it in their country. I think all those little rules can be a lot to keep straight, especially in a place where we haven’t had a lot of immigrants. It’s not like you can slowly get used to it. So sometimes it’s not just all rudeness on the part of the person, it’s just how do I navigate all of this? And sometime, in response, you just back off and you don’t interact, maybe, as much as you could.”*

The most common topics mentioned by participants that could cause some disagreement between them were sex roles, religious beliefs, and family rules. For example, Sara commented:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I also had a lot of trouble understanding some of the rules around head dress, for example, because I had a few friends that would wear the hijab and I would say: Well, what is the point of this? They would say: hair is too sexual and so I would reply: So do you look at all of the people who are showing their hair and think they are inappropriate women? They would answer: no. So how can it be both? And I didn't quite understand because it's hard to explain why they cover hair? And why is it such a big deal?”*

Rashmi, an immigrant, also offered a different perspective about the differences in sex roles

*“Here, female are completely open. I was raised in a Buddhist culture where female are not so open and not very forward.”*

Some of the participants did not show any negative feelings toward their intercultural friends, which was considered one of the reasons why there were no real conflicts between them. Participants in both groups were open minded and respected each other's cultural values and beliefs, and tried to understand or adjust to each other cultural norms and rules. As Sara and Anne explained:

*“I am open to accept their values and beliefs because we expect the same from them. It takes two sides. If you expect people to accept your beliefs and \ values you have to extend the same. It's a two way street.”*

Rania also described how her Canadian friend is very respectful of her values and beliefs:

*“She is really respectful. She tries because our religion prohibits drinking she tries not to drink in front of us or not to serve any pork.*

Some misunderstandings result from miscommunication in intercultural conversation which is defined as mismatch between the speaker's intended meaning and the hearer's interpretation of this meaning in the particular context of interaction. This can be related to a language barrier that hinders the expression of the correct message to the respondent. Misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts in some cases can be a reason why intercultural friendships are not easy to develop or sustain. However, managing the



## Friendship Across Cultures

misunderstanding by being open to different points of view and cultural differences might assist in initiating or maintaining intercultural friendships.

***Social activities and involvement.*** Differing cultural norms affected the intercultural friends' preferences in socializing activities, which, in turn had a significant impact on the development of friendships. Each culture holds a certain perception of acceptable and unacceptable social activities. Some immigrant participants refrain from doing some social activities that they consider against their culture's values and beliefs. For example, some immigrant participants perceive drinking at bars or at a party to be against their religious beliefs and avoid these kinds of activities. This has relevance to the development of friendship because it is through these socializing activities that dyadic bonding takes place. Without shared common social activities, intercultural friendships tend to be more difficult to develop. For instance, Eman illustrates how the absence of joint social activities between intercultural friends could affect the development of intimacy.

*“With my background, although I share many things with Canadian women I still have some barriers because they have different things to do during in their time. So if they go to church or if they go to a party where they will be drinking, I prefer to have a potluck or a gathering with my people who share the same things.”*

Randa, an immigrant woman who grew up in Canada, explained how cultural differences affected her relationship with her Canadian friends at the university:

*“In university you have more freedom. In university you're older, above 18. Some of them could just go out and drive, they had cars. I could go to the early movie and to the restaurant but I can't go to the bar and I can't go to things like that. They started to have boyfriends but I was always clear about that and everybody knew that I had those limits and nobody ever tried to make me break those limits or anything like that.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Some Canadian participants showed interest in learning about other cultures and did not think different cultural preferences of social activities would be a problem in the development of intercultural friendship. For example, Samantha related:

*“I think that it’s all about compromise and learning about people. For me, I guess, I don’t understand why I wouldn’t want to know or why you wouldn’t want to share cultures or meals or information about religion. I think you need to be open to that and I guess I wouldn’t want to feel like I was going to be judged because of the way I live in Canada or the things I believe here. I wouldn’t want to judge an immigrant women based on that.”*

However, other Canadian women identified some cultural activities, traditions or rituals as not easily understood or enjoyed. Sara commented about this:

*“My girlfriend in university was Chinese and in a Chinese club. It was a big group but she wanted me to join so I could come along to their events. I didn’t know a lot of people. I was the only white, non-Chinese speaking person in the Chinese Students Association. I would go to these events and first of all the food you get is not what we think of as Chinese food. We also did a talent kind of thing and people got up and sang and I had no idea about any of it.”*

To avoid cultural differences, some participants tried to engage in social activities that interested, both, them and their intercultural friends; common interest is important for maintaining friendships. For example, Carla reported that she and her immigrant friends tried to adjust their social activities to match both of their interests:

*“I would say with my immigrant friends there’s more socializing and talking and enjoying food whereas with my Canadian friends there are more activities like hiking, watching a movie or going to a restaurant. For example, on a trip to Waterton with Nadia and her husband, we went on a little walk. They thought they were going on a big hike so they felt like they were adjusting. They are doing some adjustments because we usually just sit down and we are also doing some adjusting because we are not used to going on a little walk. We are used to going for a decent hike and feeling like we are getting a really good hike. So both people are adjusting.”*

While some of the participants in both groups tried to introduce their activities to their intercultural friends by inviting them to enjoy and learn about their culture, others

## Friendship Across Cultures

claimed that they avoided inviting their intercultural friends to culturally unique activities. Bunu and Samantha spoke to this:

*Bunu: "Some people really like our culture because we have many festivals. They really like our cultural food. I showed Sally how to make our cultural food and I invited her to my festival. In total there are 20 or 25 Nepali households and when our festival arrives we get together and celebrate. Yeah, I invited her last time.*

*Samantha: "I don't think they do but we don't socialize a lot and then I think when we do I am just never sure if they would be comfortable in the situation. So if we are having a Christmas gathering I'm not sure if that is an appropriate time to invite people where we might be serving alcohol. Also, there would be all sorts of food so I don't know if it would be the wrong type of food but I don't think that's a right thing to do when I think about it because my friends, I think, could make the choice if they would be comfortable in that situation and they could choose to come or not to come."*

Limitation of social networks to close family or old close friends excluded immigrant women from the social circle of Canadians, as Arwa explained:

*"They are just used to their groups. They have aunts and cousin. They have too many that they can't include you in everything so you might think you're being left out."*

Similarly, Shadia explained how it is hard for Canadian women to include immigrant women to their circle of already formed friendships:

*"They have already established their relationships and sometimes they're not willing to build new ones. If you are from a different society and have a different culture, even if you have the language sometimes it's difficult to fit in the society."*

Carla also related to the same idea that it is hard for her to include more new friends to her small group of old friends:

*"I'm used to spending time with my husband and my three kids but we don't have a wide circle of close friends. We are very individualistic so we have a small group. Our group is small where I'm sure if we compared my in-group to Nadia's in-group, her in-group would be way bigger. My in-group is quite small so it takes a lot more effort for an immigrant woman to become a member of that in-group and they have to do more work because I already have my good friends"*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Most of the immigrant women liked to get involved in social activities with their own ethnic group as they shared lots of similarities. For example, Shamim stated:

*“I do have more immigrant friends because we have meetings and gatherings and less Canadian friends because I don’t usually go to their gatherings. The people I meet I don’t gather with because one day my friend called me lets go to a pub. I said: no, that’s not allowed in our religion. So I usually don’t go to such gatherings because they oppose my faith and culture.”*

Most of the participants had some difficulties in getting involved in social activities with their intercultural friends. Therefore, the lack of shared social activities among intercultural dyads sometimes impeded the development of friendships.

### **Telecommunication Facilities/Maintenance of Long Distance Friendships**

Leaving behind families and friends, with whom immigrant women used to informally talk every day and turn to with complaints, frustrations, and for help, is one of the post-immigration challenges they have to face. Batoul spoke about this:

*“Back home you were around your family, and when you needed them you could just pick up the phone and talk to them whenever you felt like it, or you could just go and see them whenever you felt like it. If you’re feeling down and you need to talk, you could just go and find a sister and talk. It’s not that easy here. Here, you’re a thousand miles away and the time difference doesn’t make it easier. You have to think twice before you decide to call.”*

Family and friends back home often served as the primary source for social networking and social support for women during the early stage of resettlement.

Rania explained that she kept in contact with her family and friends back home to get emotional support needed in her early adjustment in Canada:

*“I am a really emotional person. I am really attached to my family and it was really harsh but I have a supporting husband and a supporting family. They stayed in touch through Skype and internet and it made things easier. I used to talk to them a lot because at the beginning I needed that support, I needed to feel that they were still there talking to me. I used to talk to them much more than now and I used to have only one child. Now I have two children and I’m a student and my husband is a student as well so I got busier.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Most of the immigrant participants had more friends in their home country compared to friends in Canada because they grew up there and had more opportunities to meet and make friends easily in different stages of their lives. Take the cases of Shamin and Rashmi in the following narratives:

Shamim: *“I have lot of friends there. I grew up there and I studied there so I have lots of friends back home.”*

Rashmi: *“I had so many friends and we’re still connected. Friends I had in university when I was in Sri Lanka are all around the world so we Skype and e-mail each other as well as talk on the phone.”*

Technological innovations broke down geographic borders and provided immigrant women with alternative means to maintain their connections with their former social networks. Using long-distance telephone calls, Skype and the internet, or frequent overseas visits, allowed immigrant women to maintain contact and relationships with their families and friends either in the country of origin or in other parts of the world. Technology also helped them maintain long distance relationships with Canadian women. Linda described this phenomenon:

Linda: *“Thanks to technology, we are still connected. We can still see each other and laugh together. We share our stuff and when I go back home, we try to visit each other even in busy times. We make time to see each other.”*

Immigrants can easily stay connected with their home country and be kept updated on current events in the new country and the world through long-distance calls, e-mail, and the Internet. Arwa noted:

*“It is amazing to stay in touch with people. Even if I don’t respond to their Facebook posts, I still know what is happening at home. It was so expensive when we had to call, but now you get to know what they are doing. I would talk to my friends in Nairobi who are going home and before they arrived they would tell me, ‘we are almost home.’ I think it has really helped. I think it is one of the things that help you adapt. Last week my brother was sick in hospital back home*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*and I was getting updates every 4 hours through text messages instead of having to go and see him. They would let me know how he was doing. You feel like you are there. You cannot see them but at least you know what is happening there.”*

Although telecommunication technology helped immigrant women maintain their original relationships back home, long-distance friendships may lack some of the ongoing, every day behaviors common in geographically close friendships which does not satisfy the woman's need for close friendships. Shamim mentioned that she was able to maintain her long distance relationships through technology devices, but these relationships lack closeness:

*“We still contact them through Facebook and e-mails. We know about each other but we're close like before because of the distance and busy life.”*

Because of current computer technology, immigrants are no longer dependent on the assistance of Canadians for providing information about life in Canada, such as how to access different facilities and services (e.g, health care, schools, and other community services). As Arwa reported:

*“It is good because if you want to know anything about immigration, it is there on your desktop. You can just go there and look around. It's a very important tool for immigrants; it helped me a lot.”*

Getting information about the host culture through the internet can hinder face to face interaction between immigrant and Canadian women, which potentially has a negative impact on the development of intercultural friendships. Relying on the internet to access information might decrease the opportunities of interaction between immigrant and Canadian women. Texting and e-mailing, for example, also decreases the chances of face to face interaction and verbal communication between them. This can result in less oral communication and fewer chances of improving the immigrant women's English proficiency. Aurora observed:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“I definitely prefer face-to-face interaction. I still spend a lot of time in Edmonton, so when I am in Lethbridge, I see Aisha almost every day and we talk all the time. When I am in Edmonton or when she is in Calgary, we don’t talk as much. We text a little bit sometimes or chat on Gmail but we don’t talk nearly as much as when we are both here. Face-to-face, we can talk much more easily.”*

Further Arwa:

*“If they are far, you have to talk with them over the phone. If they live in the same area, I love to see them. You feel more close to people when you see them.”*

Maintaining relationships in their home countries was vital for immigrant women as a source of support in their early adjustment in Canada. Most of the participants relied on telecommunication facilities such as Facebook, Skype and E-mail as a way of long distance connection with their families and friends. However, these long distance relationships were often less intimate. Relying on telecommunication technology and the internet as a way of communication and seeking information about the host society decreased the chances of face to face interaction and development of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women.

### **Intercultural Friendship in the Neighbourhood**

The satisfaction of individuals with their neighbourhood is related to social interaction and socialization with their neighbours. For reasons of cultural proximity, immigrants tend to settle in neighbourhoods populated by the same ethnic group resulting in ethnic residential concentration. This preference is often related to the social support they receive from their ethnic group during their early settlement. The material and social support provided by compatriots can reduce culture shock of recent immigrants. However, their strong engagement with their ethnic group potentially segregates them from Canadians. Self-segregation is also apparent among persons who are not recent immigrants, whether by preference or actual residential outcomes.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Cities in Canada differ in their ethnic composition. In cities largely populated with immigrants, the assumption is that new immigrants selectively seek to connect with individuals of a similar background. Therefore, ethnic residential concentration affects the extent to which immigrants have social contacts with the native population and, as a result, hinder their social integration. Immigrants who live in ethnically dense neighborhoods may be less likely to interact and develop friendship ties with Canadians. In contrast, immigrants residing in mid-sized cities with limited ethnic groups are more likely to connect and form intercultural relationships with Canadians.

Although immigrant participants showed preference in connecting with their ethnic group upon arrival, moving to a small city with a smaller population of immigrants compelled them to connect with Canadian women. For example, Rashmi stated:

*“We had so many Sri-Lankan friends in Calgary, so they kept us from feelings lonely. However, when I came to Lethbridge, I felt lonely for at least one year. I didn’t find any Sri-Lankan friends. We felt alone but when I went to my kids’ school, I met with some Canadian mothers. They were really kind and spoke nicely to me. They were so welcoming, I didn’t feel lonely anymore and I didn’t feel any discrimination.”*

Linda and Arwa added that they had more chances in developing friendships with Canadians in a small city because of the low chances of having many immigrants:

*Linda: “After five years of my immigration was when I made those good Canadian friends. It could either be because of the language barriers or because less immigrants live in this small town.”*

*Arwa: “You have to find friends. It’s an essential part of human life. You need friends to keep you going and to fit in their society. You chose to be Canadian so you can’t isolate yourself forever. There are not enough Kenyans here to associate with every day, some of them live in the north and some in the south. You need to get people around you, you still need Canadians.”*

Immigrant women who settled in small cities with a lower population of immigrants in Canada may have more chances of developing intercultural friendships



## Friendship Across Cultures

than immigrant women who settled in bigger cities. However, for Canadians who live in ethnic diverse neighbourhoods might have less willingness to connect with their neighbours. Therefore, their relations might shift away from immigrants and towards the majority Canadians in the neighbourhood.

When participants were asked for the reason of choosing their neighbourhood, only one participant mentioned that she lives among her ethnic group. Others mentioned several reasons for choosing their neighbourhood based on availability of facilities that might help them in early adjustment such as accessing services, looking for job opportunities, and the presence of educational facilities for their children. Bunu stated that the reason of choosing her neighbourhood is because a high percentage of her ethnic group lives in the same neighbourhood:

*“I chose to live in this neighbourhood because there are many Nepalese people living here.”*

Arwa reported the reason for choosing her neighbourhood:

*“It is close to the university and my husband wanted to be able to walk to work.”*

Although most of the immigrant participants have lived in their neighbourhoods for a long period of time, they still had not developed strong relationships with their neighbours. Relationships with their neighbours remained superficial and restricted to just greeting whenever they met in front of their houses. Some related this to the high mobility of neighbours especially in student residential areas. Rania described her relationships in the neighbourhood:

*“I think I’m the oldest one here. It’s been around three years and I haven’t been able to make friendships because they are mostly students. Every year or two, somebody moves in and out, so there are no chances of building relationships.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Linda reported that her relationship with her neighbours in Canada is superficial and never developed to be close:

*“I’ve never had a neighbour friend here. I always hear people say: ‘my neighbor was so nice.’ I wish I could leave my kids with a neighbour but I’ve never experienced such a connection. I know the person who lives next to me but we just say hi and we don’t go beyond that.”*

Other immigrants reported that Canadians are more dedicated to their nuclear families than their friends or neighbours, which affects their neighbourhood relationships. Arwa observed:

*“They are used to their groups. They have aunts, uncles and cousins. They have so many people already that they can’t include you in everything. You might think you are being left out but I just always think it’s what they can accommodate.”*

To rationalize their lack of involvement in neighbourhood relationships, some immigrant participants claimed that upon living in a temporary residence, such as a rented house or on a university campus, they did not invest as much effort in building relationships with their neighbours. Their willingness to develop relationships with their neighbours would differ if they owned their home, knowing that their stay would be, to some degree, permanent. Linda stated:

*“Probably because I didn’t feel like I belonged to this neighbourhood because I am renting the property but maybe now that we are in the process of getting a house and we know it is going to be our house, I will immediately go to introduce myself to the neighbours.”*

Few relationships were established between immigrant and Canadian women in their respective neighborhoods. They remained superficial and some restricted to just at a greeting level. This may be related, in part, to the high mobility of residents in the neighborhoods. Most of the immigrant participants reported that they were not satisfied

## Friendship Across Cultures

with their neighborhood's relationships when they compared them with neighborhood relationships in their country of origin, where all neighbors know each other and used to have social activities together.

### **Intercultural Friendship Development Process**

Friendships develop and advance over time. They have beginnings, when partners become acquainted; middles, when solidarity and other elements of friendship increase, decrease, change and stabilize, and sometimes friendships might end for a variety of reasons. Intercultural friendship is characterized by cultural negotiation. Cultural negotiation includes communication about cultural differences such as asking questions about the unfamiliar cultural behaviours of another.

All participants expressed similar ideas about the process of developing intercultural friendship. As more time is spent together, the understanding between each other grows and the friendship develops. However, most of the participants reported that intercultural friendships are more difficult and took longer time to develop compared to intracultural friendship. This is related, in part, to the extended period required to familiarize with another's cultural background.

For example, Marlene explained that it took her a longer time to develop friendship with immigrant women compared to Canadian women:

*“Maybe it's a little slower with immigrants. You have to get used to the differences so it takes a little longer to form the friendship. Whereas with Canadians, we grow up the same way, so it is faster.”*

Batoul also reported that having the same culture makes it easier for her to develop relationships with immigrant women compared to Canadian women.

*“I would say forming friendships with immigrants is easier, specifically from my community. I find it again, compatibility, it works here. It's easier to feel*

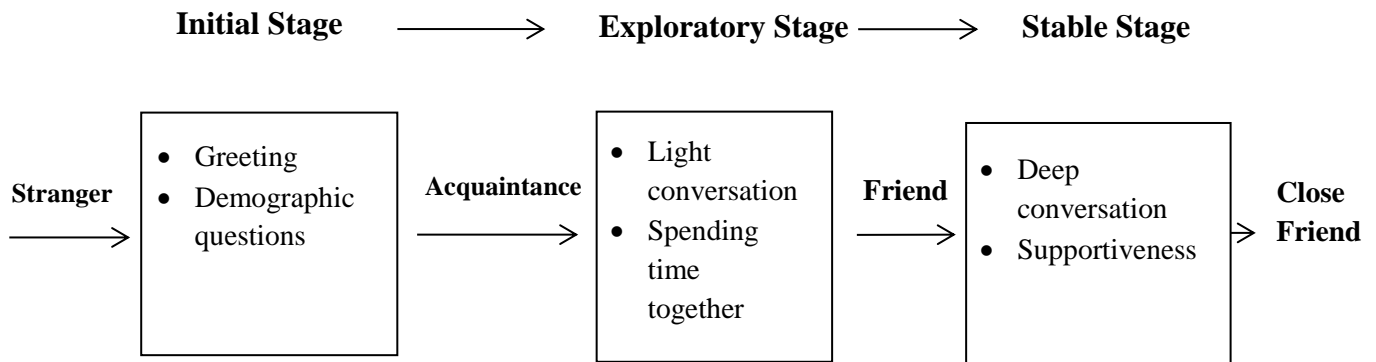
## Friendship Across Cultures

*comfortable with people of your own kind. Commonalities in our culture, in our traditions, our beliefs, and the way we live come into play. So we are more compatible with each other.”*

All participants revealed similar common stages of the progress of friendship in the intercultural context, from acquaintance, friend, to close friend. Most participants perceived acquaintance and close friends the same way interculturally. They characterized an acquaintance as a friend that one contacts frequently and know little about. In contrast, a close friend is a person with whom one shares feelings and the intimate details of life.

Strategies for developing intercultural friendships were revealed through all the interviews and several types of relational development strategies were reported by both groups of participants. These included: greeting, light conversation, spending time together, deep conversation, and supportiveness. As shown in Figure 2 greetings and asking demographic questions were strategies reported by the participants which characterized the initial stage of developing their friendship. Light conversation and spending time together were strategies mainly identified as occurring during the exploratory stage of friendship development. Finally, deep conversation and supportiveness normally were strategies used in the stable stage.

**Initial stage.** The contact stage is where intercultural friends meet each other for the first time. In this stage, interaction between strangers is described as superficial as people talk about limited topics and reveal little information about themselves. Participants described their initial interaction as less intense. Participants indicated that when they first met they engaged in light conversation and general talk with their counterparts. They met their intercultural friends for the first time.



**Figure.2 Intercultural Friendship Development Stages**

in different social environments, such as (a) university (b) children’s schools and activities, (c) religious places, (d) English as a second language programs (ESL), (e) workplace, and (f) through living arrangements such as the neighbourhood. Among these avenues, only three were mentioned more than once: children’s activities, churches, and universities. Given the fact that the majority of immigrant participants in this study were unemployed, it is not surprising that work did not emerge as a prominent social avenue as it otherwise would have. The following narratives, from Sara and Arwa, are examples of where intercultural friends met for the first time in a school:

*Sara: “Most of them I met through school. Part of what made it easier was that we were all studying the same topic and so we already had something in common. We also had sort of a same schedule and lifestyle that we had to navigate together. I would have to say that’s how I knew most of them.”*

Rashmi spoke to the limited chances of developing intercultural friendship through work:

*“I think that’s the problem. I don’t have many Canadian friends because I don’t work but when you work with others you come to know other people. You can make friends.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

Most of the participants reported that their intercultural interaction happened naturally. Encounters with Canadian women mostly happened by accident and they did not follow any strategies to look for Canadian women friends. However, some reported the effectiveness of interaction with Canadians through involvement in social activities. As Batoul reported:

*“Exposure is important. If you’re not getting out of the house, you’re unlikely to meet anybody. So if you want to make friends, you just have to get out. I met a few ladies at the kids’ program who were willing to just approach me and talk and visit. We were friends as long as they were coming to the program, but after you stop coming to the program, kids grow up and then everybody goes on their own way.”*

The type of greeting reported by most of the participants was verbal salutes (e.g, *Hi, How are you?*), and some demographic questions such as (e.g, *Where are you from? How long have you been here?*). Greeting and asking demographic information tends to be disclosed in the initial stages of relationships and considered an efficient and simple way of commencing a conversation; it is a sign of showing interest in communicating with another. Arwa, an immigrant, described how she started to interact with her Canadian women friends:

*“She began with: ‘Hi, how are you? Welcome to our congregation. Where do you live?’ And her daughter right away came and started to play with Rose, and every evening her daughter comes and plays with Rose.”*

Aurora, another Canadian, initiated her relationship with her African friend, Aisha, at the university:

*“We met at school, so we had that in common already and we were standing next to each other in line in the orientation and so we just started talking. I think it’s easy for something like that to start talking and asking about people’s backgrounds. So we just started talking based on that and we became really good friends.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

When Bunu was asked about how she initiated relationships with Canadian women, she said:

*“First of all, I ask for their name and where they live and I start from there, only general information.”*

Participants in both groups identified the same strategies in initiating their intercultural friendships. Most of them reported that greeting and asking some demographic questions were the main strategies they used to start their intercultural friendship.

**Exploratory stage.** In this stage personalities begin to emerge, people start to exchange information about each other, and they reveal more of their individual personality. They become less cautious and grounded in sharing information about themselves. People at this stage of their relationship try to find out more about each other by engaging in a light conversation. The purpose of exchanging information about each other is to establish common ground. Through talking and observing each other, people decide whether they wish to continue the interaction and pursue the relationship. The major goal of the exploratory stage is to explore each other’s culture and clarify some cultural misunderstandings

Most of the participants tried to find out more about each other in their initial interaction. Frequent conversation then enabled them to increase their understanding of each other. The information gathered about a partner could be used for selecting future friends. For example Martha explained:

*“I met my friend Amanda in Biology class. We sat beside each other and we just started talking, and she said: ‘oh, yeah, I am from Poland. And I said: ‘oh neat, tell me about that. And so, we just started to talk about what that was like and what her culture looks like there. We were sitting beside each other in high*

## Friendship Across Cultures

*school biology and we started talking and that inspired from there. I just like to get to know people, talk to them and learn about their culture.”*

Eman also explained how they went through deep conversation with their Canadian friends to learn more about each other:

*“At the beginning there were many conversations and she asked me about how life was back home, and what I do there. She asked about my family. She talked about her life a lot and what she does every day.”*

Frequency of contact and spending time together were found to be other ways of promoting closer relationships between immigrant and Canadian women. This provided the opportunity for participants to learn more about each other. Both Canadian and immigrant participants reported the significance of spending time together which helped them to develop friendship with their counterparts. Participants discussed different ways of spending time together, such as doing daily activities together, which provided another informal opportunity to promote interactions between them. Activities mentioned often by both groups of participants included visiting each other, going shopping together, having coffee or tea time, going to a park or on a trip, and watching movies. For example, Aurora noted:

*“Well, with Aisha, we mostly meet at school because we are there quite a bit, but we also get together and go to dinner with some of our other friends too. Sometimes we go out to eat. We are both new to Lethbridge and so we like trying out new places to explore. Basically, we spend time together going shopping, going out to eat and then just at school.”*

Rashmi also related to the importance of frequent contact in initiation a strong relationship:

*“I believe if I go to the university more frequently, I will become closer to Canadians and will be able to go more deeply into their lives but I always prefer to be with immigrants.”*



## Friendship Across Cultures

In this exploratory stage, intercultural friends began to engage in frequent social interactions. Interaction is often a stage when participants start to realize their relational roles, rules, and rituals which refer to the joint activities done on a regular basis. Participants from both groups reported the importance of spending time together and the frequency of contact as their relationship developed.

**Stable stage.** This final stage is assumed to be the highest level that one can achieve in a relationship. With further interactions, participants became more accepting, and came to a deeper understanding of the other's culture, and where those cultural values or beliefs came from. In other words, in this stage, intercultural friends really learned to respect the other's cultural perspective. Emerging roles and rules for both members in the intercultural friendship were much better understood in terms of what was considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour and topics of interest. At this stage, participants built trust in each other and a deeper level of self-disclosure took place through penetration of each participant's core self. This stage results in complete openness and spontaneity. Relationships are friendlier; personal idioms and private intimate expressions are exchanged. Since friends know each other at the deepest level, they are able to interpret and predict the feelings and behaviours of the other fairly accurately, even without verbal exchange. Carla reported that her relationship with her immigrant friend, Nadia, developed more intimacy by sharing more personal information:

*“She doesn't just communicate with language but she communicates emotionally as well. She tells me things you would only tell a sister and not necessarily other people.”*

## Friendship Across Cultures

In the exploratory stage, people tend to exchange relatively superficial and limited information. When individuals get closer, they exchange deeper and more extensive information. Batoul observed:

*“In the beginning, our conversations were mainly about getting to know each other, learning about each other’s family and talking about our husbands and kids. And since we both have kids around the same age, she was easier to open up to and share with. I was reluctant at first and I remember I talked to her about it and she was really good about it. She suggested I take it one step at a time and not plan to share just not to resist the urge to share when it surfaced. With time, I was able to open up to her and share stories about my family, my culture and myself. She was very understanding to all the differences and very accommodating. Once, she emailed an invitation for the whole class for a pool party. I simply declined and when she asked me, I was honest and explained to her that I don’t take alcohol and that I prefer not to be around it. She was very understanding.”*

Some Canadian and immigrant women seemed to notice the increased depth and breadth of information they shared with their counterparts. Reciprocity of self-disclosure is effective in developing relationships. Also, comments by participants illustrated the characteristics of female -to-female relationships.

“Positivity” refers to productive behaviors presented by participants in their intercultural friendships. Participants described their intercultural friends by using the following words: *respectful, encouraging, helpful, trustworthy, patient, nonjudgmental, open-minded, and truthful*. These terms symbolize the positive characteristics that participants demonstrated in their intercultural friendships. In particular, most of the immigrant participants reported that providing support and giving help was a considerable strategy that was positively engaged to enhance their mutual interest in the friendship. Linda reported that she got support from her Canadian friends in many situations:

## Friendship Across Cultures

*“She is a person that is very honest and very sensitive. She shares your happiness and sadness. She is the kind of person that wishes the best for me. For example, she would tell me: ‘I have a solution for you’ like in terms of getting my licence. Even though we know that is not going to happen, it is nice to hear that someone supports you. This is something I appreciate her for and she encourages me. When I was in school I wasn’t sure I was going to succeed because I was so tired, so she always said: ‘no you need to move on, you have to do it.’”*

As discussed in Linda’s accounts, support used to be offered mainly by Canadian women.

However, as relationships developed, support became reciprocal. For example, Eman, an immigrant, noted how she and her Canadian friend were supportive of each other:

*“I was friends with Kelsey. She is very nice and I chat with her. We sit together and she sometimes asks me how I feel being here and how my parents are back home. Her dad just passed away so I just e-mailed her and I expressed my sorry feelings about her loss. I expressed my support for her. I really appreciate her she is very helpful and very supportive”*

Reciprocity in providing support between Canadian and immigrant women seemed to have a positive influence on friendship development. Supportiveness describes both emotional and informational support, and both types were reported by immigrant and Canadian participants. For example, Linda explained how she got support from her Canadian friend:

*“I share with her every success or the opposite. If I’m sad I can call her. She has been a great support and she celebrates my family’s successes. Even if my daughter has a special event, we invite her.”*

The use of supportiveness in this stage of relationships has been identified. Additionally, reciprocal support was found to be necessary to maintain good relationship.

Strategies for developing intercultural relationships that were identified among the immigrant and Canadian women included meeting through different settings, greeting, light conversation, spending time together, deep intimate conversation and supportiveness.

### **Summary**

Several themes emerged as factors influencing the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. First, the language barriers, which were identified by participants as the main factor influencing initial interaction and development of intercultural friendship. Immigrant participants who reported having low level of English proficiency felt the stress in expressing themselves clearly when communicating with Canadian women. However, participants who had confidence in communicating in English reported that language was not an obstacle in building their intercultural friendships. Participants who showed interest in building intercultural friendships believed that language could be a challenge in intercultural relationship development but it does not completely prevent the chances of intercultural friendship development. Participants reported that they were able to overcome these obstacles by demonstrating patience and communication adaptation as they adjusted their speech styles by speaking slowly.

Knowledge about cultures is the second factor that was identified by participants to be influencing the formation of intercultural friendship. Participants reported that getting the chance to exchange new sets of ideas and perspectives help in widening their scope of views about each other's culture. Showing interest in other cultures and learning more about other people's cultural behaviours and values were reported to be the pleasant part of intercultural friendship. Participants believed that they were greatly rewarded for having friends from other cultures.

Self-disclosure, defined as the process of disclosing personal information to others who could not know otherwise, is the third factor affecting intercultural formation.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Self-disclosure is one of the main communicating techniques employed to reduce ambiguity in intercultural relationships. Participants stated that they share less personal stuff and discuss fewer topics with people who are considered not so close. Also, participants reported that English competency affected their level and amount of self-disclosure. The lack of confidence in English made immigrant participants nervous in communicating with Canadian women. Therefore, participants reported that they disclose more to intracultural friends who share the same language and background than with their intercultural friends.

The fourth aspect discovered to influence the development of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women was similarity/dissimilarity. Similarities were reported by participants to alleviate the fear of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Having the same language and cultural background allowed people to feel greater ease in disclosing the self and greater trust in a relationship. Therefore, most of the participants reported that they have more intra-cultural than intercultural friends because of less effort and time needed in building intracultural friendships.

Although differences in culture were identified by participants as a factor that hampers the development of intercultural friendship, dissimilarities in cultures did not decrease individuals' willingness to bond with people from different cultures if they could bond using similar interest in certain areas and similar personalities. Different aspects of similarities were identified by participants as influential in starting intercultural friendship. Most of the participants mentioned that as women they have lots of commonality to bond on such as having interest in same topics like shopping, cooking, and child rearing. Also, as women, they all considered friendship as a source of assistance and support, when it is needed, that gives their lives meaning.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Strategies followed by participants to maintain long- distance relationships as a primary source of support during their early stage was also explored. Most of the participants reported the importance of telecommunication technology in keeping their old relationships and staying updated with current events happening in their country of origin. However, these relationships do not satisfy the woman's need for close friendships as they may lack some of the features of geographically close friendships. Although, telecommunication facilitates their contact with family and friends back home, participants reported that relying heavily on technology as means of communication with friends who are physically close hinder their opportunities of face-to- face interaction and, as a result, increases the chances of social isolation.

Intercultural friendship formation in the neighbourhoods was also examined because socialization and social interaction with neighbours plays an important role in individuals' satisfaction in the neighbourhood. Few intercultural friendships in the neighbourhoods were reported by participants, which were related, by participants, to the high mobility of residents in some neighbourhoods.

In this study, three stages were identified through the strategies immigrant and Canadian women reported to follow in their intercultural friendship development. These stages are categorized as: initial stage, exploratory stage, and stable stage. During the initial stage, intercultural friends exchange superficial information and demographic questions are usually asked. The exploratory stage is where the individuals begin to show more interest in the relationship and exchange detailed personal information. Specifically, the exploratory stage marks the beginning of building of close friendship ties. In the

## Friendship Across Cultures

stable stage, the relationship exhibits a deepened level of genuine and sustaining friendship.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This study sought to examine the importance of intercultural friendship in the lives of immigrant women, an area of study that has been mostly overlooked by communication researchers. The present study explored twelve immigrant and nine Canadian women's perspectives of intercultural friendship and its development. It also explored the factors that they perceived to influence the development of such a friendship, and identified the strategies participants followed in forming intercultural friendships. The results presented reveal only the experiences of the interviewed women who spoke to the phenomenon under study, and do not necessarily reflect the larger population of intercultural friendships among immigrant and Canadian women. The aim of this chapter is to critically reflect and analyze on how the findings of this study articulate with social relationship development theories and models, and previous studies in the reviewed literature. This includes factors affecting formation of intercultural friendship development such as differences in cultural norms and beliefs, language and multicultural experiences.

#### **The Impact of Social Adaptation Challenges**

Although, the findings of this study revealed that immigrant women migrated for different reasons, they all had faith and expectations of a better future. The immigrant women shared the same challenges at the early stage of their settlement in their new society regardless of the initial reason for migration. For example, the majority of the participants reported that they left their families and friends behind and they experienced social isolation upon their arrival in Canada with immigrant women.



## Friendship Across Cultures

Building new relationships was not an easy process for most of the immigrant participants. The findings of this study identified many challenges that impacted immigrant women's social integration and, as a result, intercultural friendship development with their counterparts in the host society. The results revealed that it took a long time before immigrant participants were able to build their social network in the new society and establish Canadian friendships.

Most of the immigrant women reported that they experienced cultural shock upon their arrival and that they had to adapt to many differences in their early adjustment to the new society. For example, learning English, the native language, to facilitate communication with the host members was a significant challenge for most of the participants, who had limited English skills, which kept them isolated from the native speakers. This finding is concurrent with the findings of several studies that explored the challenges faced by immigrant women during their resettlement in the new society (Kalek, Mak, & Khawaja, 2010; Man, 2004; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). These studies showed that cultural and linguistic adaptations were a challenge for many of immigrant women. The difficulties some of them encountered in communicating in native language aggravated their feelings of isolation and depression.

The findings of this study indicated that, as a result of not having their professional credentials recognized, most of the immigrant participants remained unemployed although they held a high level of education. Unemployment excluded immigrant women from the work force and affected their interaction with local women. Consequently, this decreased their chances to improve their English language and lessened their opportunities of developing relationships with Canadians. These findings

## Friendship Across Cultures

are supported by previous studies that explored post immigration adaptation challenges among immigrants. Such studies established that most immigrant women face adaptation challenges in their new society. This impacts their interaction with host society members upon arrival (Martins & Reid, 2007; Rashid, 2011; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). Also it supports findings of other studies that focused on social integration of immigrant women in the host society and its impact on their wellbeing (Martínez et al., 2002; Schmitz et al., 2003).

As immigrant women developed confidence and competence in their English language skills and were exposed to the host society, they showed more willingness to interact with Canadian women and develop potential relationships. Immigrant women in this study revealed that their relationships with Canadian women provided them with needed support during their adjustment, such as providing necessary information about inquiries concerning Canadian society. These findings are consistent with Kim's (2001) work regarding the importance of contact between immigrants and host society members in terms of their adjustment and social integration in the host country. Similar to Rashid's study on the resilience of immigrant women in Canadian society (2011), this study confirmed that although immigrant women faced significant obstacles they were resilient in adapting to their new social circumstances.

### **Friendship Perspective across Cultures**

A comparison of perspectives on friendship across cultures was not the goal in the present study because the immigrant women participants had different cultural backgrounds. This is in contrast to other studies which focused on just two specific cultures such as the Li (2010) study which compared the Chinese and American

## Friendship Across Cultures

perspectives of friendships. This made it difficult to make comparisons among multiple cultural perspectives and with Canadian perspectives of friendship. However, many similarities and a few differences in the perspectives of what friendship entails emerged through the interviews. This suggests the possibility that cultural differences may afford a mediating role and provide a leading topic for interaction in the early stages of relationship development. Such differences to some extent become irrelevant once a friendship becomes closer. This is consistent with the findings of Gudykunst and Nishida (1994) who suggested that in close friendships there are more cross-cultural commonalities than differences and this can be explained by the personal, rather than cultural, impact on the development of intercultural friendships once close relationships have been established.

Being supportive, open, and having a big heart, understanding and not being judgmental, and sharing good and bad moments were the most common characteristics of close friends identified by both groups. However, strong obligation, commitment, expectation, and practical help were characterized as the immigrants' perceptions of friendship which were different from the Canadians' perceptions that tended to regard friendships as a function of socializing, activity-sharing, and fun seeking. This finding is consistent with other studies which found that friendship varies from culture to culture in terms of several aspects such as obligation, socialization, duration and mutual trust (Fahrlander, 1980; Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

### **Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development**

Several significant factors influencing intercultural friendship developments were identified through the interviews. Some of these factors were consistent with the factors

## Friendship Across Cultures

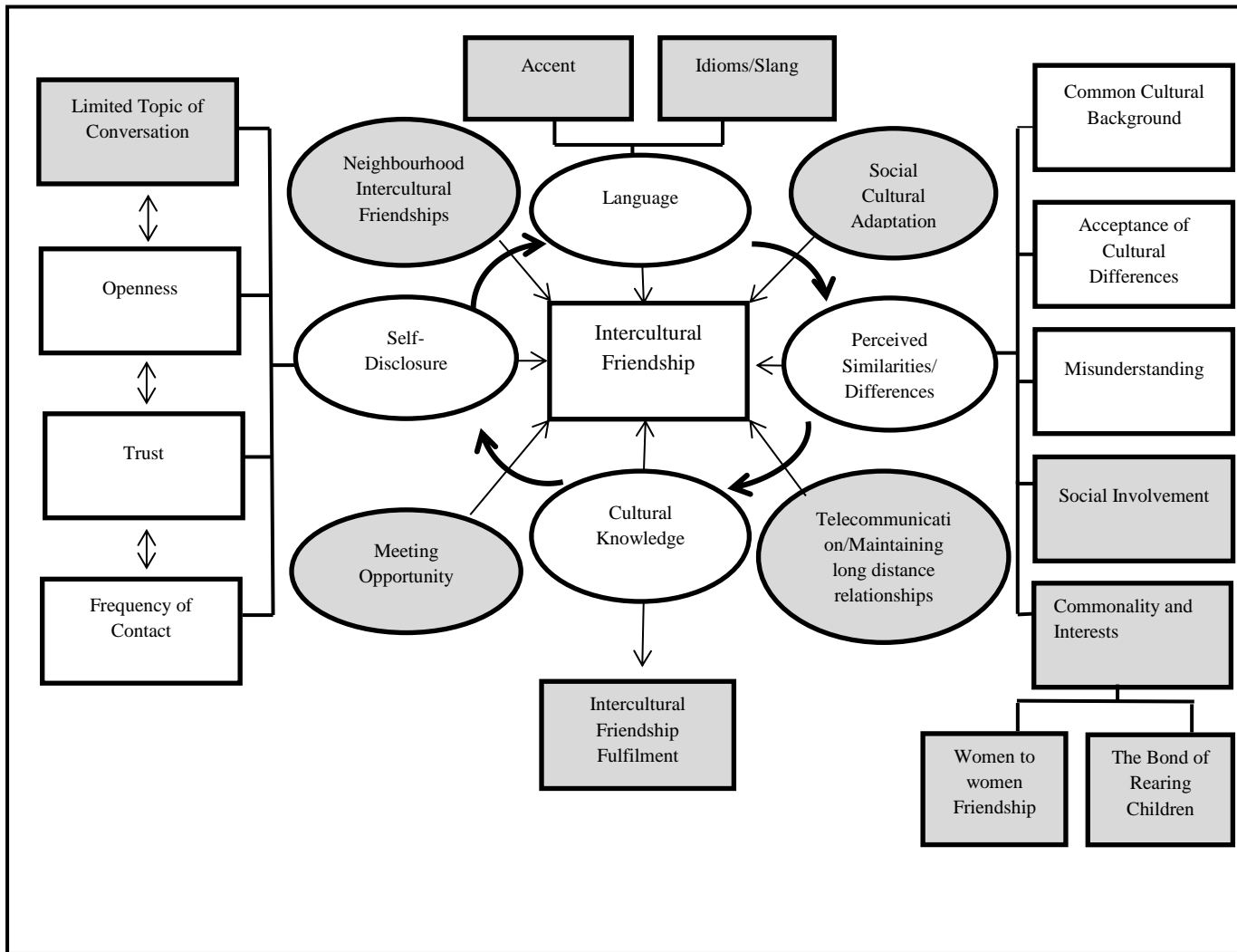
identified by interpersonal relationship development theories; however additional factors emerged from the interview data and its analysis. Shaded boxes in Figure 3 below represent these emergent or new factors. These new or emergent factors influenced the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women and included: limited topic of conversation, neighbourhood intercultural friendships, accent, idioms/slang, social-cultural adaptation challenges, telecommunciations, intercultural friendship fulfillment, social involvement, commonality and interests, women to women interaction (including gender), and the bond of child rearing. In addition, previously established factors of language competency, knowledge about culture, self-disclosure, and perceived similarity/dissimilarity were confirmed in this study.

**Language competency/communication competencies.** With respect to intercultural friendship development and during initial meetings with strangers, English competency played an important role in the comfort level associated with such interactions. The English language communication skills of immigrant women affected the level of anxiety they felt in their interaction with Canadian women and decreased the latter's willingness to interact with them. A lack of confidence in English reduced the participants' ability to communicate with host society members. In contrast, confidence in English reduced the level of anxiety they felt in their interaction with Canadian women and increased the Canadian women's willingness to interact with them.

A lack of confidence in English reduced the participants' ability to communicate with host society members. In contrast, confidence in English reduced anxiety at initial intercultural encounters and increased the chances of interaction. This aligns with Gareis et al's study (2011) which confirms the connection between language competence and

## Friendship Across Cultures

intercultural friendship satisfaction. For most of the participants, language was one of the most challenging and highly noticeable factors affecting the development of intercultural friendship. In having to learn and use a second language, some participants felt stressed because they could not express themselves clearly when they communicated with host members. This confirms the findings of existing research on the importance of language



**Figure 3: Factors Influencing Intercultural Friendship Development**

competency in intercultural relationship development (Burns, 1991; Kim, 1991). The sympathy and open mind of participants was markedly expressed in relation to

## Friendship Across Cultures

communication adaptation. They were patient and adjusted their speech styles. For example, immigrant women who reported having an accent mentioned that they started to talk slowly with Canadian women in order to facilitate the communication and avoid any misunderstanding. Also, Canadian women tried to reduce the use of slang and idiomatic expressions in their speech and showed some patience in understanding the immigrants' way of talking.

The immigrants' confidence in English also affected their level of self-disclosure, as the more they built confidence in English, the more they were able to disclose. As the level of intimacy was related to the extent of self-disclosure, most of the relationships between immigrant and Canadian women did not develop to a high level of intimacy because of the limited topics they were able to share. They were limited in their ability to disclose and express ideas as a result of not being fluent in English.

In this study, English proficiency was a significant factor affecting intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women. This finding is in keeping with other studies regarding the importance of language competency in allowing broad and intimate communication in intercultural friendship development, which characterizes friendship (Samter, 2003; Volet & Ang, 1998).

**Knowledge about culture.** Culture exploration is an activity that makes intercultural friendship so unique and exciting. Participants in intercultural friendships are provided the opportunity to learn about, not only their own culture, but also that of their friends through constant inquiring and comparing. This cultural exploration process makes the members in intercultural friendships feel rewarded because they are allowed to frequently exchange new sets of ideas or perspectives with their friends, broadening their

## Friendship Across Cultures

scope of views. Engaging in culture and language exploration is also a positive way to show respect, sincerity, and interest in one's intercultural friend. Most importantly, learning about other cultures and languages help the members in intercultural friendships to eradicate stereotypes and avoid misunderstanding, in a way, decreasing the possibilities of forming conflicts between certain cultural groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1984).

Knowledge about different cultures was reported by the women to be a main factor in fostering the formation and development of intercultural friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. This is consistent with Berger and Calabrese's (1975) findings which posit that strangers usually follow particular steps to reduce uncertainty about each other before deciding to go further in their relationship (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

Positive feelings toward different cultures were reported by participants to make intercultural friendship formation easier. This finding is supported by Gudykunst et al. (1991) which suggest that interests in immigrants and knowledge about their culture increases the willingness of host society members to develop close intercultural relationships. In intercultural friendship, participants reported being given chances to learn about their own culture as well as their friends' culture, through querying and comparing cultural differences and similarities. In this study, participants felt pleased and rewarded by having friends from different cultures, which allowed them to exchange new sets of perspectives and ideas that broadened their world views.

Differences in cultures become manifest when intercultural friends compared their cultural values, beliefs, and their life styles. It is suggested that immigrant women

## Friendship Across Cultures

adapt their values to those of the host members, in order to fit in the social life of the host society (Kim, 2002). However, in this study the women in intercultural friendships were more interested to learn about their intercultural friends' cultures, as immigrant women were eager to disclose information about their own culture. This, in turn, helped intercultural friends learn about each other's cultures but not essentially try to change their friends' different sets of cultural values or beliefs. Canadian participants reported that they tried to understand, accept, and respect their immigrant friends' cultural values and beliefs and they expressed that cultural learning was the best part of their intercultural friendship.

Participants in this study reported that being interested in learning about other cultures through comparing different perspectives on different topics increased their willingness to form intercultural friendships. This is consistent with Lee's study (2006) which found that cultural differences did not impact friendship negatively but encouraged members in intercultural friendships to compare their perspectives on a given issue.

**Self-disclosure.** Self-disclosure, which is composed of openness of communication, is one of the most important factors in the development of close relationships. Self-disclosure is a major interactive technique that helps to reduce uncertainty in intercultural friendship development (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). It is a process of revealing and sharing personal information about oneself to another. Although individuals from different cultures disclose differently, self-disclosure is still an essential part of developing an intercultural friendship (Kudo & Simkin, 2003).

The depth of self-disclosure reflects degrees of closeness in friendships. The more individuals in a relationship share personal or private topics, the closer they become. The



## Friendship Across Cultures

results of this study show that participants disclosed significantly more to their friends than to acquaintances, and significantly more to women friends who are very close. This study highlights the role of self-disclosure in the different stages of intercultural friendship development. The findings of this study have implications for the uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) and the role of self-disclosure in intercultural friendships development. As reported by SPT theory, the more depth and breadth of information exchanged helps friends to become closer and their friendship to become more intimate. Also, Berger and Calabrese (1975) confirmed the role of self-disclosure in reducing uncertainty about strangers in intercultural friendship development. Results of this study showed that participants were aware of potentially offending their intercultural friends or being judgmental in their intercultural relationships, and they tried to avoid deepness of disclosure which negatively affected the relationship development. That is, self-disclosure was not enacted and the friendship did not move to a more intimate level of engagement, and the participants were comfortable with this limitation of their friendship.

The findings of this study also suggested that participants reveal more to women friends from the same background, who share the same language and cultural perspectives, than to women from different backgrounds because less time and effort were needed to disclose to friends who share life experiences or perspectives.

**Perception of similarity/dissimilarity.** Findings of this study showed the importance of shared beliefs and values in relationship development especially regarding close friendships. Dissimilarity of cultures and beliefs was found to contribute to

## Friendship Across Cultures

difficulties in communication and relationships development between immigrant and Canadian women. Cultural similarity, on the other hand, makes explanation and prediction of behaviours easier and therefore increases interpersonal attraction during initial encounters between immigrant and Canadian women that help in facilitating a deeper involvement. Findings of this study showed that participants are more likely to choose friends with whom they share similar values, attitudes, and opinions.

The immigrant women in this study had significantly fewer Canadian women friends than immigrant women friends from same ethnic group or from different ethnic groups. Also, the findings of this study indicate that immigrant women were less satisfied with the number and quality of these intercultural friendships. This is in contrast to the number and quality of their friendships with immigrant women. These findings confirm previous research reports of the preference of immigrant women to form friendships with their co-ethnic group (Heyni et al., 2011). This can be explained by the ability of immigrant women to find solidarity with fellow immigrant women who share the same challenges and experiences, or who might share same language or culture. This finding is also congruent with previous studies which showed that co-ethnic groups were considered the primary source of social support and social network in the early stage of immigrant's settlement in the new society (Baker et al., 1994).

Canadian participants revealed that they have more Canadian women friends than immigrant friends. They related this fact to the less effort and time needed to develop relationships with individuals who share the same life experiences and same cultural background. Findings of this study emphasised the importance of individual similarity and attraction as bases for friendship formation between immigrant and Canadian

## Friendship Across Cultures

women. These findings are consistent with several studies showing the importance of individual similarity for intercultural relationship development. These studies showed that people usually prefer social ties with others, who are similar to themselves in relation to culture, behavioural and intrapersonal characteristics (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Mollenhorst, et al., 2008). It is also congruent with research identifying cultural similarity as a factor affecting friendship formation (Gareis, 1995). Similarities in culture ease friendship development, as they typically enhance effectiveness of communication.

Although participants recognized dissimilarities more than similarities in their intercultural relationships, they mentioned that they focus on shared similarities rather than differences during their interactions. They chose to emphasize their shared similarities with respect to many aspects of themselves. Finding compatibility helped immigrant and Canadian women to get along with each other. Through identifying their similarities, participants believed that they were close to their intercultural friends because they could understand them in that particular area.

Some individual similarities, such as hobbies, attitudes, values and personality, were perceived to be essential to the development of intercultural friendship. Most of the participants related to commonalities as important elements in building their relationships. Participants reported that friendship is important in human life and they cannot afford life without friends regardless of cultural background. They believed that cultural difference was not necessarily an obstacle to intercultural friendship formation if they could bond on other commonalities, especially among women who have more in common in many aspects of their lives.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Although participants reported that they appreciate their intercultural friendships, which provided them with experiences and knowledge about other cultures' values, beliefs, traditions and food, they still believed that building a relationship with people from the same cultural background is faster and easier. These findings are consistent with research showing the importance of individual similarity for the development of intercultural relationships (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Kim, 1991). It is also consistent with research indicating that cultural similarity is a factor related to friendship formation (Bochner et al., 1977; Gareis, 1995).

Socialization was another key positive factor expressed in the accounts of the participants. The findings of this study revealed that different cultural norms affected the intercultural friends' preferences in socializing activities which, in turn, had a significant impact on the development of intercultural friendships. Although participants highlighted the impact of spending time together on the development of intercultural friendship, excluding intercultural friends from certain activities decreased the chances of developing close relationships. Participants reported these activities to be either against their culture's values and beliefs, for example at special holidays and parties where drinks (alcohol) and special food are offered or because they are not familiar with these activities, like winter sport activities.

Different cultural values and beliefs could be a reason for creating conflict and misunderstanding in intercultural relationships. The findings of this study showed that the participants tried to manage or avoid conflict with their intercultural friends by being open minded and respectful to their intercultural friends' values and beliefs. This helped them not only to develop successful relationships but also to maintain these relationships

## Friendship Across Cultures

and to get closer by understanding each other's differences. This could be explained by the participants' high level of education which makes them to be open minded and more accepting of different cultures, or because of the previous multicultural experiences of the participants.

### **Relationships Maintenance**

One way to examine long distance relationships maintenance is to explore how these contacts with friends are kept. The advancement of technology has facilitated the formation and maintenance of friendships among individuals who are geographically distant. Different means of contact, such as Facebook, Skype and e-mail, were reported to be used by immigrant participants to keep their contact with family and friends back home. This is consistent with the findings of other studies on the importance of maintaining meaningful distance relationships with family and friends as a crucial source of support for immigrants in their early adjustment in a new society (Bakardjieva & Smith, 2001).

Most of the immigrant participants reported that they left many friends behind. However, contact was maintained with a few friends. As the interviewees' lives had changed after immigration, connection to old friends was not as significant as compared to geographically close relationships; therefore, looking forward to building new relationships in the new society was the main concern for most of the participants.

Immigrant participants reported that they benefited from the Internet as a source of information about many aspects of the new society, such as community services and economic opportunities. These findings align with other researchers' findings on the benefits of the Internet in the fulfillment of immigrant women's needs, such as advice

## Friendship Across Cultures

and support, through different web sites and news groups (Koerber, 2001). Participants reported that with today's faster lifestyle, studying, having a job, and taking care of a home, did not leave time for face to face interaction between friends and contact is kept by other means such as phone calls, text messaging, and Facebook.

Although telecommunication facilities helped participants maintain their long distance relationships, such relationships lacked some of the features of physically close friendships. On the other hand, relying on these communication channels as means of contact was reported by participants to decrease opportunities of face to face interaction, and, as a result affected the formation of meaningful and more intimate relationships between immigrant and Canadian women. This finding is supported by Rashid (2011) who suggests that telecommunication facilities played a significant role in hindering the formation of friendship between immigrant women and their host society members.

### **Intercultural Friendship in the Neighbourhood**

Individuals' satisfaction with their neighbourhood is related to social interaction and socialization with their neighbours. After arriving, for reasons of cultural proximity, immigrants tend to settle in neighbourhoods populated by the same ethnic group resulting in ethnic residential concentration. This preference is often related to the social support they receive from their group during their early settlement (Kivisto, 2001; Miyares, 1997). Previous studies show that the material and social support provided by compatriots can reduce the culture shock of recent immigrants. However, their strong engagement with their ethnic group segregates them from members of the host society. Self-segregation is also apparent among persons who are not recent immigrants, whether by preference or actual residential outcomes.

## Friendship Across Cultures

The findings of this study showed that few intercultural relationships were established in their home neighbourhoods. Also, these relationships remained superficial and did not develop to become close. Although immigrant participants reported that they had been residing in their neighbourhoods for a long time, they remained separated from neighbours' social circles and this caused them to feel further isolated. Some participants related this to the busy life of their neighbours, or to the strong commitment they have with their nuclear family and long-established friends. Others attributed their separation from the neighbourhood to the temporary nature of their residency in the neighbourhood i.e., as renters. Immigrant participants stated that they were not satisfied with the quality and quantity of their neighbourhoods' relationships compared to their experiences back home.

### **Intercultural Friendship Development Strategies**

The findings of this research drawing on Lee's and social penetration theory (SPT) stages models (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Lee, 2008) to identify the stages of intercultural friendship development through strategies reported to be followed by participants in their relationship development. During the interviews, data was collected regarding strategies both immigrant and Canadian women used at different stages in developing relationships with their counterparts. The responses offered by participants related to strategies followed in intercultural relational development, such as starting an interaction through gathering superficial information about intercultural friends in the initial stage, and then engaging in deep disclosure in later stages. Findings from both groups indicated that there are common strategies used in different stages of intercultural friendship development. Building on intercultural friendship staged development models

## Friendship Across Cultures

(Altman & Taylor; Lee, 2008), three stages of friendship development emerged from the data. Participants identified these stages as they developed their intercultural friendship. These stages included: initial, exploratory, and stable.

**Initial stage.** Findings revealed that different environmental contexts provided opportunities for participants to meet with their counterparts which appear to contribute positively to the initiation of intercultural friendship. Also, participants met their intercultural friends without following any strategies, and that the meeting happened by chance such as through ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, children's schools or activities, religious places or the university. These findings showed the significant role of exposure to the host society and interaction with the host members in intercultural friendship development, certainly with respect to initiation of the process. In this stage, interactions were described as superficial as participants reported that they exchanged limited topics and revealed little information about themselves when they first met.

**Exploratory stage.** In this stage personalities begin to emerge, people start to exchange information about each other, and they reveal more of their individual personality; they become less cautious and grounded in sharing information about themselves (Altman & Taylor, 1973). People at this stage of their relationship try to find out more about each other by engaging in a light conversation. Spending time together was a common strategy reported across both groups to be used in this stage to contribute positively to the advancement of a relationship. The more time friends spend together, the more trust they build in each other and the closer the relationship becomes. In this stage participants explored each other's cultural differences and decided to go further in the relationship, or not.



**Stable stage.** In the advanced stages of relationship development, more information is revealed and more support, either instrumental or emotional is provided within the context of the friendship. Findings also indicated that, as the relationship developed to an intimate level, the frequency of interaction was less important for participants because the relationship relied more on affection than on frequency of contact. The findings of this study support the conclusion of other empirical studies, such as Hays' study (1988), which showed that frequency of interaction became less important for participants after they established a special relationship.

Intercultural friendship development was different than intracultural friendship development. Participants revealed that their relationships with intercultural friends usually required longer time to form than friendship with a friend from the same cultural background. They related this to the long period of time needed to learn about the other's culture and because of language and cultural differences. These differences are typically not present during the formation of intracultural friendships. Most participants reported the same stages of intercultural friendship development, commencing with the initial stage in which they met for the first time and began to learn basic and limited personal information about each other. Proceeding to the next stage, the exploratory stage, they learned more about each other (depth and breadth) and they began to spend more time together. In the last stage, the stable stage, during which close relationships were formed, they became supportive of each other and their friendships, more exclusive to each other.

### **Summary**

Several existing and new factors were confirmed and revealed as a consequence of this study. It became clear that these intercultural friendship development factors did not exist in isolation of each other. Rather, they appeared to have a relative impact on each other.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Cultural differences and language competency were identified as the main hindering factors. However, showing interest in learning about other cultures through sharing information about each other (breadth and depth) were identified as facilitating factors. Also, the role of gender was significant in facilitating the formation of friendship between both groups of women. Bonding arising from the many commonalities as women, wives and mothers were also reported to enhance the formation of friendship between Canadian and immigrant women. Importantly, gender as a factor influencing intercultural friendship development is missing from the current theoretical perspectives. The findings from this study suggest that further conceptual development is required of the intercultural friendship development theories, i.e., the inclusion of gender as a factor that influences friendship formation.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to understand the nature of friendship development between immigrant and local Canadian women; specifically, to identify the factors affecting the formation of such a friendship. The findings of this study showed that intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women is influenced by multiple factors. Along with differences in language, values and self-disclosure as well as uncomfortable social activity involvement were found to decrease the chances of intercultural friendship development. In contrast, self-disclosure, knowledge about other cultures, establishment of trust and frequency of contact facilitated the formation of intercultural friendships between immigrant and Canadian women.

This research draws upon the theoretical contributions of the social penetration theory and the uncertainty reduction theory to explore elements influencing intercultural friendship development through related interpretations of immigrant and Canadian women's experiences. Beyond the conceptual framework developed for this study, the data and findings revealed new factors and concepts that potentially influence the formation of intercultural friendships. In the following section, I provide an overview of these findings which were not addressed in the theoretical stances used to guide this study.

### Emergent Findings from the Study

**The impact of sociocultural adaptation challenges.** Regardless of their reason for immigration, most of the immigrant participants reported that they faced challenges in

## Friendship Across Cultures

their early adjustment to their new society. This is congruent with previous studies that explored adaptation challenges that immigrant women have to overcome in their early adjustment in a new society (Martins & Reid, 2007; Rashid, 2011; Schellenberg & Maheux, 2007). Separation from families and friends back home and the lack of social networks, especially friendships, kept most of the participants isolated from the host society particularly during the first few years of their immigration. This finding is consistent with Khan and Watson's study (2005) which explored the experiences of immigrants in building their social networks in the new society. In this study for participants reported that they were uncomfortable communicate in English upon their arrival to Canada, and this affected their interaction with Canadian society members. This finding is congruent with that of Mulvihill et al., (2001) who showed the impact of language competency on the interaction between immigrants and their host society members. Unemployed because of unrecognized foreign credentials and the lack of exposure to the host society decreased participants 'contact and interaction opportunities with Canadians. This in turn appeared to limit the chances of friendship development between the immigrant women and their Canadian counterparts. Most of the participants revealed that as a result of adaptation challenges it took them a long time before they were able to build their social networks in the new society and establish Canadian friendships. This finding is consistent with the literature on sociocultural adaptation, however, it is a new finding with respect to intercultural friendship development.

**Relying on relationships with former immigrants.** Participants mentioned that they benefited from contact with other immigrants or family members who had immigrated prior to them in terms of obtaining support required during early adjustment.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Participants reported that relying on former immigrants who provided them with information, knowledge, and other essential life skills facilitated their adjustment to the new environment (Barnes & Aguilar, 2007; Finch & Vega, 2003). However, such connections with family members or culturally similar friends upon arrival potentially decreased the chances of approaching host members for information and seeking help. Consequently, and for some of the participants, this limited the opportunities for meeting host members and developing Canadian friendships. This finding may explain why immigrant women usually do not approach Canadian women upon their arrival and, as a result, have few or no Canadian friends in the early stages of their adjustment. Also, this phenomenon may delay their social integration in the host society.

**Impact of ethnic density on the formation of intercultural friendships.** Most of the immigrant participants reported that their relationships were positively affected as they moved from larger cities to smaller ones. Participants noted that their relationships with Canadian women started after they moved to a smaller city with a less dense immigrant population. Fewer or limited opportunities for contact with the same ethnic group compelled them to interact with Canadian women and increase the chances of intercultural friendship formation. Gijsberts and Dagevos (2005) found that in neighbourhoods with more host member residents, minority groups have more chances of contact with local members and develop higher language skills.

These findings suggest that the ethnic composition of the city affects the formation of intercultural friendships between immigrant and Canadian women. Usually in an ethnically dense neighbourhood, immigrants purposefully pursue communication with people of similar ethno-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, immigrants

## Friendship Across Cultures

who live in places with greater populations of people from similar backgrounds may have less incentive to develop friendships with people from different backgrounds, i.e., in this instance, Canadian women. This is consistent with another study that suggests that immigrants who live in neighborhoods with a greater immigrant population from similar background may have less motivation to develop friendship with the host society members (Fong, 2000).

**Intercultural friendship fulfilment.** Although friendship is an essential part of all women's lives, participants expressed different expectations regarding fulfilment of their intercultural friendships. Immigrant participants perceived their relationships with Canadian women as a source of support and information diffusion necessary for successful adjustment and settlement in the new society. Canadian participants reported that cultural learning was the best part of their intercultural friendship which allowed them to exchange new sets of perspectives and ideas that broadened their worldviews. Being interested in learning about other cultures through comparing different perspectives on different topics increased their willingness to form intercultural friendships.

These findings showed that participants' perceptions of intercultural friendship are different between immigrant and Canadian women. This can be explained by the different rewards that are expected from intercultural friendships and how much time and effort they have to invest in building the relationship.

**Opportunities for meeting.** Meeting opportunities have a significant impact on the social structure of people's personal networks. In order to initiate interaction between immigrant and Canadian women, there should be chances for them to meet (Blau, 1977).

## Friendship Across Cultures

Participants revealed that they met their counterparts through different environmental contexts such as ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, through children's schools or activities, through religious places, or through the university. These contexts appeared to contribute positively to the initiation of intercultural friendship. They also mentioned that these meetings happened by chance and without enacting any strategies. Most of the participants emphasized the importance of having opportunities to meet with their counterparts as an initial stage of developing intercultural friendship. These findings suggest the significant role of exposure to the host society and interaction with host members in intercultural friendship development, certainly with respect to the initiation of the process.

**Language competencies and communication skills (accents, slang, and idioms).** Communicative competence is related to the interaction process between immigrant and Canadian women. Most of the participants indicated that speaking English, a key tool to social communication, was a major factor that most significantly influenced the formation of their intercultural friendship, particularly during the initial stages of friendship development. Findings of this study reveal that a lack of English competency influenced the extent and quality of information immigrant women could reveal when communicating with their Canadian counterparts. Reaching an intimate level of exchange, such as emotional disclosure, required more developed levels of English expressions. Accordingly, such exchanges would not be possible without a certain level of English proficiency.

Despite being able to communicate in English and having good English proficiency some immigrant participants stated that they have accents and use the rules of

## Friendship Across Cultures

their native language when speaking, which can differ from the English language.

Speaking English with an accent may hinder Canadians' comprehension, thus hindering communication. This can affect the flow of the conversation as immigrant women are then asked to repeat what they have said or to find another way to explain what they mean. Using idioms and slang through conversation is common in different cultures.

However, using idioms and slang in a conversation with someone from a different culture and language may cause misunderstandings. Immigrant participants reported that the use of idioms and slang were not effective in communicating with intercultural friends as their use might cause misunderstanding. This is consistent with Dunne's (2009) study on the impact of accents and slangs on the effectiveness of intercultural contact because individuals, in such interaction, have to adapt their communication style.

These findings illustrate that communicating in a different language can present barriers to general and intimate communication and understanding that characterize friendship. Along with the obstacle of accents, the use of idioms and slang can impede communication between intercultural friends. Individuals may find it difficult or frustrating to adapt their communication style either by moderating their accents and slowing their speech to make themselves more easily understood.

### **Intercultural friendship and gender (woman to woman friendship).**

Participants revealed that they usually develop higher levels of closeness and intimacy with other women. This finding is supported by other studies' findings which suggest that females rate their interpersonal interactions as more intimate and develop higher levels of closeness in their relationships (Reis et al., 1985; Williams, 1985). Participants in this study showed an interest in forming friendships with women from different backgrounds



## Friendship Across Cultures

despite the differences in language and culture. They valued woman to woman relationships and highlighted the role of same-gender relationships. Most of the participants agreed that, as women, they can bond given their respective commonalities. They have similar interests, and responsibilities as women, wives, and as mothers. For example, women shared interests in shopping, chatting, cooking and taking care of children. These findings suggest that same gender commonalities increased the willingness and facilitated the formation of intercultural friendship between both groups of women.

**The bond of rearing children.** In addition to the other commonalities that the participants identified with their intercultural women friends, having children around the same age greatly increased their chances to meet and form intercultural relationships. Friendship between women can develop through children engagement (Little & Austin, 1996). Most of the participants mentioned that they initiated their intercultural friendships through children's schools or children activities. Participants who have children stated that they interacted out of interest because they wanted the children to spend time together and at the same time they also enjoyed each other's company; their relationships arose from the common bond of child rearing. These findings suggest that children might facilitate the formation of friendship because they provide more opportunities for contact and interaction between immigrant and Canadian women.

**Managing conflicts or misunderstandings.** Participants revealed that most misunderstandings with their intercultural friends resulted from the differences in culture and language. Having different lifestyles, values and beliefs can be problematic in developing a relationship between Canadian and immigrant women. However,

## Friendship Across Cultures

participants in both groups revealed that they were open-minded and respected each other's cultural values and beliefs, and tried to understand or adjust to each other's cultural norms and rules. This was how they reportedly managed conflicts or misunderstandings.

**Uncomfortable social activity involvement.** Shared activities are needed to maintain a relationship between people. Absence of interaction can be a reason for termination of relationships between friends, as friends usually spend much of their time together. Each culture holds a certain perception of acceptable and unacceptable social activities. Therefore, some immigrant participants revealed that they avoided certain social activities (eg., presence of alcohol at parties) that were against their values and beliefs. Also, some participants stated that their unfamiliarity with the activities engaged in by their intercultural friends (eg., winter sport activities), thusly limited themselves in such activities. Findings of this study showed that without shared common social activities, intercultural friendships tend to be more difficult to develop. Most of the Canadian participants mentioned that when socializing, they prefer engaging in activities with their friends rather than just sitting and talking. However, immigrant participants perceived socializing as inviting friends to a meal or coffee while chatting. Such differences can limit the level of comfort in sharing social activities between immigrant and Canadian women and as a result affect the development of their relationships.

Sharing the pleasure of humor characterizes close relationships because it creates a sense of closeness and connection between friends. Participants mentioned that sharing humor through telling jokes were problematic because jokes are culturally specific and it

## Friendship Across Cultures

was difficult to find the right words to interpret and understand jokes. Most of the participants mentioned that they missed this dimension in their intercultural friendships.

**Frequency of contact.** Frequent contact between individuals, either in the workplace or neighbourhoods, facilitates friendship development between different groups or individuals. Both Canadian and immigrant participants reported the significance of spending time together which helped them to develop friendship with their counterparts. Participants discussed different ways of spending time together which provided informal opportunities to promote interactions between them. Activities mentioned often by both groups of participants included visiting each other, going shopping together, having coffee or tea time, going to a park or on a trip, and watching movies. However, most of the participants reported that their busy lives and limited available time might be a reason why these relationships did not develop to become more intimate. Canadian participants revealed that they had commitments to their own family and other friends which made it difficult to include new friends in their immediate (and long established) friendship networks. Immigrant women's lives were very full; they had limited free time to invest in intercultural friendships. Most participants mentioned that the absence of interaction placed their intercultural relationships at risk of ending.

**Trust.** Trusting each other is crucial to the development of a cross-cultural relationship. For most of the participants, friendships with their counterparts were built on mutual trust. Participants revealed that they had to establish a certain degree of trust before they were willing to share personal information and life experiences. Being open, providing support and spending more time together were found to be the most significant reasons that helped the participants build trust with their intercultural friends. Findings of

this study showed that building trust is an important element in fostering friendships formation between immigrant and Canadian women.

**Impact of telecommunication facilities and maintenance of long distance relationships.** Telecommunications such as Skype and Facebook provide enormous benefits to immigrant women in maintaining their long distance relationships (family and friends), who often serve as the main source of the social networking and social support needed in their early adjustment period. Also, immigrant participants indicated that they relied on the Internet for seeking information about the host culture. Most of the participants, immigrants and Canadians, stated that they used texting and e-mailing as “easy” ways of communication. Although these ways of communication might help friends maintain frequent contact, they may also decrease the chances of face-to-face interactions that give relationships more meaning.

Findings of this study revealed that obtaining information through the Internet and relying on telecommunication as a way of communication, reduced the need for face-to-face interaction between immigrant and Canadian women. This may have a potentially negative impact on the development of intercultural friendships. This study supports Rashid’s study (2011) which demonstrated the impact of relying on telecommunication facilities on the interactions between Canadian and immigrant women and as a result, hindered formation of relationships.

**Intercultural friendship in the neighbourhood.** As immigrant participants in this study came from a small city in Canada, their chances of residing in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of immigrants were limited. Therefore, immigrants revealed that they chose their neighbourhoods based on the availability of different facilities that might

## Friendship Across Cultures

help them in their early adjustment such as access to services, educational facilities such as schools, universities and work. Most of the immigrant participants stated that although they have lived in their neighbourhoods for a long period of time, their relationships in their neighbourhood have remained superficial and limited to just greetings. Some related this to the high mobility of neighbours especially in student residential areas. Owning a home in a neighbourhood may increase an individual's willingness to develop relationships with neighbours, knowing that their residence would be somewhat permanent. In comparison, temporary residence (renting an apartment or home) provides little motivation for friendship initiation given the transitory nature of people who rent accommodations. Findings of this study revealed that most immigrant participants have few or no Canadian women friends in their neighbourhoods and are not satisfied with their neighbourhood relationships when they compare them with neighbourhood relationships in their country of origin, where neighbours know each other and have social activities together.

**Intercultural friendship development process.** Most of the participants in both groups stated that intercultural friendships usually took a longer time to develop compared to intracultural friendships. They related this to the extended period required to familiarize themselves with the intercultural friend's cultural background. Most participants perceived acquaintances, casual friends, and close friends the same way interculturally. That is, they characterized an acquaintance as a friend that one contacts frequently and knows little about. A casual friend is someone with whom one spends time with but shared limited personal information with. In contrast, a close friend is a person with whom one shares feelings and life details.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Participants reported that most of their intercultural relationships remained acquaintances or casual friendships and only very few developed close relationships. Participants identified similar common stages in their intercultural friendship development process from acquaintances, to friends, and then to close friends. The three main stages, revealed by participants, included the initial stage, in which their relationships progressed from strangers to acquaintances through greeting and learning about each other. The next stage, the exploratory stage, accrued when they decided to go further in their relationship. During this stage, they began to explore each other's cultures and shared more personal information about each other. They also started to spend more time together as they became friends. In the last stage, the stable stage, they became closer to each other and more deep personal information was shared with more openness. Also, in this stage, friends became supportive towards each other as more support and practical help were provided. As noted previously, few of the immigrant women enjoyed close friendships with Canadian women.

### **Limitation of the Existing Intercultural Friendship Development Theories**

In this study, social penetration theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973) provides a framework with which to view relationship development between immigrant and Canadian women. This theory states that closeness of relationships depends on the amount of information revealed and the number of topics discussed between individuals. It also suggests that close relationships are based on the personal information partners reveal about themselves through sharing private feelings and thoughts. Findings from this study revealed that limited topics were available for immigrant and Canadian women to discuss and this affected the development of meaningful relationship; almost all of the

## Friendship Across Cultures

intercultural relationships remained superficial or casual. In addition, language barriers and cultural differences affected the level of closeness in their relationships because limited ability to communicate in the dominant language potentially limited the expression of feelings and private thoughts. Also, what people perceive as appropriate information to share, varies socially and culturally. Therefore, some participants shared more personal and private information with their intercultural friends than others. As a result, most of these relationships remained at the acquaintance or superficial state.

This study was also made use of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Gudyknust, 1985) to reveal strategies used by immigrant and Canadian women to collect information about the other's culture in order to reduce their uncertainties before proceeding deeper in their relationships. Building on this theory, factors impacting relationship development between immigrant and Canadian women were identified. These factors included language and communication competency, self – disclosure, cultural differences, perceived similarity and commonalities.

The Lee and SPT models offered explanations on the strategies which individuals follow in their relationship development, and suggested that relationships develop through several stages (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Lee, 2008). These models provided primary models of the stages followed by immigrant and Canadian women through which they pass as they develop friendships with each other. Findings of this study confirm the stages of intercultural friendship development as conceptualized by the Lee and SPT models going from acquaintance to close friends. However, the strategies found in this study in the development of intercultural friendships identified by the participants at each

## Friendship Across Cultures

stage were somehow different from those identified by Lee and SPT in their existing development stages models.

Relationship development theories and models that guided this study were effective in providing a solid framework in exploring intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women. In particular, they assisted in identifying factors influencing the formation of such friendships and the respective strategies followed in establishing these relationships. However, some limitations associated with these theoretical perspectives were identified as a consequence of this study. Relationship development theories suggest that the basic goal of a relationship is to achieve the highest possible level of intimacy. However, it was discovered in this study that individuals may be satisfied with relationships at lower levels of intimacy. Therefore, these theories focused on self-disclosure as a main factor of interpersonal relationship development and ignored the impact of other factors such as socializing activities, the role of gender, and meeting opportunities as identified in this study. In particular, these theories and models are silent with respect to gender. In this study, gender surfaced as a substantial factor that influenced the development of friendships between immigrant and Canadian women.

The primary focus of this research was to explore intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women, whereas, previous studies explored the differences between male and female relationships. These previous studies suggested that males and females communicate differently in interpersonal relationships and tend to perceive women's interpersonal interactions as more intimate than men (Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985). Women usually develop higher levels of closeness and



## Friendship Across Cultures

intimacy because they are more likely to disclose personal information than men (Williams, 1985). Of interest, not all women in this study enjoyed the intimacy of close friendships. With just a few exceptions, the women were engaged in superficial or casual friendships or acquaintances.

Based on the findings of this study, I suggest that the role of gender has been ignored in existing relationship development theories. The majority of the factors that were identified to influence friendship development in existing theories are missing the voice of women and the importance of same-gender friendship development. Therefore, feminist theories might be more applicable to explore friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women.

The findings of this study indicated that factors affecting intercultural friendship development are dynamic, change as the relationship develops, and also, these factors seem to be related to each other, or that one factor can influence the other. For example, this study identified that lack of English competency affected the level of confidence in communication in the second language, which as a result affected the breadth and depth of information exchanged between members in intercultural friendship; hence, the depth of self-disclosure. In contrast, cultural differences could be a reason why people are interested in intercultural friendships, i.e., a chance to learn about other people's cultures. This connection between factors influencing the formation of intercultural friendship has not been addressed in the existing models and theories used to guide this study. Therefore, further systematic studies are needed to examine these factors in more depth. Additional research is needed to explore the dynamics of intercultural friendship development and the interplay of factors influencing these relationships.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have social and practical implications for policy makers by highlighting the possible difficulties faced by immigrant women in building their social networks in host societies. In this study, some of the challenges that hindered immigrant women's social integration included limited English proficiency, lack of access to job training, credentialing and licensing issues, and limited understanding of different social systems. Therefore, policies might be considered to address adaptation problems faced by immigrant women and thus facilitate their social integration into Canadian society. It would be beneficial to establish programs that provide information and social networking services to new immigrants. For example, social and community services could provide linguistically and culturally appropriate social activities for immigrant women. In addition, agencies might collaborate with immigrant communities to determine resources and support systems specifically for immigrant women. Workshops should be created to evaluate immigrants' knowledge and skills in order to involve them in the workforce and give them the chance to interact with Canadian women.

Findings of this study revealed that, overall, immigrant women had limited intercultural friendships with Canadian women. Therefore, community agencies that provide services to immigrant women can create a space for immigrant and Canadian women to meet by developing social programs that build connections, enhance communication, and improve relationships between immigrant and Canadian women. For example, agencies can host social activities to engage Canadian and immigrant women in order to create opportunities for both groups to meet. These findings can also help

## Friendship Across Cultures

policymakers to consider some multicultural programs that increase awareness among Canadian residents and appreciation of Canada's diversity to welcome immigrants from different cultures. For example, establish a multicultural awareness day to introduce Canadians to immigrants from around the world.

This study also has implications for health care providers (professionals, counsellors, and social service workers) by offering an inclusive understanding of how social isolation and lack of social networks (especially friendship) can negatively impact immigrant women's well-being. This finding might help them to offer efficient counselling and emotional support for immigrant women. Screening immigrant women for social isolation and loneliness is warranted during the early (transitional) years of their immigration journeys.

This study may also have implications for different institutions such as schools, universities, and colleges where students come in contact with local students, as well as students from different cultural backgrounds. Fostering opportunities for intercultural friendships in these institutions would be of benefit for immigrants, international students and host students. For example, at the University of Lethbridge, Aboriginal and international students are invited to attend social events that bring them together. Colleges and Universities can host programs that bring together Canadians and international students for exchange of ideas on cultural differences which might enable new international students to learn about the host society and provide Canadians with opportunities to engage with the new international students. Although universities organize social activities to introduce international students to the campus and the host society, these activities usually involve only international students and not the Canadian

## Friendship Across Cultures

students. Findings from this study suggests that universities should organize informal social activities that increase the number of places and settings where students naturally gather, such as barbeque parties or field trips, in order to increase their chances of meeting. Also, offering sport activities that include both groups in games such as basketball or soccer may create opportunities for them to interact and develop relationships.

Public schools can play a significant role in fostering contact between immigrant and Canadian parents by creating programs that involve students from these respective families. This might facilitate the formation of friendship between students' parents as well as the students themselves.

Results of this study suggest that neighbourhood activities can enable social contact between immigrant and host society members and enhance immigrants' social integration in their neighbourhoods. These neighbourhood organizations can arrange to host barbeques and garage sales that might provide opportunities for contact and potential friendship formation among neighbours, especially between immigrant and Canadian women.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

While the findings of this study do make a valuable contribution to the existing literature and a significant contribution to our understanding of the nature of intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women, its scope of transferability is limited for several reasons. This study explored experiences of immigrant women who have immigrated to Canada under immigration categories other than that of refugee; however, immigrant women who have immigrated as refugees might

## Friendship Across Cultures

have experiences not revealed in the findings, as they might face different challenges in their early adjustment, which may impact the development of intercultural friendships.

This study focused on immigrant and Canadian women in intercultural friendship development; it would be worthwhile to include refugees and males in future studies for the purpose of comparison and transferability.

The use of English in conducting this study excluded immigrant women who were not comfortable being interviewed in English. Their experiences of having difficulties in communicating in English, however, could have been pertinent to the topic of this study, as English was one of the factors identified as affecting the formation of intercultural friendships. Future studies might consider interviewing immigrants in their own native languages.

The data from this study comes from a single city with a small population of immigrants, with a relatively small sample size. Further research might include larger cities to examine the impact of the size of the ethnic group relative to the city of residence on intercultural and intracultural friendship ties.

This study focused primarily on exploring intercultural friendship development between immigrant and Canadian women who have at least one intercultural friend. Future research in this area might consider conducting research with immigrant women and/or Canadian women who do not have intercultural friends.

Despite the rich perceptions of intercultural friendship provided by the qualitative method used in this study (person-centred interviews), it does have some limitations. Future research studying the process of intercultural relationship development might consider other methods that include observational data, quantitative data and preferably

## Friendship Across Cultures

longitudinal and grounded theory. Therefore, future studies might choose effective strategies to recruit participants who are willing to devote more time for a longitudinal research design, which requires more time and energy, and therefore may face some practical challenges.

In this study many factors were identified as affecting the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. The findings from this study showed that these factors are dynamic and related to each other; however, it was not possible to precisely examine how these factors are related or affect each other. Therefore, quantitative or mixed method studies might be needed to investigate the relationships between these factors and how each factor can impact the other.

### **Conclusion**

Making friends across cultures involves obstacles that are usually absent in intracultural friendships. Most of the immigrant participants revealed that as a result of the challenges that they faced in developing their relationships with Canadian women, they have few Canadian women friends compared to the number of friends who are from the same ethnic group.

Participants in this study identified several factors that affected the formation of their intercultural friendships but did not apply to their intracultural friendships. English competency was categorized as the most significant factor that impacted the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women, especially during the initial stages of friendship development. Speaking English in a different accent and using idioms and slang often caused misunderstandings and were consequently found to affect successful communication between intercultural friends. Participants revealed that communicating

## Friendship Across Cultures

in a different language can present barriers to intimate communication which characterize close friendship. Self-disclosure, which necessitates sophisticated language skills especially in oral communication, was also identified as a factor that influenced the development of intercultural friendships.

Canadian participants reported that being interested in learning about other cultures increased their willingness to develop relationships with immigrant women. Intercultural friendships allowed for the exchange of new sets of ideas and perspectives which, as shared by most of the Canadian participants, helped widen their scope of views about each other's cultures. For immigrant women, developing friendships with their host society counterparts meant they could learn about host societies and learn English language skills, which can potentially result in better social integration and positive satisfaction with life in the host country. For the host members it is an interesting opportunity to be exposed to other cultures and enhance their knowledge about other countries. However, forming intercultural friendships is complex and consists of many challenges.

Cultural differences were found to have a significant impact on the formation of the participants' intercultural friendships especially during the initiation stage. Immigrant participants revealed that having different cultural backgrounds with different values, beliefs and lifestyles made the connection with their intercultural friends challenging and in some cases caused misunderstandings. Therefore, most of the participants showed preference in forming friendships with women from the same background who shared similar languages, values and beliefs. The degree of acceptance of cultural differences between immigrant and Canadian women by being open-minded and respectful of other

## Friendship Across Cultures

individuals' values and beliefs increased their comfort levels in interacting with intercultural friends. Because frequent interaction and shared activities are needed to maintain relationships between people, participants revealed that being uncomfortable to engage in their intercultural friends' social activities, affected the development of their relationship. Perceived similarities were found to be unique in forming friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. Participants in this study identified different aspects of similarities to be influential in starting intercultural friendships such as having the same interests and hobbies.

Findings of this study illustrated the significant role of gender in facilitating the formation of friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. Sharing commonalities, as women, wives, and mothers, facilitated the formation of intercultural friendships. Similarly, women bonded with respect to child rearing.

Given the complexity of intercultural friendship development, this particular mode of relationship presents itself as potential area worthy of further exploration by researchers. The development of intercultural friendship had received limited attention from communication researchers.



## References

- Abrams, D., Rutland, A., & Cameron, L. (2003). The Development of Subjective Group Dynamics: Children's Judgments of Normative and Deviant In-Group and Out-Group Individuals. *Child Development, 74*(6), 1840–1856. doi:10.1046/j.1467-8624.2003.00641.x
- Akram, S. (2012). *A Qualitative Study of the Process of Acculturation and Coping for South Asian Muslim Immigrants Living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)*. University of Toronto.
- Altman, I., & Taylor, D. A. (1973). *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*. *Journal of Social Psychology* (Vol. 75, p. 212).x
- Antshel, K. M. (2002). Integrating culture as a means of improving treatment adherence in the Latino population. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*. doi:10.1080/1354850021000015258
- Aroian, K. J. (1990). A model of psychological adaptation to migration and resettlement. *Nursing Research, 39*(1), 5-10.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, C. (2009). *Introduction to Research in Education. Getting Started in PER* (p. 669).
- Bakardjieva, M., & Smith, R. (2001). The Internet in Everyday Life: Computer Networking from the Standpoint of the Domestic User. *New Media & Society*. doi:10.1177/1461444801003001005
- Baker, C., Arseneault, A. M., & Gallant, G. (1994). Resettlement without the support of an ethnocultural community. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 20*, 1064–1072.
- Barker, M., Child, C., Gallois, C., Jones, E., & Callan, V. J. (1991). Difficulties of overseas students in social and academic situations. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 43*(2), 79-84. doi: 10.1080/00049539108259104
- Barnes, D. M., & Aguilar, R. (2007). Community social support for Cuban refugees in Texas. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*, 225–237. doi:10.1177/1049732306297756
- Beiser, M. (1999). *Strangers at the Gate: The 'Boat People's' First Ten Years in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bennett, M. J. (1991). *American cultural patterns: A cross-cultural perspective*. Intercultural Press.
- Berger, C., & Bradac, J. (1982). Language and social knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relations. Retrieved from <http://www.getcited.org/pub/102262608>

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Berger, C. R. (1979). Beyond initial interaction: Uncertainty, understanding, and the development of interpersonal relationships. In *Language and social psychology* (pp. 122–144).
- Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*(2), 99-112. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.1975.tb00258.x
- Berndt, T. J. (1982). The Features and Effects of Friendship in Early Adolescence. *Child Development, 53*, 1447. doi:10.2307/1130071
- Berry, J. W. (1984). Multicultural policy in Canada: A social psychological analysis. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement, 16*(4), 353.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied psychology, 46*(1), 5-34. doi/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x/full
- Berry, J. W. (1999). Intercultural relations in plural societies. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 40*(1), 12.
- Berry, J. W. (2001). A psychology of immigration. *Journal of Social issues, 57*(3), 615-631. doi/10.1111/0022-4537.00231/full
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation.
- Berry, J. W. (2006). Mutual attitudes among immigrants and ethnocultural groups in Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30*(6), 719-734.
- Blau, P. M. (1977). *Inequality and heterogeneity: A primitive theory of social structure* (Vol. 7): Free Press New York.
- Block, J. D., & Greenberg, D. (2002). Women and friendship. Wellness Institute, Inc..
- Bochner, S., McLeod, B. M., & Lin, A. (1977). Friendship patterns of overseas students: A functional model. *International Journal of Psychology, 12*(4), 277-294. doi/10.1080/00207597708247396
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Brewer, M. B., & Miller, N. (Eds.). (1984). Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation. Academic Press.
- Briggs, X. D. (2007). “Some of My Best Friends Are...” : Interracial friendships, class, and segregation in America. *City & Community, 6*, 263–290. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6040.2007.00228.x

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Brown, R., & Hewstone, M. (2005). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 37, 255–343. doi:10.1016/S0065-2601(05)37005-5
- Burns, R. B. (1991). Study and Stress among First Year Overseas Students in an Australian University. *Higher Education Research & Development*. doi:10.1080/0729436910100106
- Caetano, R., Ramisetty-Mikler, S., Wallisch, L. S., McGrath, C., & Spence, R. T. (2008). Acculturation, drinking, and alcohol abuse and dependence among Hispanics in the Texas-Mexico border. *Alcoholism, Clinical and Experimental Research*, 32, 314–321. doi:10.1111/j.1530-0277.2007.00576.x
- Caldwell, M. A., & Peplau, L. A. (1982). Sex differences in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles*, 8(7), 721-732.
- Cameron, J. E., Sato, T., Lay, C., & Lalonde, R. N. (1997, June). A multidimensional measure of ethnic identification. In annual convention of the Canadian Psychological Association. Toronto, Canada.
- Campbell, T. (1997). Technology, Multimedia and Qualitative Research in Education. *Journal of Research on Computing in Education*, 30, 122–132.
- Canadian Heritage, 2002. Canadian Heritage. Annual Report. Official Languages 2000-2001. Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services.
- Cavana, R. Y., Delahaye, B. L., & Sekaran, U. (2001). *Applied business research: qualitative and quantitative methods*. *Recherche En Soins Infirmiers* (p. 472).
- Chen, L., Gudykunst, W., & Mody, B. (2002). Communication in intercultural relationships. *Handbook of international and intercultural communication*, 2, 241-257.
- Choudhry, U. K. (2001). Uprooting and resettlement experiences of South Asian immigrant women. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 23, 376–393. doi:10.1177/019394590102300405
- Chui, T., & Maheux, H. (2011). Visible minority women. *Ferro, V. and Williams, C., Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report Catalogue*(89-503).
- Chao, J. (1997). Indian American seeking a voice. *San Francisco Examiner*, pp. B1, B4.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2008b). Facts and figures-immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents, 2008 Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/index.asp>

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Coenders, M., Lubbers, M., & Scheepers, P. (2002). Majorities' attitudes towards minorities in Western and Eastern European Societies. *Results from the European Social Survey, 2003*.
- Cohen, S., Sherrod, D. R., & Clark, M. S. (1986). Social skills and the stress-protective role of social support. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 963–973.
- CRIAW (Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women). (2003). Immigrant and refugee women. Ottawa: CRIAW. <http://www.criawicref.ca/sites/criaw/files/Immigrant%20%26%20Refugee%20Women%20Factsheet.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Qualitative Health Research* (Vol. 9, p. 403). doi:10.1111/1467-9299.00177
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Journal of investigative surgery: the official journal of the Academy of Surgical Research* (Vol. 25, pp. 279–80). doi:10.3109/08941939.2012.723954
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1–28).
- Dindia, K., & Allen, M. (1992). Sex differences in self-disclosure: a meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 106–124. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.112.1.106
- Douglas, W. (1991). Expectations about initial interaction an examination of the effects of global uncertainty. *Human Communication Research, 17*, 355–384. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1991.tb00237.x
- Duck, S., Hay, D., & Hobfoll, S. (1988). *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research and interventions*. Retrieved from <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/1988-97881-000>
- Dunne, C. (2009). Host students' perspectives of intercultural contact in an Irish university. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 222-239.
- Edwards, B., Foley, M. W., & Putnam, R. D. (2001). Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. *Contemporary Sociology*. doi:10.2307/3089235
- Fahrlander, R. S. (1980). Social participation and adjustment of foreign students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Fehr, B. (1996). *Friendship processes*: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Fehr, B. (2000). The life cycle of friendship. In S. S. Hendrick & C. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close Relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 71–84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Fehr, B. (2004). Intimacy expectations in same-sex friendships: a prototype interaction-pattern model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, 265–284. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.86.2.265
- Feld, S., & Carter, W. C. (1998). Foci of activity as changing contexts for friendship. *Placing friendship in context*, 136-152.
- Finch, B. K., & Vega, W. A. (2003). Acculturation stress, social support, and self-rated health among Latinos in California. *Journal of Immigrant Health*, 5, 109–117. doi:10.1023/A:1023987717921
- Flaskerud, J. H., & Uman, G. (1996). Acculturation and its effects on self-esteem among immigrant Latina women. *Behavioral Medicine (Washington, D.C.)*, 22, 123–133. doi:10.1080/08964289.1996.9933773
- Fong, E. and W. W. I. (2000). Determinants of Friendship Choices in Multiethnic Society. *Sociological Forum*, 15, 249–271.
- Fozdar, F., & Torezani, S. (2008). Discrimination and Well-Being: Perceptions of Refugees in Western Australia. *International Migration Review*, 42, 30–63. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2007.00113.x
- Frey, L., Botan, C., & Krebs, G. (2000). *Investigating communication*. Retrieved from <http://uurimismetodid.pbworks.com/f/00+Investigating+Communication.+Contents+and+Preface.PDF>
- Garcia, L., & Quek, F. (1997). Qualitative research in information systems: time to be subjective? *Information systems and qualitative research* (pp. 444-465): Springer.
- Gareis, E. (1995). *Intercultural friendship: A qualitative study*: University Press of America Lanham, MD.
- Gareis, E. (2000). Intercultural Friendship: Five case studies of German students in the USA. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. doi:10.1080/07256860050000803
- Gareis, E., Merkin, R., & Goldman, J. (2011). Intercultural Friendship: Linking Communication Variables and Friendship Success. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 40(2), 153–171. doi:10.1080/17475759.2011.581034
- Geertz, C. (1973). Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (pp. 3–30).
- Gijsberts, M. en Dagevos J.,(2005) Uit elkaars buurt. De invloed van etnische concentratie op integratie en beeldvorming.
- Glazer, N., Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (1991). Immigrant America: A Portrait. *Contemporary Sociology*. doi:10.2307/2071829

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Gliner, J. A., & Morgan, G. A. (2000). *Research methods in applied settings: An integrated approach to design and analysis*: Psychology Press.
- Government of Alberta. (2011). Alberta immigration progress report 2011. Retrieved from <http://employment.alberta.ca/documents/WIA/WIA-IM-immigration-progress-report.pdf>
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1981). *Effective evaluation: Improving the usefulness of evaluation results through responsive and naturalistic approaches*: Jossey-Bass.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (1983). Similarities and differences in perceptions of initial intracultural and intercultural encounters: An exploratory investigation. *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 49(1), 49-65.  
doi/abs/10.1080/10417948309372588
- Gudykunst, W. B. (1985). An exploratory comparison of close intracultural and intercultural friendships. *Communication Quarterly*, 33(4), 270-283.  
doi/abs/10.1080/01463378509369607
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging differences: Effective intergroup communication*: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Ge, G. (1988). Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: An integrative theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*.  
doi:10.1016/0147-1767(88)90020-X
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Hammer, M. R. (1987). Strangers and hosts: An uncertainty reduction based theory of intercultural adaptation. In Y. Y. Kim, & W. B. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Cross Cultural Adaptation. Current Approaches* (pp. 106–139). Newbury Park: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. Y. (1984). *Communicating with strangers: An approach to intercultural communication*: Random House New York.
- Gudykunst, W. & Kim, Y. (1997) *Communicating with Strangers: an approach to intercultural communication*, 3rd edn (Boston, MA, McGraw–Hill).
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Nishida, T. (1994). *Bridging Japanese/North American differences* (Vol. 1): Sage.
- Gudykunst, W., Gao, G., Sudweeks, S., Ting-Toomey, S., & Nishida, T. (1991). Themes in opposite sex, Japanese-North American relationships. *Cross-Cultural Interpersonal Communication*. Newbury Park/London/New Delhi: Sage Publications.

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Hagan, J. M. (1998). Social Networks, Gender, and Immigrant Incorporation: Resources and Constraints. *American Sociological Review*. doi:10.2307/2657477
- Hagerty, B. M., Williams, R. A., Coyne, J. C., & Early, M. R. (1996). Sense of belonging and indicators of social and psychological functioning. *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing*, 10, 235–244. doi:10.1016/S0883-9417(96)80029-X
- Huntington, S. P. (2004). The hispanic challenge. *Foreign policy*, 141(2), 30-45.
- Hanassab, S., & Tidwell, R. (1998). Intramarriage and intermarriage: young Iranians in Los Angeles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22(4), 395-408.
- Hays, R.B. (1988). Friendship. In S.W. Duck (Ed.), *Handbook of Personal Relationships* (pp. 391-408). New York: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Hollan, D. (2005). Setting a New Standard: The Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation of Robert I. Levy. *Ethos*, 33, 459–466. doi:10.1525/eth.2005.33.4.459
- Hordnes, C. K. (2013). 'Norwegian English': English native speakers' attitudes to Norwegian-accented English.
- Hynie, M., Crooks, V. A., & Barragan, J. (2011). Immigrant and refugee social networks: determinants and consequences of social support among women newcomers to Canada. *CJNR (Canadian Journal of Nursing Research)*, 43(4), 26-46.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I. (2006). Perceived Discrimination, Social Support Networks, and Psychological Well-being Among Three Immigrant Groups. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. doi:10.1177/0022022106286925
- Jibeen, T., & Khalid, R. (2010). Predictors of Psychological well-being of Pakistani Immigrants in Toronto, Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 452–464. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.04.010
- Kalek, S., Mak, A., & Khawaja, N. (2010). Intergroup relations and Muslims' mental health in Western societies: Australia as a case study. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15564908.2010.487722>
- Kalmijn, M., & Tubergen, F. (2006). Ethnic intermarriage in the Netherlands: confirmations and refutations of accepted insights. *European Journal of Population / Revue Européenne de Démographie*, 22, 371–397. doi:10.1007/s10680-006-9105-3
- Kanas, A., van Tubergen, F., & Van der Lippe, T. (2011). The role of social contacts in the employment status of immigrants: A panel study of immigrants in Germany. *International Sociology*. doi:10.1177/0268580910380977
- van Kemenade, S., Roy, J. F., & Bouchard, L. (2006). Social networks and vulnerable populations: findings from the GSS. *Health Policy Research Bulletin*, 12, 16-20.

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Khan, S., & Watson, J. (2005). The Canadian immigration experiences of Pakistani women: Dreams confront reality. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09515070500386026>
- Kim, Y. Y. (1991). Intercultural communication competence: A systems-theoretic view. *Cross-cultural interpersonal communication*, 259-275.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2002). Adapting to an unfamiliar culture. *Handbook of international and intercultural communication*, 259-273.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*: Sage.
- Kivisto, P. (2001). Theorizing transnational immigration: a critical review of current efforts. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. doi:10.1080/01419870120049789
- Knickmeyer, N., Sexton, K., & Nishimura, N. (2002). The Impact of Same-Sex Friendships on the Well-Being of Women: A Review of the Literature. *Women & therapy*, 25(1), 37-59. doi/abs/10.1300/J015v25n01\_03
- Koerber, A. (2001). Postmodernism, Resistance, and Cyberspace: Making Rhetorical Spaces for Feminist Mothers on the Web. *Women's Studies in Communication*. doi:10.1080/07491409.2001.10162435
- Kudo, K., & Simkin, K. a. (2003). Intercultural Friendship Formation: the case of Japanese students at an Australian university. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 24(2), 91-114. doi:10.1080/0725686032000165351
- La Greca, A. M., & Lopez, N. (1998). Social anxiety among adolescents: linkages with peer relations and friendships. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 26, 83-94. doi:10.1023/A:1022684520514
- LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 114, 395-412. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.114.3.395
- Lalonde, R. N., & Cameron, J. E. (1993). An Intergroup Perspective on Immigrant Acculturation with a Focus on Collective Strategies. *International Journal of Psychology*. doi:10.1080/00207599308246918
- Lee, P.-W. (2008). Stages and transitions of relational identity formation in intercultural friendship: Implications for identity management theory. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 1(1), 51-69. doi/abs/10.1080/17513050701690918
- Li, Z. F. (2010). Bridging the gap: Intercultural friendship between Chinese and Americans. *Masters Theses*, 131.



## Friendship Across Cultures

- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging Criteria for Quality in Qualitative and Interpretive Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. doi:10.1177/107780049500100301
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Enquiry*. Sage, London.
- Little, J., & Austin, P. (1996). Women and the rural idyll. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 12(2), 101-111.
- Liu, M., & Chen, X. (2003). Friendship networks and social, school and psychological adjustment in Chinese junior high school students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 40(1), 5-17. doi/10.1002/pits.10066
- Man, G. (2004). Gender, work and migration: Deskillling chinese immigrant women in Canada. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 27, 135-148. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2004.06.004
- Mansfield, P. K., Theisen, S. C., & Boyer, B. (1992). Midlife women and menopause: A challenge for the mental health counselor. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*.
- Martínez García, M. F., García Ramírez, M., & Maya Jariego, I. (2002). Social support and locus of control as predictors of psychological well-being in Moroccan and Peruvian immigrant women in Spain. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26, 287-310. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(02)00005-6
- Martinovic, B., van Tubergen, F., & Maas, I. (2011). Acquisition of Cross-Ethnic Friends by Recent Immigrants in Canada: A Longitudinal Approach. *International Migration Review*, 45, 460-488. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7379.2011.00854.x
- Martins, V., & Reid, D. (2007). New-immigrant women in urban Canada: insights into occupation and sociocultural context. *Occupational Therapy International*, 14, 203-220. doi:10.1002/oti
- Matsushima, R., & Shiomi, K. (2002). Self-disclosure and friendship in junior high school students. *Social, Behavior and Personality*, 30, 515-526.
- McCracken, G. (1988). The long interview. In *The long interview* (Vol. 13, pp. 28-53). doi:10.2307/2072531
- McGill, M. (1985). McGill report on male intimacy. Retrieved from <http://agris.fao.org/agris-search/search.do?f=2013/US/US2013039340003934.xml;US201300393467>
- McMichael, C., & Manderson, L. (2004). Somali Women and Well-Being: Social Networks and Social Capital among Immigrant Women in Australia. *Human Organization*, 63, 88-99.
- McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. M. (2001). Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.27.1.415

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Meadows, L. M., Thurston, W. E., & Melton, C. (2001). Immigrant women's health. *Social science & medicine*, 52(9), 1451-1458.
- Mendoza-Denton, R., Downey, G., Purdie, V. J., Davis, A., & Pietrzak, J. (2002). Sensitivity to status-based rejection: implications for African American students' college experience. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 83(4), 896.
- Miles, M. ., & Huberman, A. . (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.)*. *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook (2nd ed.)*.
- Miller, T. (2000). An exploration of first time motherhood: narratives of transition. Retrieved from <http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/36391>
- Mingers, J. (2001). Combining IS research methods: towards a pluralist methodology. *Information systems research*, 12(3), 240-259. doi/abs/10.1287/isre.12.3.240.9709
- Miyares, I. M. (1997). Changing Perceptions of Space and Place as Measures of Hmong Acculturation. *The Professional Geographer*. doi:10.1111/0033-0124.00071
- Mollenhorst, G., Völker, B., & Flap, H. (2008). Social contexts and personal relationships: The effect of meeting opportunities on similarity for relationships of different strength. *Social Networks*, 30, 60–68. doi:10.1016/j.socnet.2007.07.003
- Moran, R. T., Harris, P. R., & Moran, S. (2007). *Managing cultural differences*. Routledge.
- Müller, G. (2006). *On the Role of Personality Traits and Social Skills in Adult Economic Attainment*. Retrieved from <http://repub.eur.nl/pub/7664/>
- Mulvihill, M., Mailloux, L., & Atkin, W. (2001). Advancing policy and research responses to immigrant and refugee women's health in Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.cwhn.ca/fr/node/22048>
- Nesdale, D., Rooney, R., & Smith, L. (1997). Migrant Ethnic Identity and Psychological Distress. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. doi:10.1177/0022022197285004
- Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Allyn & Bacon. *Needham Heights, USA*.
- Nicotera, A. M. (1993). *Interpersonal communication in friend and mate relationships*: SUNY Press.
- Orlikowski, W. J., & Baroudi, J. J. (1991). Studying Information Technology in Organizations: Research Approaches and Assumptions. *Information Systems Research*. doi:10.1287/isre.2.1.1
- Parks, M. R., & Floyd, K. (1996). Making friends in cyperspace. *Journal of Communication*, 46, 80–97. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1996.tb01462.x

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5), 751–783.
- Pinkster, F. M., & Völker, B. (2009). Local social networks and social resources in two Dutch neighbourhoods. *Housing Studies*, 24(2), 225-242.
- Polakoff, E., & Gregory, D. (2002). Concepts of health: women's struggle for wholeness in the midst of poverty. *Health Care for Women International*, 23, 835–845.  
doi:10.1080/07399330290107520
- Polit, D., & Hungler, B. (1994). *Essentials of Nursing Research: Methods, Appraisal, and Utilization*.
- Racine, E., Bell, E., & Deslauriers, C. (2010). Canadian research ethics boards and multisite research: experiences from two minimal-risk studies. *IRB: Ethics & Human Research*, 12-18.
- Rashid, R. (2011). *"Loneliness is killing me": life stories and resilience of Canadian immigrant women*. Lethbridge, Alta.: University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Health Sciences, 2011.
- Redmond, M. V., & Bunyi, J. M. (1993). The relationship of intercultural communication competence with stress and the handling of stress as reported by international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. doi:10.1016/0147-1767(93)90027-6
- Reis, H. T., Senchak, M., & Solomon, B. (1985). Sex differences in the intimacy of social interaction: Further examination of potential explanations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.48.5.1204
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (1995). Foundations of Qualitative Interviewing. In *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (pp. 17–41).
- Rumbaut, R. G. (2008). Reaping What You Sow: Immigration, Youth, and Reactive Ethnicity. *Applied Developmental Science*. doi:10.1080/10888690801997341
- Samter, W. (2003). Friendship interaction skills across the life-span. ... *Communication and Social Interaction Skills*. Retrieved from [http://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/comm\\_books/6/](http://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/comm_books/6/)
- Saukko, P. (2005). Methodologies for cultural studies: An integrative approach. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3, 343-356.
- Schellenberg, G., & Maheux, H. (2007). Immigrants' Perspectives on Their First Four Years in Canada. Statistics Canada.
- Schmitz, C. L., Jacobus, C. S., Stakeman, C., Valenzuela, G. A., & Sprankel, J. (2003). Immigrant and refugee communities: Resiliency, trauma, policy, and practice.

- Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought, 22(2/3), 135-158. doi: 10.1080/15426432.2003.9960346
- Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 118–137).
- Schwarzer, R., & Hahn, A. (1995). Reemployment after migration from East to West Germany: A longitudinal study on psychosocial factors. *Applied psychology, 44*(1), 77-93. doi/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1995.tb01388.x
- Shelton, J. N., Richeson, J. A., & Salvatore, J. (2005). Expecting to be the target of prejudice: Implications for interethnic interactions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*(9), 1189-1202.
- Sigelman, L., Bledsoe, T., Welch, S., & Combs, M. W. (1996). Making Contact? Black-White Social Interaction in an Urban Setting. *American Journal of Sociology*. doi:10.1086/230824
- Statistics Canada. 2004. Highlights of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, Wave 1, 2000–2001. Ottawa, ON.
- Stevens, G. (1999). Age at immigration and second language proficiency among foreign-born adults. *Language in Society*. doi:10.1017/S0047404599004030
- Stewart, E.C. & Bennett, M.J. (1991) *American Cultural Patterns: a cross-cultural perspective* (Yarmouth, ME, Intercultural Press).
- Talbot, L. (1995). *Principles and practice of nursing research*. Mosby Inc.
- Thomson, M., & Hoffman-Goetz, L. (2012). Application of the health literacy framework to diet-related cancer prevention conversations of older immigrant women to Canada. *Health promotion international, 27*(1), 33-44.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (2012). *Communicating across cultures*: Guilford Press.
- Todd, L., & Hoffman-Goetz, L. (2011). Predicting health literacy among English-as-a-second-Language older Chinese immigrant women to Canada: comprehension of colon cancer prevention information. *Journal of Cancer Education : The Official Journal of the American Association for Cancer Education, 26*, 326–332. doi:10.1007/s13187-010-0162-2
- Torres, L., & Rollock, D. (2004). Acculturative distress among hispanics: The role of acculturation, coping, and intercultural competence. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*, 155–167. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2004.tb00368.x

## Friendship Across Cultures

- Tropp, L. R. (2007). Perceived Discrimination and Interracial Contact: Predicting Interracial Closeness among Black and White Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. doi:10.1177/019027250707000108
- Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19(1-2), 75-87.
- United Nations. (2013). Population division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, trends in the total migrant stock: The 2013 revision. Retrieved November 11, 2013, from <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm>
- Van Oudenhoven, J. P., Prins, K. S., & Buunk, B. P. (1998). Attitudes of minority and majority members towards adaptation of immigrants. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 28, 995–1013. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199811)28:6<995::AID-EJSP908>3.0.CO;2-8
- Van Tubergen, F., & Kalmijn, M. (2009). Language proficiency and usage among immigrants in the Netherlands: incentives or opportunities? *European Sociological Review*, 25, 169–182. doi:10.1093/esr/jcn043
- Volet, S. E., & Ang, G. (1998). Culturally mixed groups on international campuses: An opportunity for inter-cultural learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 17(1), 5-23.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1999). The measurement of sociocultural adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23, 659–677. doi:10.1016/S0147-1767(99)00014-0
- Wellman, B., Haase, A. Q., Witte, J., & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the Internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 436–455. doi:10.1177/00027640121957286
- Wellman, B., & Wortley, S. (1990). Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support. *American Journal of Sociology*. doi:10.1086/229572
- Williams, D. G. (1985). Gender, masculinity-femininity, and emotional intimacy in same-sex friendship. *Sex Roles*. doi:10.1007/BF00288179
- Wiseman, J. P., Adams, R. G., & Allan, G. (2000). Placing Friendship in Context. *Contemporary Sociology*. doi:10.2307/2653948
- Yeh, C. J., Kim, A. B., Pituc, S. T., & Atkins, M. (2008). Poverty, loss, and resilience: The story of Chinese immigrant youth. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.55.1.34
- Zhao, J., Xue, L., & Gilkinson, T. (2010). Health status and social capital of recent immigrants to Canada. *Health Policy Research Bulletin*, 17, 41-44.

## Friendship Across Cultures

Zehtab-Martin, A., & BEESLEY, K. B. (2005). Immigrant service gaps in a small city: Brandon, Manitoba. *cities*, 51, 75.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Letter to Immigrant Services**

Program Director  
Immigrant Services

Re: Request to put up poster to invite participants for research.

Dear Program Director,

I am currently enrolled in Masters of Science (Health Sciences) program at university I am interested in conducting a research study on immigrant women's experiences in transitioning to Canadian culture. In particular, I am interested to know the challenges and barriers immigrant women experience during the process of building friendships with Canadian women and how they overcome these challenges.

This research will require 8-10 Canadian immigrant women for in-depth interviews. The potential participants will be eighteen years of age or older, will have lived in Canada for more than one year. I am seeking women who have immigrant status other than refugee, and who are willing to participate in the study. Immigrant women comfortable being interviewed in English will be considered for this study. Potential participants will be interviewed for about 60 -90 minutes, they will also be asked to complete a 15 minute demographic questionnaire. Each participant will be rewarded with a \$20 gift card at the beginning of the interview for their valuable time. I will also request for your kind permission to put up a poster at the office of LFS-Immigrant Services providing information about the study and an invitation for prospective participants.

In compliance with ethical standards, I will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of each participant. The proposed research has been reviewed by the Human Subject Research Committee, University of Lethbridge and ethics approval has been granted. A copy of the ethics certificate have attached to this letter.

I am aware that your organization works closely with immigrant people and provides settlement support to newcomers to Canada. It would be most appreciative if permission is granted to put up recruitment posters at the LFS to invite potential participants who meet the aforementioned criteria and would be willing to take part in this research study.

Thank you in advance for your kind support.

Sincerely,

Samar Izwayyed

MSc Student


Faculty of Health Sciences

University of Lethbridge

Appendix B

Invitation Poster

## Intercultural Friendship Study



**IMMIGRANT AND CANADIAN WOMEN WANTED FOR RESEARCH ON FRIENDSHIP**

I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the relationships between immigrant and Canadian women. During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions about your friendships and social relationships in Canada. This interview is expected to take about 60-90 minutes. Also, you will be asked to complete a 15 minute demographic questionnaire.

*I am looking for immigrant women:*

- Who have an immigrant status other than refugee
- Aged 18 years or older
- Willing to share intercultural friendship experiences
- Who have lived in Canada for at least one year
- Comfortable to be interviewed in English
- Who have at least one close Canadian woman friend

*I am looking for Canadian women:*

- Aged 18 years or older
- Willing to share intercultural friendship experiences
- Who have at least one close immigrant woman friend

If you would like to be part of this study, please contact:

**Samar Irwayyed**  
at (xxx)-xxx-xxxx  
Or email at xxxxxx@xxxx.ca

A \$20 Gift Card will be rewarded for your participation.



## Appendix C

### Information Sheet for Participants

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Samar Izwayyed. As part of the requirement for completion of a master's degree program in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Lethbridge, I am conducting a research entitled "Friendship Across Cultures: Exploring The Concept Of Friendship Between Immigrant And Canadian Women In Southern Alberta." I would like to invite you to take a part in this study.

I am interested in gaining a better understanding of the relationships between immigrant and Canadian women and how immigrant women's friendships with Canadian women can facilitate their adjustment in Canada. You will be asked to complete a 15 minute demographic questionnaire in addition to the in depth interview which is expected to take about 60-90 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to answer some questions about your friendships and social relationships in Canada. The interview will take place wherever you are comfortable and at any place that can assure your privacy. There is very little risk or discomfort related to this research. Your name and other personal information will be kept confidential and will not be identified in the final report.

You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any explanations and without any negative consequences. Withdrawal from the study will not affect any of the services you receive from LFS and also LFS will not know the names of people participating in the study. Your confidentiality is guaranteed throughout the study. You will receive \$20 gift card at the beginning of the interview for your valuable time. If you decided to withdraw from the study at any time, you can still keep your \$20 gift card.

If you are willing to participate please contact me at the number below or e-mail address. If you have any question about the study I will be happy to answer them.

Thanks for your consideration.

Samar Izwayyed  
MSc Candidate  
Faculty of Health Sciences  
University of Lethbridge  
Telephone: xxxxxxxxxx  
E-mail: xxxxxx@uleth.ca

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent for Immigrant Women

Dear participant,

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Health sciences at the University of Lethbridge. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. My study is about friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. Before signing the consent, I would like you to read and understand the following information about the study.

#### **Purpose**

I am interested in immigrant women's experiences of forming friendship with Canadian women. The study is part of my master's degree requirements at the University of Lethbridge.

#### **Procedure**

During the interview, you will be asked about your friendships with Canadian women. This one-on-one interview will take about 1- 1.5 hours I will also ask you to complete a 15 minute demographic questionnaire. I will interview you in a place you prefer (e.g. in your home). The interview will be recorded and transcribed by me with your permission. Note that a written note will be taken if you disapprove the use of audio recorder during the interview. Also, you will be asked to fill out a demographic questionnaire.

#### **Risk**

There are no risks related to this study. However, if you feel any distress I will stop the interview and the recording device will be turned off. If you continue to feel discomfort I will encourage you to contact Southwestern Alberta Distress Centre, at (403) 327-7905 or 1-888-787-2880. The counselor will offer you support.

#### **Benefits**

By taking part in this interview, you will benefit the researcher in understanding how immigrant women's friendships can help their adjustment in Canada. Research may assist future immigrant women and those who work with them.

#### **Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please indicate, at any time, if you feel that you cannot answer, or feel uncomfortable answering, any questions, so I can move on to the next question. You can withdraw from the interview at any time. LFS will not know the names of people participating in this study; nothing will be done against you if you decide to withdraw from the study. You will still receive services from the LFS. You will receive a \$20 gift card after signing the consent form. If you decided to withdraw from the study you can still keep your \$20 gift card. If you decide to withdraw, I will destroy all information you have shared with me.

**Confidentiality**

All data will be stored in a secure location. Information you are going to share will be treated anonymously by using another name that you will be asked to choose in order to protect your privacy. Interviews may be quoted in the write-up of the study but your real name and any identifying information will not be used. Although the results of this study will be used primarily for the completion of my master research project, it may also be used for later publications and presentation. The recorded interviews will be kept for 5 years and stored in a secure location. I assure you that all information you provide will be destroyed after 5 years.

**Contact information**

If you need any more information about this study please call Samar Izwayyed at (403) xxx-xxxx or Dr. Olu Awosoga at 403-xxx-xxxx at the University of Lethbridge. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this interview please contact the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge (phone: 403-329-2747 or email: [research.services@uleth.ca](mailto:research.services@uleth.ca)).

I have read the above information and understand fully the terms of my participation in this study entitled “Friendship Across Cultures: Exploring The Concept Of Friendship Between Immigrant And Canadian Women In Southern Alberta.” With these understandings, I consent to voluntarily take part in this study described above. I know that I can stop the interview at any time without explanation and without any negative consequences.

(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

I have read the above information. I have given consent for audio recording and transcribing the interviews.

(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

**Request for Summary of Findings**

If you would like to receive a summary of the results for this study, please write your e-mail or mailing address below.

E-mail address: .....

Mail address: .....

A copy of this form is given to you for your records.

**Appendix E**  
**Informed Consent for Canadian women**

Dear participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study on friendship between immigrant and Canadian women. This research is being conducted by Samar Izwayyed, a student at the University of Lethbridge in Canada, and under the supervision of Dr. Olu Awosoga of the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Before signing the consent, I would like you to read and understand the following information about the study procedure. Below are detailed explanations about the purpose, procedure, and benefits/ risks associated with this study.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to gain a deep understanding of the factors that facilitate and/or hinder the formation of friendships between immigrant and Canadian women. The study is part of my master's degree requirements at the University of Lethbridge.

**Procedure**

During the interview, you will be asked about your social relationships and friendships with immigrant women. This one-on-one interview is expected to take about 60-90 minutes and will take place in your preferred location. I will also ask you to complete a 15 minute demographic questionnaire. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission. The audio recording will then be transcribed by the researcher. Note that a written note will be taken if you disapprove the use of audio recorder during the interview.

**Risk**

There are no anticipated discomforts or risks related to this interview.

**Benefits**

By taking part in this interview, you will benefit the researcher in understanding how immigrant women's friendships can help their adjustment in Canada. Research may assist future immigrant women and those who work with them.

**Participation**

Please be informed that your participation in this study is voluntary. Please indicate, at any time, if you feel that you cannot answer, or feel uncomfortable answering, any questions, so I can move on to the next question. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any explanation and without any negative consequences. You will receive a \$20 gift card after signing the consent form. If you decided to withdraw from the study at any time, you can still keep your \$20 gift card and any information contributed to the point of withdrawal will be completely removed or disposed of as confidential waste as appropriate, and will not be included in the study findings.



**Appendix F**  
**Participant Demographics Information**

\*Note: questions 3-8 are for the immigrant women only\*

1. Your Pseudonym:
2. Age:
3. Country of Origin: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Length of Residency in Canada: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Ethno-cultural affiliation
  - a. Caucasian
  - b. Native American
  - c. African American
  - d. Latin American
  - e. Other
6. Religious affiliation
  - a. Muslim
  - b. Christian
  - c. Other
7. Immigrant category
  - a. Skilled worker - principal applicant
  - b. Skilled worker - spouse and dependents
  - c. Family class
  - d. Other
8. English Fluency:
  - a. Fluent
  - b. Good
  - c. Poor
9. Level of Education:
  - a. Less than high school
  - b. High school or some post-secondary
  - c. Post-secondary diploma or certificate
  - d. Bachelor's degree
  - e. Graduate or professional school
  - f. Other: (describe) \_\_\_\_\_
10. Marital Status:
  - a. Single
  - b. Married
  - c. Divorced
  - d. Widow

## Friendship Across Cultures

### 11. Children

- a. Yes (Number of Children \_\_\_\_\_ )
- b. NO

### 12. Employment status:

- a. Not employed
- b. Employed (Specify \_\_\_\_\_ )

### 13. Average of total household income per year:

- a. <\$30.000
- b. \$30.000-\$70.000
- c. \$70.000-\$100.000
- d. >\$100.000

### 14. Accommodation (a) Rent (b) Own house

## **Appendix G**

### **Interview Guide for Immigrant Women**

The following questions will help to guide the interview. Other probing questions will arise during the interview as participants disclose more.

#### **Introduction Questions**

1. Where did you grow up?
2. How long have you been in Canada?
3. Can you tell me why you decided to come to Canada?

#### **Immigration Hardships**

1. What information did you get before you immigrated to Canada?
2. Who did you contact to assist your movement to Canada? What kind of information did they give you? Was it helpful? In which way?
3. How did you feel when you came and had nobody to help you? Can you remember any situations you faced when you first came to Canada?
4. How did the separation from family and friends back home affect you? How did you overcome this problem? How do you feel now?
5. Did you feel any isolation or loneliness when you first came to Canada? Did you try to seek any help from immigrants or Canadians when you first came to Canada?
6. What other challenges did you face when you first came to Canada? Do you still face the same challenges?
7. What strategies helped you overcome these difficulties?

#### **Background of Relationships**

1. Do you have any relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws) that live in Canada?
2. How far away in Canada are your relatives? Do you consider them as friends and can you rely on them for help?
3. Can you tell me a little about your family?



**Friendship Formation**

*Friendship in Canada*

1. Tell me about your friendships with Canadians in general ?(Canadians are people born in Canada)
2. Do you have such friendships? If so, please tell me about them.
3. How did you first meet?
4. How long have you known them?
5. How are they connected to you?
6. Do any of these people work with you at the same place?
7. Do you think work helped you in forming your friendships?
8. Why do you think you have (or don't have) Canadian friends?
9. Did you face any difficulties in building new relationships, such as friendships, in Canada?
10. How did you start building your new friendship here in Canada?
11. What factors do you think helped you build close friendships with Canadian women?
12. Do you have more immigrant friends or Canadian friends? Are they close to your age?
13. How did you form these friendships here in Canada? Which is easier, to form friendships with Canadian women or with immigrant women?
14. Which one is friendlier? Canadians or immigrants? Why?
15. Who are more helpful, your Canadian friends or immigrant friends? Can you tell me why?
16. Do you have any children? Do your children have Canadian friends? How close are you to their parents? Do you consider them close friends?
17. What does friendship mean to you?
18. Do you think friendship is important? Why?

*Nature of Friendship between Immigrant and Canadian Women*

1. Do you spend time with your Canadian friends? How often?
2. Do you consider these Canadian friends close to you? What do you like best or find most special about your closest Canadian friend?

## Friendship Across Cultures

3. How did you come to trust your Canadian friends? Did they ever do or say anything that made you especially trust them?
4. How do you usually spend time together?
5. How satisfied are you with your friendships?
6. Do you ever wish you had more Canadian friends?
7. Is there anything about your friends that you wish was more similar to your friends back home?

### ***Friendship Seeking Strategies***

1. Is there any particular activity, like a club, association, sport, or spare-time interest, that you devote time to or find especially interesting? Did you choose this activity to look for friends?
2. Are any of your Canadian or immigrant friends also involved in the same activity?
3. What strategies do you follow to form friends here in Canada? Are they similar to the strategies you use back home? Do you think these strategies (e.g. club, church...etc.) is a right way to look for friends? Do you find it easier to make friends in Canada or back home?

### ***Friendship and Support***

1. Can you think of some ways a close friend (Canadian or immigrant) has helped you?
2. What kinds of things do you normally share with your Canadian or immigrant friends?
3. Can you tell me some kinds of things you care about or need from a relationship that only your women friends provide?
4. Do these things make your adjustment in the new country easier? Do you think that your friends assist your adjustment to the new country? In which way? Which friendship helped you more in your settlement in Canada? Canadian or immigrant friendships?

***Neighbourhood Friendship***

1. How long have you lived in this neighborhood?
2. Why did you choose this neighbourhood? How do you compare your neighbourhood here with your neighbourhood back home? Do you think your neighbours here are closer and more helpful?
3. Do you have any friends who live in this neighbourhood?
4. How do you describe the ethnic density of your neighbourhood?
5. Do you ever visit with or go out with your neighbors? How often?
6. How many of your neighbors do you think of as friends? Are they immigrants or Canadians?
7. Do you have a neighbourhood club or organization where all your neighbours meet? How do you think this can be helpful in forming friendships with your neighbours?

***Pre- Immigration Friendship***

1. Can you tell me about your friends in your home country?
2. Can you tell me a little about what happened in those friendships once you were immigrated? Are you still friends with any of them?
3. Would you say you have more close friends in Canada, fewer close friends, or about the same before you immigrated?
4. How have communication facilities such as the Internet and phone facilitated maintaining or forming your friendships?
5. If you didn't have close friends right now, how would that affect you?

## **Appendix H**

### **Interview Guide for Canadian Women**

#### **Intercultural Friendship Formation**

1. Tell me about your friendships with immigrants in general?
2. Do you have such friendships? If so, please tell me about them.
3. How did you first meet?
4. How long have you known them?
5. Are they close to your age?
6. How did you form these friendships here in Canada?
7. How they are connected to you?
8. Do any of these people work with you at the same place?
9. Do you think job helped you forming your friendship?
10. Why do you think you have (or don't have) immigrant friends?
11. Did you face any difficulties in building new relationships, such as friendships with immigrants? How did you start building your friendship with immigrants?
12. What factors do you think helped you build close friendships with immigrant women?
13. Do you have more immigrant close friends or Canadian close friends?
14. Which is easier? To form friendships with Canadian women or with immigrant women?
15. Which one is friendlier? Canadians or immigrants? Can you tell me why?
16. Do you have any children? Do your children have immigrant friends? How close are you to their parents? Do you consider them close friends?

#### **Nature of Friendship between Immigrant and Canadian Women**

1. Do you spend time with your immigrant friends? How often?
2. How do you usually spend time together?
3. Do you consider these immigrants friends close to you? What do you like best or find most special about your closest Canadian friend?
4. How did you come to trust your immigrant friends? Did they ever do or say anything that made you especially trust them?
5. How satisfied are you with your intercultural friendships?

## Friendship Across Cultures

6. Do you ever wish you had more immigrant friends?
7. What does friendship mean to you?
8. Do you think friendship is important? Why?

### ***Friendship Seeking Strategies***

1. Is there any particular activity, like a club, association, sport, or spare-time interest, that you devote time to or find especially interesting? Did you choose this activity to look for friends?
2. Are any of your Canadian or immigrant friends also involve in the same activity?
3. What strategies you follow to form friends??Do you think these strategies (e.g. club, church ...etc.) is a right way to look for friends?

### ***Friendship and Support***

1. Can you think of some ways that your closest friend has helped you?
2. Who are more helpful your Canadian friends or immigrant friends? Can you help me understand why?
3. What kinds of things do you normally share with your friends? Who do you feel gives you more support and comfort: your Canadian friends or friends from immigrant friends? Why?
4. Can you tell me some kinds of things you care about or need from a relationship that only your women friends provide?
5. If you didn't have close friends right now, how would that affect you?

### ***Neighbourhood Friendship***

1. How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?
2. Do you have any immigrant friends who live in this neighbourhood?
3. How do you describe the ethnic density of your neighbourhood?
4. Do you ever visit with or go out with someone who's a neighbour? How often?
5. How many of your neighbours do you consider close friends? Are any of them immigrants?
6. Do you have like neighbourhood club or organization where all your neighbours meet? How do you think this can be helpful in forming friendship with your neighbours?

**Appendix I**

**Demographic Information of Canadian Participants**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Number of Immigrant Women Friends</b>
Martha	25	Christian	Bachelor of Degree	Yes	1
LaRee	43	Christian	High School	Yes	6
Marlene	62	Christian	Post-Secondary	Yes	1
Aurora	25	Christian	Graduate Degree	Yes	1
Samantha	50	Christian	Bachelor Degree	Yes	2
Suzy	64	Christian	College	Yes	4
Anne	37	Muslim	Graduate	No	12
Sara	42	Christian	Bachelor Degree	Yes	3
Carla	55	Christian	Graduate Degree	Yes	1

**Appendix J**

**Demographic Information of Immigrant Participants**

Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Age	Religion	Level of Education	Employment	English Proficiency	Length of Stay in Canada (years)	Number of Canadian Women Friends
Arwa	Kenya	45	Christian	Bachelor Degree	Yes	Good	15	3
Bunu	Bhutan	20	Buddhist	Less than high school	Yes	Poor	2	2
Shamim	India	39	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Fluent	10	3
Rashmi	Sri-Lanka	44	Buddhist	Bachelor Degree	No	Fluent	6	1
Batoul	Sudan	38	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Fluent	9	3
Dema	Jordan	42	Muslim	Diploma	Yes	Good	15	2
Linda	Colombia	40	Christian	Bachelor Degree	Yes	Good	10	2
Randa	Lebanon	42	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Fluent	37	1
Noor	Jordan	33	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Good	4	1
Rania	Lebanon	30	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Good	4	1
Eman	Jordan	33	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	No	Good	3	1
Shadia	Syria	35	Muslim	Bachelor Degree	Yes	Good	6	2