Balancing Culture and Development:  
Parent-Adolescent Relationships in Croatian Immigrant Families

by

Barbara Samarin

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ABSTRACT

Balancing Culture and Development: Parent-Adolescent Relationships in Croatian Immigrant Families

Barbara Samarin
University of Guelph, 2013

Advisor: Dr. Susan Chuang

Recent research on parent-adolescent relationships has emphasized the importance of studying cross-cultural and different ethnic groups. Croatia has a unique social, political, and history, it is important to examine Croatian immigrant families as a separate and distinct group. The main goals of this exploratory study were to: (1) examine the developmental and cultural challenges for second generation Croatian-Canadian immigrant adolescents in context of their families; (2) gain greater insight into the adolescents’ perspectives on factors that may either facilitate or hinder their relationships with their parents; and (3) investigate adolescents’ views of potential cultural differences and similarities with their parents. Twenty second-generation Croatian-Canadian immigrant adolescents participated, and a qualitative, social constructionist approach was employed.

With respect to communication with their parents, youth discussed: cultural barriers, language barriers, learning about the culture, daily interactions, negotiating personal freedom, personal/private disclosure, and importance of education. Youth’s perceived cultural discrepancies with their parents focused on cultural knowledge, cultural norms and expectations, cultural pressures, educational opportunities, language barriers, personal freedom, work ethic, cultural pride, and dual cultural identity. Overall implications of the study stress the importance of maintaining good parent-adolescent relationships in immigrant families and examining the challenges and struggles experienced by second-generation immigrant youth.
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Introduction

Recent research on parent-adolescent relationships has increasingly emphasized the importance of studying cross-cultural and different ethnic groups. Historically, theoretical frameworks of child development and family relationships have overlooked the ways in which developmental processes are shaped by socio-cultural contexts (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009). In order to better understand immigration and diverse ethnic minority families, a more culturally sensitive and in-depth examination of the processes of acculturation is needed. It is also important to have a better understanding of how these acculturation processes influence the parent-adolescent relationship. Children from immigrant families make up a rapidly growing segment of the youth population in Canada. One in three Canadian children are from an immigrant family with at least one immigrant parent (Jamieson, Curry, & Martinez, 2001). More specifically, European immigrants are a significant portion of the immigrant population in Canada. The current study focuses on one specific group of families of European descent, Croatian-Canadian immigrant families. There has been very little research to date that has focused on Croatian-Canadian immigrant families, specifically immigrant Croatian-Canadian youth, and how these families adjust and develop throughout the acculturation processes.

The developmental stage of adolescence is an important area of research as adolescence is a time of transition where the individual’s biological, psychological, and social characteristics undergo change. Research has emphasized that the social and cultural context within which the adolescent grows and develops will foreshadow their future contributions to society, whether positive or negative (Fanti, Henrick, Brookmeyer, & Kuperminc, 2008). This study will help contribute to research on immigrant families, the adolescents’ perspective on parent-adolescent relationships, and how cultural contexts influence family dynamic and their development.
An important developmental aspect of adolescence is autonomy and independence. Developing a sense of autonomy includes having an understanding of the relationship between individuality, personal freedom, autonomy, and selfhood (Fuligni, 1998). For example, Phinney, Kim-Jo, Osorio and Víljalmsdóttir (2005) found that even children perceived the self as a unique and distinct being, separate from others. During adolescence, fostering autonomy and independence contributed to overall psychological well-being. As conceptions of independence and autonomy are those associated with psychological well-being (e.g., formation of a social self), examining whether these concepts vary by culture needs further exploration. Examination of different cultures may provide a greater understanding of how individuals conceptualize and define independence and autonomy and provide more insight into parent-adolescent relationships and social interactions (Davies & Windle, 2001).

Acculturation is also a crucial social context to consider when examining immigrant parent-adolescent relationships, especially in Canada, the second largest immigrant country in the world. Over the past several decades, the demographic landscape of Canada has greatly transformed into an ethnically diverse population. Almost one of every five Canadians is an immigrant, with 36% of immigrants (390,800) representing immigrant and refugee children and youth 24 years of age or under (Statistics Canada, 2006).

There are two levels of acculturation which need attention: the group level (e.g., the family) and the individual level. At the individual level, acculturation is a process of change experienced by the persons of a racial and ethnic minority group during the adoption of the host culture (Chung, Flook, & Fuligni, 2009). Focusing at the family level of acculturation, research reports that parents’ own acculturation experiences impacted their adolescents’ well-being. Dennis, Basanez, and Farahmand (2010) found that immigrant Latino parents with high levels of
acculturative stress had adolescents with more problematic behaviours such as poor mental health, excessive drug and alcohol use, and had higher instances of psychological and emotional depression. Thus, it is important to examine the complexities of how acculturation adjustment and stress influence the individual and the family dynamics (Putnick, Bornstein, Collins, Painter, Hendricks, & Suwalsky, 2008).

The purpose of the present study was to explore Croatian immigrant parent-adolescent relationships. In order to contextualize this study, the following section will provide a review of current literature in the areas of adolescence, acculturation and specific aspects of parent-adolescent relationship such as communication, conflict, development, and culture. The perspective of the adolescent is taken in order to examine how adolescents develop within a family context as well as viewing culture and acculturation as a potential catalyst for change within the family.

Adolescence

Adolescence has been defined as a period of transition, spanning the second decade of life where the individuals’ biological, psychological, and social characteristics undergo change, becoming adult-like (Smetana & Berent, 1993). Adolescence is most commonly defined as the age period between 13 to 19 years. Adolescent research has accentuated the importance of establishing and maintaining both a sense of self as an individual and having a connection to significant others during this developmental phase (Phinney et al., 2005). Phinney and her colleagues found that displays of independence and autonomy during adolescence were positively associated with measures of ego development and self-esteem.

The emergence of adolescents’ autonomy involves two interrelated factors: (a) the development of the youth competencies; and (b) the youth establishment of boundaries between
what is within their area of privacy and personal discretion and what falls within the parental regulation (Nucci, Killen, & Smetana, 1996). Erikson (1968) was one of the first theorists to connect the emergence of competencies in childhood with children’s assertion of personal authority over the self. According to Erikson, the key aspect of adolescence is the youth’s negotiation of authority with his/her parents. He stated that the failure to establish a balance between children’s areas of discretion and the parents’ representation of societal regulation resulted in problems of psychological adjustment with far-reaching significance. Phinney et al. (2005) have suggested that personal freedom is necessary for the formation of a healthy social self, particularly during the developmental stage of adolescence. Developmentally, exercise of choice within the person permits the construction of what is socially unique about the person within the frame of socially ascribed roles and scripts (Fanti et al., 2008). Thus, the formation and development of autonomy in adolescence is a key component to healthy adolescent development and overall psychological well-being.

Given the complex developmental trajectories and adolescent experiences, this period can be a dramatic challenge. Adolescence is a particularly vulnerable period of time as individuals undergo significant developmental transitions (e.g., physiological and emotional changes, increased desires for independence). Also, newcomer youth must deal with additional challenges such as negotiating their lives within various multicultural environments and cultures (e.g., family, school, and community). These stresses of adjusting and settling in a new country that youth experience, especially their coping strategies, have received increased attention.

Not all adolescents undergo these transitions in the same way, with the same speed, or with comparable outcomes. There is diversity in their paths through life, which has been known as developmental trajectories (Fanti et al., 2008). A major source of diversity in adolescent
development is the context that youth are involved in, including the contexts of family, peer
groups, school, workplace, community, society, and culture.

Adolescent Autonomy within the Family

Researchers have examined the importance of adolescents’ desire for autonomy and
personal freedom. It has been suggested that the development of one’s identity is linked to
conceptions of the self. However, it is important to acknowledge that adolescents are not the only
active participant of their construction of personal concepts and personal domain. Parents and
significant others have been found to play an important role in this developmental process (Nucci
et al., 1996). According to the domain specificity perspective (Turiel, 1979), the relationship of
the adolescent and social environment is an interactional process where adolescents form ways
of thinking in an attempt to understand the social events, persons, and interactions around them.
In addition, distinguishing features of social events result in the formation of distinct domains of
social knowledge. Turiel (1983) has suggested three distinct domains of knowledge, which
include the psychological, moral, and societal conventional domains. The personal domain will
be particularly emphasized and further explored in the present study.

The personal domain has been identified as part of the psychological realm and is
represented by a set of behaviours that allow the individuals to construct a sense of the self
(Turiel & Nucci, 1978) Personal issues have been defined as a set of actions that the individual
judges as outside the boundaries of acceptable social regulation. These issues are private aspects
of an individual’s life and are not viewed as what is right or wrong, but are personal preferences
and choices. Personal issues are under the individuals’ own authority and help reinforce the
degree of individuality and autonomy experienced by the individual. Instances of personal acts
within North American culture include choice of friends, curfew, clothing, and recreational activities (Nucci & Turiel, 2000).

Phinney et al. (2005) examined the ways in which European American adolescents from diverse ethnic backgrounds expressed their autonomy in their responses to disagreements with parents. Phinney et al. revealed that adolescents who were able to speak openly with their parents and who were able to negotiate their autonomy and personal freedom reported high levels of self-esteem, confidence, self worth, and feelings of competency. They also found that adolescents who were given opportunities by their parents to be more independent and experience more personal freedom had closer relationships with their parents as compared to adolescents whose parents did not encourage independence and autonomy. Autonomy promotion within the parent-adolescent relationship has also been related to increased interpersonal competence and more intimate friendships. In contrast, undermining adolescents’ autonomy has been linked to decreased interpersonal competence, greater amounts of hostility in relationships with peers and increasingly distant peer relationships (Beyers & Goossens, 2008). The development of autonomy is considered to be a central task of American and Canadian adolescents, as youths are trying to establish and maintain both a sense of self as an individual and a social self who is connected to significant others (McElhaney, Porter, Thompson, & Allen, 2008).

The changes young people undergo during adolescence are also linked to changes that occur in their family and cultural contexts. The quality of parent-adolescent relationships has important developmental implications for adolescents and has been linked to multiple facets of adjustment (Crockett, Brown, Iturbide, Russell, & Wilkinson-Lee, 2009). Research has supported the importance of family in the lives of adolescents and has also emphasized the
influential role parents play during adolescent development. During the past several decades, researchers have demonstrated that the quality of parent-adolescent relationships is integrally linked to adolescents’ psychological functioning and overall well-being. For example, when parents were connected to and involved with their adolescents, better educational outcomes are displayed (Crockett et al., 2009). In a longitudinal study of 12,868 school students from Grades 7 through 12, data collected by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, parenting practices were found to foster change in adolescents’ academic accomplishments (Bui, 2009). Adolescents with parents who showed hostility towards them on a regular basis had lower levels of academic achievement.

Research also revealed that there were developmental changes in the responses to adolescent-parent disagreements. Smetana, Daddis and Chuang (2003) found that early adolescents of European descent began to question parental authority and asserted their own authority and independence. With increasing age, adolescents were less willing to accept parental authority and asserted their own opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs in order to negotiate autonomy. Some researchers also stated that increased instances of adolescent assertion of autonomy often resulted in increased conflicts between parents and adolescents (Berzonsky, Branje, & Meeus, 2007). In addition, Chao and Aque (2009) sampled 1,085 immigrant youth of Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and European American descent, and found that the push for adolescent autonomy was one of the major reasons for parent-adolescent conflicts. More specifically, the parents’ role of maintaining authority and perceived control was associated with their feelings of success as parents. Furthermore, the parental views of adolescent development and understanding of their needs were often different than what adolescents perceived for themselves. Discrepancies between parents’ and adolescents’ perceptions of family life were
most prevalent around topics that tapped into adolescents’ desire for autonomy and individuality. Furthermore, as children get older, they are more likely to report dissatisfaction with their families’ ability to change roles, rules, and negotiate autonomy (Beyers & Goossens, 2008).

Past research has suggested that autonomy inhibition by parents was associated with a range of other features related to parent-adolescent relationships such as less parent-adolescent involvement, poorer communication, less positive affective expression, and increased parent-adolescent conflict and hostility (Fuligni, 1998). This pattern of findings across studies indicates that inhibition of autonomy is problematic in relation to developmental outcomes within both family and peer groups (McElhaney et al., 2008).

**Parents’ Role in Adolescent Development**

As many researchers have argued (Chao & Aque, 2009; Chao, 2006; Smetana et al., 2003), parents play a critical and active role in their youth’s development. As Levine (1988) stated, parents have three primary goals: (a) the physical survival and health of the child; (b) preparation of the child for economic and practical self-maintenance; and (c) the development of the child’s ability to maintain cultural practices and values. Parents establish limits and teach appropriate behaviours in the context of parent-adolescent relationships. These relationships create an atmosphere that can either facilitate or make it more difficult for the parents to guide their children to learn. Parent-adolescent relationships set the stage and influence the guidance that parents provide in different aspects of the adolescent’s life (such as relationships with peers, academic achievement, norms of good behaviour). For example, secure parent-child attachment relationships early in life help children to become more open and receptive to communicating with their parents (Beyers & Goossens, 2008).
Developmental theories state that adolescence is a period of growth in which identity formation is addressed and autonomy from adults is achieved (Berzonsky et al., 2007). This has been interpreted as the lessening role of parents over time in the lives of young people. However, others have revealed that ongoing positive family connections are protective factors against a range of health risk behaviours and contribute significantly to the adolescents’ psychological well-being. Although the nature of parent-adolescent relationships is changing as children enter into adolescence, the continuity of family connections and being the secure emotional base has been found to play a crucial role in positive development of youth (Davies & Windle, 2001). Moreover, parental influence on adolescents’ social, psychological, and cognitive development appears most pronounced when specific types of parent-adolescent interactions occur in the context of particular emotional exchanges within the family. For example, a recent study found that adolescents’ self-esteem and ego development was higher for adolescents when parents challenged the autonomy of their adolescent and expressed the importance of being independent (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009).

Other ways that parents promote adolescent autonomy are by providing their children opportunities and experiences. For example, Smetana et al. (2003) found that African American adolescents who lived in families where there were opportunities and support in expressing their own viewpoints, autonomy, individuality, and relatedness showed higher levels of social, emotional and psychological development. In addition, several characteristics of parental interaction such as parental self-disclosure, tolerance of novelty and uncertainty, and tolerance of unwanted/unexpected emotions have been linked to enhanced ego development and self-esteem (Beyers & Goossens, 2008). A cross-cultural comparison study examined adolescents from European American, Mexican American, Armenian American, and Korean American
backgrounds and found that immigrant parents who fostered autonomy development and positive support had adolescents who developed healthy identities, self-esteem, and were able to openly negotiate autonomy with their parents (Phinney et al., 2005). These research findings reinforce the important role of parents during adolescent development, particularly when adolescents begin to exercise their autonomy.

Adolescents are agents of their development who make their own interpretations of conflicting messages from parents and may take advantage of opportunities to exercise autonomy, self-expression, and the pursuit of happiness (Umana-Taylor, Bhanot, & Shin, 2006). However, for many adolescents, it is a difficult task to exercise their autonomy while balancing family expectations, obligations, and responsibilities. Family obligations refer to a collection of attitudes and behaviours related to the provision of support, assistance, and respect to family members (Tseng & Fuligni, 2000). It is a type of familial connection that emphasizes the membership of children in the larger social group of the family. Tseng and Fuligni (2000) suggested that by adolescence, most children have developed the capacity to provide different support to their families. However, they also claimed that too many family obligations and expectations can cause increased amounts of stress for the adolescent.

**Theoretical Contexts of Parent- Adolescent Relationships**

More recently, researchers are critically re-examining the theoretical frameworks and models of adolescent development and families as many have now acknowledged the importance of taking the sociocultural contexts into consideration (Chuang & Tamis-LeMonda, 2009). Ecological and acculturation frameworks are especially important when trying to understand experiences of immigrant populations. In addition, it is important to have a better understanding of how these acculturation processes influence immigration, diverse ethnic minority families,
and parent-adolescent relationships (Li, 2009). The Ecology Theory, as posited by Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides a framework that captures all of the various relationships that may directly or indirectly affect individual development, taking culture into consideration (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that the ecology of human development is composed of four distinct, although interconnected systems or types of settings: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. Specific to this study, the emphasis will be placed on the micro- and macrosystem. The microsystem is composed of complex relations between the individual and the environment. For example, the family is the major microsystem for adolescent development. It involves direct interactions between the developing adolescent, his or her parents, and any siblings present in the home (Bronfenbrenner, 1992).

Indirect relationships also affect individual development. Bronfenbrenner refers to this system as the macrosystem. The macrosystem is composed of the cultural values and beliefs and historical events that influence all relationships. For example, wars, natural disasters and famines may significantly impact other ecological systems. Wars may destroy the homes, or other microsystems of a person or a group of people and/or necessities and resources of life (e.g., food, water, shelter) less available. Cultural values influence the individual in many ways. In adolescence, values about child-rearing and the role of youth in society not only affect the behaviours developed by a young person but can have implications for positive or negative future developmental outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Lastly, the Ecology Theory stresses the concept of the “goodness of fit.” This idea is in relation to how individuals “fit” within certain cultural contexts. Research revealed that the better an individual “fits” within certain cultural context, the more likely they will have positive
mental, physical, and emotional health. In contrast, individuals who have discrepancies between their personal identity, values, attitudes, and beliefs and their cultural context result in negative developmental outcomes, such as poor mental health. This is also known as a “poor fit.” It is important to use this model when examining human development because it allows us to develop a better understanding for the bidirectional socialization processes that occur between the individuals and complex social networks and diverse cultural contexts (Weisner, 2002).

**The Acculturation Process**

When individuals are exposed to a new cultural context, there are inevitable changes that occur at both the individual and family levels (Chao, 2006). According to Berry (1997), acculturation has been defined as the “dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 36). This transition leads to positive or negative psychological, social, and emotional development changes within individuals that may influence various aspects of their lives.

Berry (2003) stated that acculturation is composed of two distinct categories: individual and group level acculturation. The individual level involves shifts in a person’s behaviour in order to adjust to dominant cultural beliefs. The group level involves changes in social structures, institutions, and cultural practices. At the individual level, acculturation has been defined as a process of change experienced by individuals of a racial and ethnic minority group during the adoption of the culture of the host culture (Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009). This process assumes that individuals maintain some aspect of their culture of origin as they acquire aspects of the dominant culture. As a result, acculturative stress originates from attempts by the individuals to resolve the differences between their culture of origin and the dominant culture.
When the values, traditions, and beliefs of the native culture do not fit with the host culture, this may result in certain levels of stress placed on the individuals and/or families (Berry & Annis, 1974).

Current immigrant research demonstrates the stressful and challenging experiences of immigrant individuals as they settle into a new country. Some immigrant challenges include discrimination and language barriers. These obstacles may often cause family and other interpersonal relationships to deteriorate, and lower the mental health and self-esteem of adolescents (Bui, 2009). For many immigrant families, acculturation issues and stresses are often compounded with increased tensions in parent-adolescent relationships. Immigrant families must negotiate between the new and old cultural values, beliefs and social norms regarding family roles, obligations, and functioning. Intergenerational differences in acculturation processes may also add to immigrant family stress, conflict, and miscommunication (Kwak, 2003).

Understanding the diverse and distinct immigrant challenges faced during the acculturation process is critical in developing a better understanding of immigrant family life when adjusting to a new cultural context.

Current research on acculturation has examined acculturation at the individual level. This individual level experience is known as psychological acculturation and is characterized by a process where individuals change psychological and contextual characteristics. Moreover, individuals may change the amount of contact with the dominant culture in order to attain a good “fit” (Graves, 1967). Unfortunately, not every individual achieves this good fit with the dominant culture (Berry, 2003; Berry & Annis, 1974). Recent research has shown that discrimination had a strong negative effect on various aspects of psychological well-being for immigrant adolescents (Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009). Some newcomers have reported experiencing feelings of
isolation, discrimination, and fear. Some specific examples of acculturative stress for immigrant families include: lowered mental health status (e.g., depression and anxiety), feelings of marginality and identity confusion, experiencing language barriers, isolation from society, education and employment barriers, and adapting to a new cultural context with new social norms and expectations (Berry, 2003).

Fuligni (1998) found that parents and children adapted and acculturated to a new cultural context very differently and these diverse experiences have been linked to increased parent-adolescent communication and conflict. Phinney, Ong, and Madden (2000) found similar results. Phinney et al. (2000) compared European immigrant and non-immigrant families, and found that European immigrant parents and their adolescents had more instances of daily conflicts and disagreements compared to their non-immigrant parent counterparts. Disagreements for the immigrant families revolved around acculturation issues such as certain cultural and familial expectations and obligations. Thus, it is increasingly important to examine the acculturative processes that individuals and families go through and how these processes impact family dynamics, particularly parent-adolescent relationships.

Research on immigrant families and parent-adolescent relationships has suggested that parents’ own acculturation experience and process play a crucial role in their adolescents’ well-being. In a recent study, it was found that as acculturative stress levels increased within immigrant families, so did levels of depression, particularly for adolescent youth (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2010). Melby and Conger (2006) found that immigrant parents with high levels of acculturative stress had adolescents with more problematic behaviours such as poor mental health, excessive drug and alcohol use, and higher instances of psychological and emotional depression. Other research suggested immigrant families who experience high levels
of acculturative stress predicted future delinquency and criminal behaviours in their adolescents (Smokowski et al., 2010). It is important to investigate the impact of acculturative stress on the individual; however, researchers need to examine how acculturation and acculturative stress influences the family as a unit and how this process may impact family dynamics in a negative or positive way (Putnick, Bornstein, Collins, Painter, Hendricks, & Suwalsky, 2008).

The examination of different aspects of acculturation and acculturative stress faced by immigrant individuals and families will inform us of how immigrant families adjust and settle into their new cultural context. It is also important to focus on acculturative stress in order to help decrease stress among immigrant individuals and their families. More specifically, by exploring potential risk factors and causes of acculturative stress, positive coping strategies for immigrant families can be identified (Berry, 2003). There is growing attention on the dynamics of immigrant families and, in particular, on adolescent-parent relationships undergoing acculturation, the maintenance of their relationships, and how these parent-adolescent relationships may change as families undergo many years of adaptation to the new cultural context.

**Immigration Policies and Patterns in Canada**

Before researchers begin to disentangle the complexities of immigration and how individuals and families adjust and settle into their new countries, it is imperative that researchers situate these families within the broader immigrant context. Examining the immigration patterns reveals radical shifts over the last century in relation to the countries’ ethnoprofiles (Chuang & Moreno, 2011).

Over the past several decades, the demographic population of Canada has greatly transformed. Most striking is the increase of recent immigrant families into Canada, which
currently has the second highest immigration population in the world (Canadian Heritage, 2004). Almost one of every five Canadians is an immigrant, with 36% (390,800) representing immigrant and refugee children and youth 24 years of age or under (Statistics Canada, 2006). Between the years of 2001 and 2006, Canada received 1,109,980 international immigrants. The 2006 Canadian census estimated 6,186,950 foreign born in Canada, which is the highest proportion in 75 years.

In the early 1900s, Canadian immigration policy heavily favoured immigrants of Western-European origin because of their perceived ability to better integrate in the new world and their farming skills (Canadian Heritage, 2004). In the years of 1914-1945, a more detailed immigration policy was put into place called the Immigration Act. It is important to note that during this time period, the First and Second World Wars and the Great Depression took place, which resulted in high unemployment rates. Citizens needed jobs and the Canadian government did not want to overpopulate and leave Canadian born workers without employment. Thus, the main goals of implementing this new policy were to restrict and reduce individuals migrating to Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2004). This policy included the implementation of a literacy test for all immigrants. It is also important to note that during this time in history, there became a division of preferred versus non-preferred immigrant groups, which perpetuated racist attitudes and discrimination against ethnic minorities in Canada. For example, preferred groups included: Britain, US, Irish, Australian and other North/Western Europeans. The non-preferred groups included: East/South Europeans, Asians, and African Americans (Westhues, 2006).

In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to implement an official multiculturalism policy, which was ratified to protect the rights and liberties of all Canadians, irrespective of their heritage, language, or religious affiliation. The Multiculturalism Policy of
Canada also affirmed English and French as Canada’s two official languages, and confirmed the rights of Aboriginal peoples (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2008). Canada is considered a pluralist society because it has officially endorsed both bilingualism and multiculturalism. In 1988, Canada enacted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, which aimed to “recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance, and share their cultural heritage” (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2006). The Canadian Multiculturalism Act is supported by the Multiculturalism Policy of Canada (Chuang & Moreno, 2011).

Once Canada abandoned its racist immigration policy between the years of 1962-1976, admission was based on individual and personal characteristics, not nationality (Westhues, 2006). The new Immigration Act was introduced in 1976. The goals of this policy were aimed towards family reunification, humanitarian concerns, promotion of Canada’s economic, social, demographic, and cultural goals, non-discrimination, the fulfillment of Canada's international obligations in relation to refugees, and co-operation among all levels of government, as well as with the voluntary sector, in promoting the adaptation and adjustment of newcomers to Canadian society (Canadian Heritage, 2004).

In more recent years (between the years of 1993-2002), there was a shift towards focusing on long-term economic goals and increasing the number of skilled workers coming to Canada (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). In 2002, The Immigrant Act was replaced with the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act. The core principles to the Act are: equality and freedom from discrimination, equality of status for both official languages and separate objectives for immigrants and refugee admission, very different compared to initial policy in 1953 (Li, 2001).
The current Immigration Act, along with procedures adopted by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission, has significantly broadened the role of shaping policy and establishing annual immigration levels. This is accomplished through ongoing consultation processes with federal and provincial governments, potential employees, ethnic groups, advocates, and humanitarian organizations. Therefore, all have the opportunity to have their voices and concerns heard by appropriate immigration officials (Li, 2003).

There are also three classes of immigrants that are recognized by the Canadian government: family, economic, or refugee. The family class includes individuals such as spouse, dependent child and parents who are being brought over to reunite family members. In 2006, 28.5% of immigrants that entered Canada were classified as family class (Statistics Canada, 2006). Another class is the refugee class, which includes people who need protection and are fleeing from their country of origin due to inhumane conditions. In 2006, 12.8% of immigrants that entered Canada were classified as refugee class. Lastly, the highest proportions of immigrants that come to Canada are economic immigrants. This group encompasses individuals who are classified as skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investors and self-employed. In 2006, 56.1% of economic class immigrants entered Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006).

Lastly, due to all these changes, Canada experienced an influx of ethnically diverse individuals and families (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The two federal policies on immigration and multiculturalism have helped diversify the Canadian population. Citizenship and Immigration Canada reported that 247,243 immigrants arrived in 2008 (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009). Additionally, the 2006 census reflected the diversity of Canadian demographics - Canadians reported belonging to at least one of 200 other ethnic origins (Statistics Canada, 2008). Approximately 16% of Canadians belong to a visible minority, an increase from 13% in
2001 and 11% in 1996. Newcomers to Canada are a significant contributor to this increase in the visible minority population, as nearly 75% of recent immigrants were visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2008).

**First-Generation Parents and Second-Generation Adolescents: Balancing Two Cultures**

It is particularly interesting to examine immigrant families where parents and adolescents are born in different cultural contexts from each other. Current research suggests that first-generation immigrant parents who have been socialized and educated in their home countries remain tied to their cultures of origin but their native-born children in the host country are more readily adapting to the culture, language, values and behaviours of the receiving society (Umana-Taylor et al., 2006).

Many adolescents retain some ties to the native cultures through their immigrant parents. Crockett, Driscoll, and Russell (2008) revealed that European immigrant parents who encouraged their adolescents to develop and maintain a connection to their native culture had adolescents who had an overall better understanding of their parents with regard to decision making, parenting practices, and rule setting. Also, parents who allowed their adolescents to explore their native culture on their own terms was linked to the positive formation of the adolescents’ ethnic identity (Crockett et al., 2008). In addition, Latino immigrant parents who used high control and demandingness in order for their adolescents to adopt certain aspects of their native culture most often contributed to adolescents’ increased resistance to learning about their parents’ culture of origin and experiences. These types of situations also increased the levels of conflict with their parents (Birman & Taylor-Ritzler, 2007).

Birman and Taylor-Ritzler (2007) examined 226 adolescents, American youth and immigrant adolescents from the former Soviet Union, and found that immigrant families reported
a greater degree of conflict than non-immigrant families. More specifically, studies have demonstrated the negative impact of acculturation gaps on family relationships, particularly parent-adolescent relationships. For adolescents of immigrant families, it was difficult to live with the expectations and demands of one culture in the home and another at school and/or with peers. Adolescents may not turn to their parents with problems and concerns, believing that their parents are unaware or not as knowledgeable about the culture and its institutions to provide them with good advice and assistance, therefore tending to close communication lines with their parents. In addition, they may perceive their parents as already burdened with the multiple stresses of acculturation and resettlement (Chao, 2006).

Birman and Taylor-Ritzler (2007) further examined immigrant youth and the frequency in which their parents relied on them to help them with the new language and different cultural and social situations; such as doctors’ appointments, parent-teacher conferences, and with financial and legal documents. Thus, adolescents became language and cultural brokers. Language brokering refers to children of immigrant families who translate for their parents and/or other individuals. Cultural brokering, on the other hand, is defined as the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of successful adaptation to a new cultural context (Chao, 2006).

Many adolescents from immigrant families are placed in a role of cultural brokers, acting as cross-cultural intermediaries between their parents and the world outside the family. Many adolescents from immigrant families are expected to help translate information to their parents, acting as language brokers. Through their role as language brokers, these adolescents contribute to the acculturation of their parents by transmitting important cultural information to them.
However, parents’ reliance on their adolescent for such brokering may have consequences for parent-adolescent relationships and adolescents’ adjustment and well-being (Chao, 2006).

Birman and Talylor-Ritzler (2007), also demonstrated a significant effect of adolescents’ perceptions of their family relationships and their acculturation and psychological distress. Psychological distress for adolescents was lessened for immigrants when they were provided various community resources that allowed them to develop the skills necessary to develop relationships and negotiate various life tasks in their new host country. Resources included a mentorship program, seminars, and pamphlets on information about positive coping and adjustment strategies for newcomers. Adolescents reported feeling positively about their integration into the Westernized culture because they viewed it as a route to success; whereas, other youth expressed feelings of being threatened and rejected involvement and acculturation into the host country. The latter was linked to increased parent-adolescent conflicts because the adolescent is torn between family/cultural obligations and expectations, and adjusting to the host country.

Alongside language and cultural brokering, extensive negotiation may occur as parents attempt to transmit core elements of their ethnic culture to their children as children attempt to reconcile the teachings of their parents with their experiences in the host culture (Kwak, 2003). Areas that may be a potential locus for parent-adolescent conflict involve issues on adolescent autonomy, differences in moral values and norms for parent-adolescent relationships. Kwak (2003) argued that there is a major tension between immigrant parents’ preference for family interdependence, and children’s striving for their own independence and autonomy. Rather, it is important to note that conflicts or disagreements between immigrant parent and adolescent
should not be seen as an outcome or endpoint in development. It should be viewed as a catalyst for change, whether positive or negative (Chung, Flook, & Fuligni, 2009).

When families from these backgrounds immigrate to North America, they are confronted with a culture with very different attitudes about the obligations of children towards their parents (Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009). European American adolescents hold values reflecting the greater individualism of American culture. Although they also have obligations to their parents and families, they expect greater equality with their parents and less emphasis on obedience. Young people typically move away from home at the end of adolescence, and there is less expectation that grown children will physically care for elderly parents. In keeping with these expectations, European American parents encourage less interdependence in their children than do parents in collectivist cultures (Chao, 1994).

**Balancing Autonomy and Family Obligation**

An emphasis on family obligation is a common element of the unique cultural traditions of many groups from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. However, some research claims that too many family obligations and expectations can cause significant stress for adolescents (Fuligni, 1998; Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Wu & Kim, 2009). Immigrant research has explored language and cultural brokering among adolescent youth and revealed both negative and positive consequences for the adolescent’s well-being (Chao, 2006).

As a result of the dramatic increase in immigration over the past 30 years in North America, the contrast between cultural traditions and societal norms may be especially relevant for adolescents in an immigrant family, who find themselves in a Westernized culture that considers the adolescent developmental stage to be a critical period for the acquisition of individual autonomy and identity (Smetana & Chuang, 2001). Only recently has research begun
to address the importance of adolescents’ contributions to family functioning, especially in immigrant families.

Adolescents’ participation in language brokering may lead to a better parent-adolescent relationship because brokering provides more opportunities for communication and understanding parents’ acculturation experiences and challenges. Some studies indicated that language and cultural brokering involves a great deal of complexity, more than the logistics of translating and interpreting communication between individuals. Not only do children serve as negotiators for their immigrant parents, they also advocate on behalf of their parents across a large range of different institutions and settings. Chao (2006) has also stressed an additional complexity of this role for youth in that they are often involved in unequal power relationship between themselves, as brokers, and their parents because the parents are in a position of authority and supervision to the adolescent brokers. Some researchers refer to this unequal power shift between parent and adolescent as a “role reversal.”

McQuillan and Tse (1995) found that brokers felt that they were more mature and independent compared to their non-immigrant peers and that they had gained a sophisticated and cultural understanding of the larger world through their language brokering experiences. Others (Umana-Taylor, Bhanot & Shin, 2006) have found that a greater proportion of adolescent brokers reported positive feelings about brokering such as being proud to broker (54%) compared to adolescent brokers who experience feelings of embarrassment when brokering for their parents (11%). Some adolescents even reported feelings of higher levels of respect and trust for their parents because of their increased understanding of their parents’ native culture and the immigrant challenges that they have had to face over the years. Some studies (Wu & Yeong
Kim, 2009) also discovered that language brokering in early adolescence helped contribute to higher academic achievement in both reading and writing.

Other researchers, however, have found that there is increased stress among adolescent brokers (Wu & Yeong Kim, 2009). More specifically, their feelings of embarrassment, frustration, and resentment towards their parents may be indicative of the potential role reversals that adolescent brokers experience with their parents. Adolescents often expressed feelings of annoyance and tension in language brokering situations, particularly when their parents demanded help from adolescents instead of communicating the importance of the broker role and positively reinforcing this behaviour (Chao, 2006). Similarly, Wu and Chao (2011) found that language brokering for Chinese and European immigrant adolescent youth was associated with decreased self-esteem. They suggested that emotions during language brokering for parents were crucial to self-perception. Thus, positive emotions when language brokering (e.g., calm, proud or useful) were found to be positively correlated with self-esteem; whereas negative feelings (e.g., angry, nervous, embarrassed, or uncomfortable) were negatively associated with self-esteem. The same study found that family obligations and high familial expectations were associated with lower mental health in Israeli adolescent immigrants and lower levels of acculturative stress. These studies demonstrated that adolescents are often conflicted between feelings of responsibility for their families and their own personal interests. Unfortunately, there is limited research on the outcomes of adolescent language and cultural brokering among immigrant families, including European-Croatian Canadian immigrants.

**Croatian Culture**

Current societal and cultural contexts are important to consider as providing insight into the challenges faced by immigrant youth and families. Investigating the experience of the
Croatian-Canadian immigrant population requires specific attention to their unique history, recent social changes, cultural framework, adjustment needs, and pathways of integration into a new cultural context (Klarin & Sasic, 2008).

Croatia has been considered an independent country since 1995. It shares borders with Italy, Slovenia, and Hungary to the north and with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia) and Bosnia-Herzegovina to the east and south. Croatia occupies the region along the Adriatic coast and has a Mediterranean climate. Seventy percent of the land is considered farmland and used for agricultural and farming purposes. The capital city, Zagreb, the largest city in Croatia, is centrally located and is known historically as the political, commercial and intellectual center of the country. In addition, the majority of the Croatian population is Catholic. As of 2009, the population in Croatia was approximately 5.5 million (Statistics Canada, 2008).

Prior to 1995, Croatia was a Socialist Republic, part of a six-part Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Under the new communist system, the country endured a rebuilding process after World War II. In the 1960s to 1970s, the country underwent significant industrialization and started developing tourism along the Adriatic Coast. Before World War II, Croatia’s industry was insignificant and almost invisible; the vast majority of the population were employed in agriculture and farming. By 1991, the country was completely transformed into a modern industrialized state. At the same time, the Croatian Adriatic coast had become an internationally popular tourist destination. The government brought exceptional economic and industrial growth, and high levels of social security (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 1997).

In 1990, the first democratic elections were held and a people’s movement, called the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), was elected by a relative margin against the reformed communist party. The HDZ’s intentions were to secure independence for Croatia but this
conflicted with the Yugoslavian Republic which in turn, initiated a civil war between the people of Croatia and the ethnic Serbs in the Yugoslavian Republic. The war began in 1991 and ended in 1995; the end result was an independent Croatia. Although this was a large victory for the Croatian people, the country was in an economic depression after the war and many people had to leave the country as refugees. The majority of Croatian people fled to countries such as Canada, United States, Australia, and Germany (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 1997).

There have been many noteworthy shifts in values, beliefs, and attitudes of Croatian people after the Civil war. First, opportunities and perceptions of women changed. During the war, women became primary providers for their children and families and dominated the workforce because husbands were fighting in the war. Many women went back to school after the war in order to have more opportunities for better jobs. In 1994, only 18% of the population in University were females; whereas in 2006, 43% of the population in universities were females (Klarin, 2006). According to Klarin and Sasic (2008), 54% of the university population included females. To further support the shift in gender attitudes after the Civil war, the first female prime minister of Croatia was recently elected in 2009.

Opportunities for women and social change after the Civil war also impacted child-rearing views and beliefs. Shortly after the war had ended, there was an increased number of men who stayed at home with their children whereas mothers were the primary financial providers. These societal shifts impacted how parents raised their children. Traditionally, the sons were expected to provide for their families if fathers could not fulfill their breadwinner role. Thus, sons were given more attention, opportunities, responsibilities, and had higher expectations by parents. However, shortly after the Civil war, females were considered equal to their male siblings and would also be expected to provide for their families when parents were incapable
due to old age or illness. The patriarchal structure of former Yugoslavia began to slowly deteriorate as the new democratic government went to power and Croatia was officially an independent nation (Klarin, 2006).

Another noteworthy shift in beliefs and attitudes of Croatian people after the Civil war was the increased emphasis on the importance of independence. These values shifted after the Civil war because Croatia fought to become an independent nation and those struggles further influenced the integration of independence in child-rearing practices. Before the Civil war, Croatian families defined independence as getting married and then leaving the home. However, after the Civil war in 1995, Croatian parents began to view independence as a central component in positive childhood and adolescent development. Recent research conducted in Croatia revealed that many parents had shifted their definitions of independence from getting married and leaving home to being self-sufficient and competent, and viewed this as a necessary developmental component in order to fulfill family and cultural expectations (Hoblaj & Crpic, 2000).

After the Civil war, there was also an increase in industrialization in Croatia which led to a decreased emphasis on the importance of farming. Many Croatian families left their farms and migrated to urban cities in order to find better jobs and new opportunities. Parental views shifted from having high expectations for first born children and/or sons, to equal expectations for all children. Child-rearing in Croatia became more child-centered and less restrictive. Many families began to realize the importance of family due to the loss of so many during the war. Parents placed more emphasis on the value of warmth, support, and love when rearing their child (Peric, 2002). The nation began to shift towards a more independent ideology, reinforcing and
encouraging different values, beliefs, and attitudes towards parent-adolescent relationships (Klarin, 2006).

There has been a significant increase in Croatian immigration to Canada. In the early 1900’s to the 1950’s, there were approximately 6,000 Croatian immigrants who migrated to Canada (Klarin & Sasic, 2008). Due to the country’s economic instability, many Croatians immigrated to Canada for safety and economic opportunities. It is important to note that the majority of Croatians who immigrated to Canada during the war were forced from their homes as refugees. After the Civil war, however, there was a significant increase in Croatian immigrants coming to Canada, over 100,000 in 1994 (Klarin & Sasic, 2008). However, there is very limited research on Croatian families and their parent-child relationships in Canada.

**The Present Study**

With such a unique socio-historical background, it is important to examine Croatian families as a separate and distinct group. Croatian’s history of political wars have influenced parenting practices and beliefs and so it is critical to investigate this group on their own. Specifically, the present study was to explore Croatian immigrant parent-adolescent relationships, with a focus on first-generation parents and their second-generation youth. Exploring the perspectives of youth will allow us to better understand the unique family dynamics and relationships in Croatian families.

The main goals of this exploratory study were to: (1) examine the developmental and cultural challenges that adolescents face at the individual level, and their relationships with their parents (e.g., types of communication, autonomy promotion/inhibition, conflicts, and resolution strategies), (2) gain greater insight into the adolescents’ perspectives on contributing factors that may either facilitate or hinder their relationships with their parents, and (3) investigate
adolescents views of potential cultural differences and similarities with their parents. The research questions for this present study were as follows:

1. How do adolescents define a good parent-adolescent relationship?
2. How do adolescents define their relationships with their parents?
3. Are there cultural differences or similarities between first generation immigrant parents and second generation immigrant adolescents?

Using a qualitative approach, this study provides an understanding of Croatian-Canadian immigrant families by examining how second-generation immigrant Croatian adolescents view their family dynamics and functioning, their own parent-adolescent relationships, and how adolescents negotiate their needs with parents, while both navigating and assisting parents’ adjustment into the Canadian culture and society.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 20 second-generation Croatian immigrant adolescents. There were an equal numbers of male \( (n = 10) \) and female \( (n = 10) \) adolescents. The average age of participation in this study was 16.55 years of age (range = 14 to 19 years), and all adolescents were from intact, two-parent households. The inclusion criteria for adolescent youth included: (1) both parents were a first generation Croatian immigrant and married (2) youth were between the ages of 14 to 19 years (3) youth were second generation Croatian immigrants, meaning that they were born in Canada but have parents who were not born in Canada and (4) adolescents were living with their parents. All participants spoke fluent in English. All of the parents’ levels of education were high school or less, and all living in a rural area.

Youth resided in Ontario and were recruited from cities, including: Ancaster \( (n = 8) \), Hamilton \( (n = 4) \), Oakville \( (n = 3) \), Mississauga \( (n = 3) \), and Burlington \( (n = 2) \). One set of
participants were siblings (a male and a female) and one participant was family-related (i.e., cousins) to another participant. All participants completed and returned a background questionnaire. All adolescent participated in a semi-structured interview at their homes.

**Procedures**

Prior to recruiting participants, ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Guelph was obtained (Appendix A). Once ethics approval was given, recruitment posters were posted in and around Croatian community organizations and settlement agencies (Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, Ontario and YMCA Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford: Immigrant Settlement Services) (Appendix B). Participants were also recruited through family, friends, local Croatian Catholic Churches, and Croatian community organizations. Youth who were interested in participating in the study contacted the researcher via telephone or e-mail. Snowball sampling was utilized when several participants had expressed interest in the study and knew of other individuals meeting inclusion criteria. Although convenience sampling is often less desirable as a recruitment strategy due to potential inability to generalizable research to larger populations, it can be a successful recruitment sampling method for difficult to reach populations, such as ethnic minority participants and immigrant families (Weiss, 1994).

Confirmation of the participation in the study was done through direct contact between the participants and the researcher via telephone or e-mail. Sixteen participants confirmed interest in participation directly via telephone with researcher, and four participants confirmed interest via e-mail with researcher. During the initial conversations via telephone and/or e-mail with potential participants, the researcher provided a brief screening interview to ensure that adolescents met the inclusion criteria for this study. In addition, an explanation of the study’s purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits were briefly discussed (Appendix C). They were
reassured that this involvement was voluntary, that there was no pressure to participate, and they were able to withdraw from the study at any point in time, or skip any questions. Once participants confirmed interest in participating, and it was determined that they met inclusion criteria, interview dates, times, and place were scheduled and agreed upon. Also, reminder e-mails were sent out to all participants the day before scheduled participation time from the researcher.

Before participating in the study, participants and parents were required to read and sign a consent form outlining the purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits of taking part in the study. All participants were informed of their rights as participants and given the opportunity to ask any questions or concerns before signing the consent form (Appendix D). Compensation for participation in the study was a $20 gift certificate per individual, and this was given immediately after the completion of the interview.

Data Collection

Background questionnaire. Each participant first filled out a background questionnaire before the interview (see (Appendix E). Specifically, the questions included: gender, age, date of birth, religion, ethnicity, level of education, average grades, involvement in extracurricular activities, current place of residence, and employment status. The background questionnaires were collected on the same day of the scheduled interview.

Interview guide. All participants took part in a face-to-face, semi-structured interview (order of questions remained constant) in their homes (see (Appendix F). Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes in length (average interview length = 52 minutes). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews are often the main source and most widely used means of data collection for qualitative research
in order to get greater insight into individuals’ experiences and perspectives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews were designed to extract detailed responses from adolescents and to promote meaningful discussions for a deeper understanding of Croatian immigrant families living in Canada, specifically second-generation youth (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005).

An open-ended, semi-structured interview was used to assess various aspects of immigrant Croatian families and parent-adolescent relationships. The interview consisted of seven questions. The first section (Questions 1-3) aimed to explore how adolescents defined a good parent-adolescent relationship and adolescents’ perceptions of their own relationships with both mothers and fathers. The second section (Question 4) explored communication between adolescents and their parents, both mothers and fathers. The third section (Questions 5-6) examined potential conflicts and disagreements between parents and adolescent from the adolescent’s perspective, as well resolution strategies used in order to resolve parent-adolescent conflicts. The last section (Question 7) focused on cultural differences, clashes, or similarities that existed between the parents and adolescent from the adolescent’s perspective. Following each question, several non-specific probes were used in order to elicit a richer description, including: “Can you give me an example? Can you expand further? What do you mean by that? Anything else?”

All data gathered for this study was confidential, and participants were assigned an identification number. Although written transcripts of the digitally recorded interviews are quoted throughout the results, all participants’ identities were kept private, and pseudonyms are used for any names and cities mentioned.

Data Analysis
The epistemological stance used for this scope of inquiry is a social constructionist approach. Social constructionist epistemology examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, and experiences are influenced by a range of discourses operating within society. The assumption is that reality is socially constructed and dependent on multiple situations and conditions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach provided a framework to examine how second generation immigrant Croatian youth make sense of their relationships with their parents, and how the personal, cultural, developmental, and social areas of their lives influence their parent-adolescent experiences.

Braun and Clarke (2006) stress that one of the advantages to thematic analysis is that it is flexible and not bound to a particular epistemological positioning. A benefit to not holding a prior theory or hypothesis allows the researcher to be more open to descriptions that are contained in the data, and change or integrate other relevant theories which will allow for richer, detailed, and complex descriptions of data. Given that there is minimal research on the experiences of second-generation immigrant Croatian youth, this method was an appropriate method of analysis in order to effectively convey detailed and in depth descriptions of interpretations, opinions, values, perceptions, and experiences told by adolescent participants during interview process.

**Qualitative analysis.** Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze adolescents’ transcribed interview responses as it allows for patterns or themes within a dataset to be identified and interpreted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The procedure for this qualitative method generally followed the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke. For the first phase of analyses, the researcher immersed herself in the data and familiarized herself with participants’ detailed responses by collecting, transcribing, and repeatedly reading and re-reading all interviews. The
researcher also wrote memos detailing overall impressions of each participant and interview. The transcripts and memos were reviewed throughout the process and as such, this phase was ongoing. The second phase involved generating a comprehensive and inclusive set of initial codes. Each transcript was read thoroughly and initial notes were made on significant concepts, ideas, and thoughts provided and described by adolescents in their interviews. Once initial notes were prepared and reviewed, and codes and key-words were identified within interview data, the researcher moved onto phase 3 of analyses.

Phase 3 involved organizing initial notes and codes into potential overarching themes and subthemes. The initial notes and codes identified in phase 2 were constantly reviewed as the researcher attempted to interpret adolescents’ responses into conceptual and significant themes by once again reading and re-reading transcribed interview data. As all codes and notes were organized, initial candidates for overarching themes and sub themes were developed by the researcher. In order to emphasize importance and relevance of overarching themes and subthemes identified, quotes were extracted from interview data and constantly compared to one other to ensure they closely matched the concept for their particular themes.

In phase 4, the themes and subthemes were further reviewed and refined, and all data extracts for each theme were read and examined for meaning. According to Braun and Clarke, the goal of this phase of analysis is to determine whether or not the overarching themes and subthemes initially identified in phase 3 corresponded in relation to the entire set of data, as well as with the specific coded data extracts. The researcher refined themes by examining the sets of quotes extracted from the transcribed interview data for meaning to ensure that themes were relevant, significant, consistent and distinctive from each other. Each transcript was reread to assess the relevance and credibility of each theme in relation to their data extracts. New themes
or sub themes were identified and reworked when reviewing initial codes, themes, data extracts, and quotations which reflected a concept different from the original theme. In addition, codes, themes, and subthemes that were not supported through detailed and relevant data extracts or codes were discarded by researcher in order to narrow down the most significant themes and subthemes. The last phase required the researcher to reread each theme and the coded data extracts associated to each specific theme. The researcher then defined and named the final set of themes and subthemes for the study. According to Braun and Clarke, by defining and refining themes and subthemes, the researcher identifies the “essence” of what each theme represents and how the specific theme or subtheme captures the meaningful and detailed descriptions provided by participants in their interview responses.

Several coding systems were developed to address each of the research questions for this study. Each interview question and their respective probing questions were analyzed to produce the following coding systems: (1) important components of a good parent-adolescent relationship; (2) adolescent perceptions of their relationship with parents; (3) parent-adolescent communication; (4) parent-adolescent conflict and disagreements; (5) conflict resolution strategies; and (6) culture. For example, “important components of a good parent-adolescent relationship” is a theme, whereas subthemes included such areas as, communication, trust, understanding, personal freedom, support (emotional, informational, instrumental).

To ensure trustworthiness and inter-rater reliability of the data analyses, the researcher and an independent cultural researcher examined responses, codes, concepts, data extracts, themes and subthemes identified from the sample at each phase of analyses. Discrepancies between the researcher and independent researcher were fully discussed and agreed upon. The
process of writing the analysis also included memos documenting the analytic decisions, insights, and questions that occurred throughout the period of data analysis.

**Results**

The interviews elicited hundreds of pages of rich text and thus, it was imperative to focus on key emergent themes. Adolescents responded to questions about their experiences as second-generation immigrant youth, as well as open-ended questions about their relationship with parents. Their responses described the roles these contextual and developmental factors play in the family environment and their relationships with both of their parents, both mother and father. Based from participants’ responses, overarching themes and subthemes were developed to reflect adolescents’ perceptions, interpretations, and experiences discussed during the interview process.

**Components of a Good Parent-Adolescent Relationship**

Adolescent participants were asked to reveal their perceptions of what components make a positive parent-adolescent relationship. Youth provided various responses along five themes: communication, mutual understanding, trust, personal freedom, and support. Support was further differentiated into subthemes which included emotional, informational, and instrumental support (see Table 1).

**Communication.** In defining a good parent-adolescent relationship, the most prominent response was the importance of communication. Youth defined communication as the ability to converse freely and openly with parents about personal and private issues, as well as every-day issues. Almost all youth (18) stated that a strong line of open and honest communication between adolescent and parent was a key component in a good relationship. As one 16-year-old female stated, “Communication is what makes your relationship grow and get stronger with your
parents. It is the most important aspect in maintaining strong relationships” (F13). Another example was given by a 17-year-old male, who expressed,

Well, a good parent-adolescent relationship needs a pretty decent line of communication going, you know, let them [parents] know where you are going and when you will be home, who you are with, that way they won’t worry. For me, I feel comfortable talking to them about anything and I know if I had a problem or an issue, we can work it out. (M20)

**Mutual understanding.** A second feature of a good parent-adolescent relationship focused on the aspect of understanding. According to these participants, understanding was defined as the ability to view issues and conflicts from multiple perspectives. The majority of youth (17) endorsed this relationship dimension as an important component to a good relationship with parents. A 19-year-old male participant mentioned, “I think good parents listen to their teen and really try to understand their feelings and perspectives on things, instead of trying to control everything” (M01). Similarly, a 16-year-old female participant stated, “If parents want a good relationship with their kids, I think they need to be understanding and patient” (F04). Another participant, a 17-year-old male, emphasized the importance of mutual understanding, “Good parents try and understand where their children are coming from on issues, but I think a strong family means that everyone should make an effort to understand one another and be open to different perspectives and opinions” (M12).

**Trust.** The concept of trust also emerged as a key relationship factor. The majority of youth (17) mentioned that trust was an important element to any good relationship, especially for having and maintaining a strong and solid parent-adolescent relationship. Specifically, all female participant youth and some male youth mentioned that trust was an important component in a strong parent-adolescent relationship. For example, one 19-year-old male said, “Even though parents and teens will fight, you have to have trust for your parents and know they have your back. That makes a really strong bond between family members, and especially parents and their
kids” (M06). A 19-year-old female participant also disclosed, “I definitely think that trust is really important in a good relationship, there should always a strong sense of trust between the parent and child” (F10).

**Personal freedom.** Personal freedom also emerged as a dominant theme (16 youth) where youth discussed the importance of parents encouraging youth to express their independence and personal preferences. Specifically, participants discussed the importance of parents allowing an adolescent to grow, learn, and develop into a unique self. A 17-year-old female expressed her view on personal freedom and its contribution to healthy adolescent development,

Parents should really encourage their children to develop independence when they are in their teenage years because it will really help them later in life. They will be more confident in themselves as a person and be more self-sufficient. (F07)

**Support.** Lastly, support was identified as an important component for good parent-adolescent relationships (17 youth). Participants described three different subthemes of support: emotional, informational, and instrumental.

**Informational support.** The most common type of support that was discussed by adolescent participants was informational support. Youth expressed that parents who provide informational support and guidance could contribute greatly to helping adolescents learn valuable life lessons. A 19-year-old female youth mentioned, “Parents should provide guidance and information about things teenagers might not know yet. They have a lot of experience and wisdom, and they should share that openly with their children” (F18). In addition, a 19-year-old male said, “I think good parents teach their children important values and lessons through their own experiences, and try their best to guide their children to a happy and healthy future as an adult” (M01).
**Instrumental support.** Instrumental support was another type of support mentioned by youth. Adolescent participants emphasized the importance of parents providing financial assistance during early adolescence. For example, an 18-year-old male youth mentioned, “I think it’s important for parents to support their children financially, especially when you are old enough to start going out with friends but too young to work” (M02). Another male youth, 17-years-old, stated, “Financial support from parents is important because it can really influence what kind of social life your kid will have” (M12). Moreover, an 18-year-old female participant also said, “Supporting your kids financially is important because that may give them opportunities in life they wouldn’t have originally been able to have” (F17).

**Emotional support.** The last type of support discussed by youth was emotional support. Adolescents described emotional support in many ways, including: physical affection, closeness, care, involvement, and nurturance. More female participants endorsed emotional support from their parents, as an essential component necessary in developing and maintaining a strong parent-adolescent relationship, compared to their male counterparts. A 16-year-old female said, “It’s good when parents tell you how much they love you, but I think showing the love through hugs, kisses, and physical affection is really critical if you want to form a really close parent-child bond” (F04). In addition, a 16-year-old male expressed, “It’s important to feel loved and cared for by your parents if you want a close relationship” (M03).

**Adolescent Parent-Adolescent Relationship Ratings**

To place adolescents’ perceptions of their relationship with their parents in context, they were first asked to rate their relationships on a 5-point likert scale (5 = very strong, 1 = poor). In their ratings for mothers, many youth (13) expressed a very strong relationship. Moreover, five youth said their relationship with their mother was fairly good. Only two participants rated their
relationship with their mother as poor. Participants were also asked to give their relationship with their father a rating. Half of the adolescents (10) expressed a very strong relationship with their fathers. Seven participants rated their relationship as fairly good. Only three youth rated their relationship with their father as poor. In addition, when combining the ratings given by both male and female youth, thirteen of the twenty adolescent participants rated their relationship with both parents as very strong.

**Adolescent Perceptions of their Relationship with Parents**

Youth were asked to describe components of their relationship with their parents; both mother and father, and explain relationship ratings given in previous interview response. Youth described various different aspects of their relationships with their mothers and fathers, both positive and negative. Several subthemes were identified from the interview responses. For positive components mentioned, youth focused on six subthemes, including: communication, mutual understanding, trust, personal freedom, mutual respect and cultural impact. Four themes were also identified as negative attributes including: conflict and control, personal freedom issues, cultural impact, and generational gap (see Table 2).

**Support.** The most commonly mentioned attribute to their relationships with their parents was support, including three distinct forms: emotional, informational, and instrumental.

**Informational support.** The most common form of support mentioned by youth was informational. For example, a 19-year-old male expressed, “I really value my parents’ advice. They give it to me all the time. I listen to them most of the time because I know they want the best for me” (M06). In addition, an 18-year-old female participant revealed, “I think an important part of my relationship with my parents is the advice they give me. They have taught me a lot in my life and I really value that in our relationship” (F11).
Some females mentioned that they would rather ask their mother for advice than their father. More specifically, a 16-year-old female revealed, “My mom is the one who I always go to for advice. She knows everything about girl stuff, not my dad” (F04). On the other hand, some male participants expressed that they would rather seek out advice from their father than their mother. For example, an 18-year-old male said,

If I need advice on something, I ask my dad. He has gone through a lot in his life, has a lot of experience and knows quite a bit. My dad’s advice and knowledge is more relevant to my life than what my mom talks about with me. I go to her for other things. (M02)

**Instrumental support.** Instrumental support was mentioned by adolescent participants as well. As an 18-year-old male described, “I really appreciate everything my parents have done and given me. I know it probably isn’t easy financially supporting all of us” (M19). An 18-year-old female participant expressed similar feelings of appreciation for parents assisting her financially and allowing her to have more opportunities than her parents had, “My parents are going to help me pay for university. I need their financial help or else I wouldn’t be able to have these educational opportunities. I appreciate it so much” (F14).

There were, however, some differences expressed regarding the parent they would most likely seek instrumental support from. Specifically, seven youth viewed their fathers as the financial provider for the family, and all those youth also reported that they were more likely to seek financial help from their fathers than their mothers. For example, a 16-year-old female stated, “I always ask my dad for money if I need some. My mom doesn’t deal with the money in our family” (F04). Some youth even revealed that they rely on their father exclusively for financial support. A 14-year-old male said, “I only go to my dad for anything money related” (M05).
Emotional support. The final type of support that was mentioned by many youth (13) was emotional support. Almost all of the adolescents who expressed emotional support as an important dimension in their relationship with their parents were females. Many of those adolescent females described emotional support as involving: quality time, physical affection, care, closeness, and nurturance. For example, a 16-year-old female said, “I think an important aspect of my relationship with my parents is that they don’t just tell me they love me, they show me in forms of affection and by spending time with me” (F13).

More female youth emphasized the importance of forming an emotional bond and sense of closeness with parents. Moreover, when females discussed emotional support, they tended to describe physical affection, whereas the male youth focused more on concepts such as nurturance and parental involvement. For example, an 18-year-old male explained, “My parents are very involved in my life and that keeps us really close and connected to one another. There is a strong bond and that is really important to have with your parents” (M19). Furthermore, a 18-year-old female stated, “An important aspect of my relationship with my parents is the love we have for each other, and how much we care about each other. That is often shown through physical affection in my family, with a lot of kisses and hugs and saying ‘I love you’ all the time” (F14).

Some youth made specific distinctions between their mothers and fathers when discussing emotional availability and support. Several adolescents reported that their mothers provided them with more emotional support than their fathers. A 17-year old female mentioned, “My mom provides a lot of love, care, and physical affection. My dad shows he loves us in different ways, but he isn’t very emotional or sensitive” (F07). A 19-year-old-male stated, “My
dad and I spend time together. We go fishing, up to the cottage, and play soccer together. That’s how I know he cares and that makes us have a good relationship” (M06).

**Communication.** The next relationship dimension that was most commonly mentioned by adolescents when describing their relationship with their parents was communication (18 youth). Youth discussed open communication as a key element to their positive relationships with both their mother and father. For example, a 16-year-old male said,

I can talk to my parents about anything. I know some of my friends can’t do that with their parents and they end up fighting all the time. Since I can talk to my parents about anything, we barely ever fight. Talking makes our relationship really good. (M16)

Furthermore, an 18-year-old female participant said, “I have really great communication with my parents. I can talk to them about anything and I know they don’t judge me” (F11). An 18-year-old male participant mentioned, “Both my parents are awesome with being open to talking about stuff whenever I have a problem or just want to talk. I can talk to them about anything and that is an important part of our relationship” (M02).

However, some participants had different lines of communication with their parents. Specifically, six youth, primarily girls, felt more comfortable talking with their mothers than with their fathers. A 16-year-old female expressed, “I definitely have a better line of communication with my mom than my dad. I’m more comfortable talking to her about everything” (F13). In addition, some youth, primarily males, indicated a better line of communication with their fathers. For example, an 18-year-old male youth explained, “I have better communication with my dad because we have a lot in common and he is easy to talk to” (M09).

**Mutual understanding.** Several youth (14) described the concept of mutual understanding, and illustrated this concept as the ability to view situations from multiple
perspectives and acknowledge that everyone has different experiences, viewpoints, and opinions. The majority of youth mentioned that mutual understanding between parent and adolescent is important for building and maintaining a strong relationship with their parents. A 19-year-old female revealed, “My parents and I try to understand where each other is coming from in certain situations. When we started being more understanding toward each other, our relationship grew even stronger” (F18). Mutual understanding was also expressed as a key component when experiencing positive conversations with parents by both male and female youth. For example, a 17-year-old male explained, “When my parents and I understand each other, our conversations always end in a positive way and we all feel better” (M12).

**Trust.** The concept of trust was described by youth as a crucial element to their parent-adolescent relationship, and defined this aspect as the ability to feel confident in relying on their parents. Fifteen youth mentioned that trust was a very important aspect to their relationship with their parents. Moreover, youth expressed that they experienced trust with both their parents. A 17-year-old female stated, “I trust both my parents equally. I know they have the best intentions towards me and I can rely on them for anything” (F07). In addition, a 19-year-old male reported, “Honestly, if you can’t trust your parents, it would be really hard to trust anyone. They are like the one solid, trusting relationship I have in my life that I never have to doubt” (M01).

**Personal freedom.** Personal freedom was mentioned by many youth. Participants described personal freedom in both a positive and negative respect when discussing their relationships. Some participants mentioned personal freedom and independence as an important and positive aspect of their parent relationship, whereas other youth discussed the desire for more personal freedom and independence from parents. More specifically, a 16-year-old male participant revealed that promotion of independence and personal freedom was lacking in his
relationship with his parents, “My relationship with my parents is good, but I really wish they would let me go out more with my friends. They have a hard time accepting that I need more independence from them and that impacts our relationship, definitely” (M16). However, an 18 year-old female youth discussed how much she valued personal freedom promotion in her parent-adolescent relationship. She stated,

I really feel like I have a strong relationship with my parents and one thing I really value is that they try to get to know me as a person, a mature person and not a little kid anymore. They have always encouraged me to be involved in whatever hobbies or sports I was interested in. It helped shape who I am today and it makes me confident in the choices I make. (F14)

In addition, some participants mentioned that one parent promoted personal freedom more often than the other. Specifically, some youth mentioned that their mothers promoted more independence than their fathers in the family, and described their fathers as being more strict, traditional, and conservative in their parenting practices than mothers. For example, a 16 year old female disclosed,

My dad is really strict and has really conservative views about everything. He doesn’t really like the idea of me growing up. He is so conservative about dating too, I am still not officially allowed to date. It impacts our relationship because I have to start keeping things from him and only talk to my mother about it; she is more understanding when it comes to me growing up and dating, or even maturing and becoming my own individual person, apart from my family. (F04)

A few youth mentioned that their mothers were more understanding in regards to promoting and fostering independence during adolescence. More specifically, a 17-year-old male participant stated, “My mom is really good at giving me space and freedom. She isn’t really strict or demanding like my dad is. He is really traditional with his parenting views and isn’t as open to me staying out all night with friends or borrowing the car” (M20).

**Mutual respect.** Half of the adolescent participants, especially male youth, mentioned the dimension of respect in their parent-adolescent relationships. Respect was discussed as both
parents and adolescents demonstrating respectful behaviours towards one another, illustrating fairness when issues arise, and a sense of equality within their relationship. For example, a 19-year-old male explained, “I think what makes my relationship with my parents so strong is the fact that we respect each other. It took us a long time to get here but we are a really tight, loyal and respectful family now” (M06). An 18-year-old male reported, “I like that my parents respect me now that I am older and going into young adulthood. I know they will be there for me as I get older and I respect them and what they have gone through in their lifetime” (M19). However, an 18-year-old female expressed desiring more respect from parents, “My parents still treat me like a child and they don’t respect me as a competent and maturing young woman” (F11).

Exploring the dimension of respect in parent-adolescent relationships further, several females discussed issues surrounding wanting more respect in regards to privacy and being treated on a more equal level. For example, a 16-year-old female youth disclosed,

My parents and I have mutual respect, but sometimes my mom doesn’t respect that and it really affects our relationship. She doesn’t respect my privacy and when she doesn’t respect me or things that are important to me, it’s hard to want to respect her back. (F08)

On the other hand, other youth who mentioned the dimension of respect explained that they wanted more respect from their parents, and wishing their parents would acknowledge their maturity level. A 17-year-old male explained, “I think my relationship with my parents would be stronger if they treated me a bit more equally and acknowledged my maturity level. I’d like some credit for the good decisions I have made” (M12).

Conflict and control. Among many positive attributes described by youth, negative dimensions were also identified in the adolescents’ responses regarding their descriptions of their relationship with their parents. Of those negative attributes mentioned were the concepts of conflict and control. Adolescent participants expressed that they often experienced instances of
conflict and control from their mother, father, or both parents. The issues of conflict and control most commonly occurred during issues surrounding: rules, roles, responsibilities, curfew, dating, social tension, limitations, boundaries, restrictions, and parental guidelines. For example, a 16-year old male youth stated, “My parents and I definitely butt heads and we will get into arguments with each other because we sometimes see situations and issues differently” (M03).

Instances of conflict and control were equally identified in both male and female youth’s responses. However, there were some parental differences described by adolescent participants. Specifically, how they discussed conflict and control in their relationships with their parents. Many female youth mentioned that they experienced much more conflict and control issues with their mothers. A 17-year-old female stated, “I argue a lot more with my mom compared to my dad. She tries to micro-manage me sometimes or tries to control certain things about my day that can get me super frustrated and we end up fighting” (F07). Moreover, some male youth expressed experiencing more instances of conflict with their fathers. For example, an 18-year-old male said, “I argue with my dad much more than I do with my mom. We disagree on almost everything, so I don’t really feel that close to him” (M02).

Cultural impact. Many youth revealed that cultural differences between them and their immigrant parents impacted their relationships. Adolescents also mentioned language barriers and family obligations and expectations when discussing the component of culture and how it pertains to their relationship with parents. For example, a 16-year-old female said,

I know my parents and I would have a closer relationship if we didn’t have a language barrier. I usually talk to my sister or cousins or friends about stuff, not my parents. Sometimes it can take a lot of effort for me to explain things to them in Croatian when it would take 15 seconds to text or call a friend. (F04)

Other adolescent participants talked about cultural issues revolving around their parents pushing them to be involved in the Croatian culture. An 18-year-old male said, “My parents forced me to
go to Croatian school when I was younger. It was every Friday night and I hated having to go. For a while I really resented them for making me go and it impacted our relationship in a negative way” (M09). Some participants explained how culture played a positive role in their relationship with their parents. For example, a 19-year-old female said,

A big part of my relationship with my parents is our cultural background and all the values and traditions they have taught me. I don’t remember a time in my life, or a life metaphor that was ever discussed, without it somehow relating back to Croatia or something to do with Croatia. It’s a huge part of all our lives and we bond over that, it brings us closer together because we share that cultural identity as a family. (F18)

**Acculturation/Generational gap.** Youth also endorsed the concept of generational gaps between themselves and their parents, and discussed how this dimension impacted their relationships. A 19-year old male said, “Sometimes I find it hard to relate to my parents because they grew up so differently than I did and during a completely different time and country” (M01). Some youth even discussed generational differences regarding parenting practices and establishing rules around the house. For example, an 18 year-old-female expressed,

Both my parents are, and always have been, really traditional in their parenting beliefs and practices. I always had strict curfews and a no dating policy until I graduated high school. I couldn’t even get a cell phone until I could pay for it myself. That is pretty old school for this day and age. (F14)

More specifically, it is important to note that all youth who mentioned generational gaps between themselves and their parents also discussed generational issues surrounding technology, and also wishing their parents were more knowledgeable regarding modern and advanced technology. For example, a 19-year-old female expressed,

My mom honestly doesn’t even know how to turn the computer on and off properly. I don’t even think she knows exactly what the Internet is either. Both my parents always ask me why I spend so much time on the computer or texting. I kind of wish they understood why it was so important. They grew up in a time where advanced technology wasn’t around yet. It seems hard for them to catch up with the times. (F17)
Parent-Adolescent Communication

To further expand the current knowledge and understanding of parent-adolescent communication for this study, adolescent participants were asked to discuss communication with their parents. In addition, youth were asked to provide examples of what they discuss with their parents and were encouraged to make necessary distinctions between communication differences with mothers and fathers.

The majority of youth expressed that they have good communication with their parents, whereas some youth stated that they had poor communication with their parents. More specifically, many female youth revealed that they had better lines of communication with their mothers than their fathers. For example, a 16-year-old female youth said, “I am really only comfortable having completely open talks about stuff with my mom. I’m only comfortable talking to my dad about certain things” (F04). In contrast, many male youth expressed that they have strong lines of communication with their fathers. An 18-year-old male discussed, “I am more comfortable talking to my dad because we talk about a lot of stuff and we have always had an open and honest relationship” (M19).

When the adolescents were asked to provide some examples of what they discuss with their parents, many subthemes were identified. The themes for youth’s responses were organized into two overarching themes: developmental and cultural. The developmental topics mentioned by both male and female youth included: daily interactions, negotiating personal freedom, personal/private disclosure, and importance of education. As for the culture theme, the subthemes included: cultural barriers, language barriers and learning about culture (see Table 3).

**Daily interactions.** Youth expressed that they often discuss daily routines, chores, schedules, and appointments with their parents. Most adolescents said that they have at least one
encounter and conversation per day with one or more parents involving updates on the daily
events, scheduling, and appointment times. For example, a 14-year-old male explained,

We talk about our schedules and daily events almost every day. We usually talk about
what we have planned for the day, who is driving us to school, who has sports before or
after school, can I go out after school, do I have an appointment that day, chores, and
whatever else that needs to be talked about that day. (M05)

In addition, a 16-year-old female disclosed, “My parents and I talk on a daily basis about what is
going on that day, either before or after it happens. We don’t function well as a family without
touching base with each other and coordinating schedules, chores, responsibilities, and roles
among one another” (F08).

**Importance of education.** Another theme that was identified as a common topic
discussed with parents was school related issues, specifically the importance of education. Many
youth mentioned that they often talked to their parents about school topics such as homework
and grades. A 16-year-old female explained, “We talk about school a lot. My parents always
want to check in on how I’m doing in school. They really push me to stay on top of everything,
and talking about it helps me stay on top of school work” (F13). Some youth also revealed that
they often talk about extracurricular activities with their parents. For example a 17-year-old male
said, “My dad is really involved with my extracurricular activities and we talk about that a lot.
He drives me to practice every day and comes to watch my games. My mom and me usually talk
about my homework or grades” (M12).

**Negotiating personal freedom.** Another theme that emerged from the youth’s responses
about parent-adolescent communication was the notion that adolescents have to negotiate
personal freedom and independence with parents as they mature and grow older. More
specifically, they described having to communicate and negotiate rules, roles, and
responsibilities with their parents. For example, a 17-year-old male said, “I have to talk to my
parents about things like borrowing the car or extending my curfew. Sometimes they will adjust the rules a bit and let me have more freedom” (M20). In addition, a 16-year-old female disclosed,

I have to talk to them about certain things, whether I want to or not, like staying out later than usual. We usually have to have a long talk about that so my parents feel comfortable about me extending curfew, and once I convince them everything will be okay, they usually let me stay out with friends. (F13)

Some youth also expressed having to negotiate issues surrounding dating. A 17-year-old female revealed, “I have had many long conversations with my parents about wanting to start dating guys. I definitely had to negotiate with them about what was appropriate and what they were comfortable with since I live under their roof” (F07).

**Personal/private disclosure.** Another common theme that was discussed by youth was the ability to feel comfortable to have open communication about personal/private issues with their parents. Many youth emphasized that being able and comfortable disclosing personal and private issues with their parents openly contributed to increased feelings of closeness. For example, an 18-year-old female expressed, “I think what has brought me and my parents closer together is the fact that I can talk to them about anything, especially personal issues that I wouldn’t be comfortable talking to anyone else about” (F14).

Some youth also mentioned that being able to have these types of conversations with their parents allowed them to form a more mature and friendship type relationship. A 19-year-old male stated,

My relationship with my parents has changed a lot as I have grown older and matured more. I feel like we have more of a friendship between us now instead of I’m the parent and you are the child and you have to listen to me. It’s much more equal and that’s why I feel close and comfortable talking to them about personal matters. (M06)
In addition, a 16-year-old female disclosed, “My mom is like my best friend. I talk to her about private stuff and we can talk for hours. Being able to talk to her freely and without thinking about it allows me to be myself and gain confidence in who that is” (F13). When adolescents discussed changes in their relationships with parents, there were no differences between mothers and fathers mentioned.

More specifically, youth discussed personal and private topics that they commonly talk to their parents about. These topics included romantic and peer relationships. Many female youth expressed that they would rather talk to their mother about romantic and/or peer relationships than their fathers. For example, a 16-year-old female expressed, “I am much more comfortable talking to my mom about my friendships and issues I might have with friends. I never talk to my dad about guys I like or want to date. I only feel comfortable talking to my mom about that stuff. She understands” (F04).

Males, however, also mentioned that they were more comfortable disclosing romantic relationship details with their mothers. Some males mentioned that their mothers are more sensitive and know what women like. For example, a 19-year-old male revealed, “I always talk to my mom when I am having issues with my girlfriend or girls in general. She is sensitive and knows what girls like and how to act around them. My dad would just make fun of me for even caring so much” (M01).

In addition, males did not differentiate between mothers and fathers when disclosing issues regarding peer relationships. An 18-year-old male said, “I talk to both my parents about friend stuff. I can talk to them about anything and sometimes it is good to get some frustration out by talking with them about friend issues” (M09).
Language barriers. Several youth described having difficulties communicating with their parents due to discrepancies in language proficiency. Many youth discussed that the language barriers between themselves and parents greatly impacted the amount of communicating and disclosure that occurred within the family context. For example, an 18-year-old male revealed,

There is a little bit of a language barrier when it comes to communicating with my parents. Both my parents would prefer that I speak Croatian when talking to them but there have been times I have completely avoiding having a conversation about something because I feel like I can’t get my point across properly in Croatian. (M19)

In addition, some youth expressed feelings of frustration when trying to communicate with parents and experiencing language barriers. A 17-year-old female mentioned, “I get really frustrated sometimes when I can’t talk to my dad about certain things because there is a language barrier. We aren’t as close because of it” (F07).

Furthermore, some youth expressed ending conversations with parents due to language barriers. For example, a 17-year-old male discussed, “Sometimes when I am talking to them in English they might not understand a phrase or a concept and then I have to translate it into Croatian for them and it loses its meaning and I end up just ending the conversation because they don’t get it” (M20). Both male and female youth expressed experiencing language barriers with both mothers and fathers.

Learning about culture. Another theme that was identified when youth discussed communication between them and their parents were the concepts of passing down of Croatian cultural values, traditions, beliefs, experiences, and practices. For example, a 19-year-old male mentioned, “We talk about Croatia a lot. That is my parents’ favourite topic to talk about. They really try to instil the Croatian values and traditions into me so I can pass it down to my kids one
Both male and female adolescents expressed enjoying talking with parents about how they grew up and their lives in Croatia. A 19-year-old female explained,

My parents always try and slip in a conversation about Croatia whenever they can. They want to teach me important values and traditions so I can carry that knowledge to the next generation. But I actually really like that and I really like talking and hearing their stories about Croatia and leaning about where they came from and my own cultural background. (F17)

In addition, many youth mentioned that they value conversations with their parents about Croatia and certain lessons they learned along the way by being immigrants and moving to Canada. For example, a 19-year-old female said,

Recently we have been talking a lot about Croatia and why exactly my parents decided to come to Canada. I also like to talk to them about what it was like immigrating to another country and their experiences because I have no idea. When they talk to me about their struggles and the Croatian culture in general, I feel a strong sense of appreciation for my parents and a sense of pride for my cultural background. (F18)

Also, a 16-year-old female mentioned, “I learn so much about Croatia and the Croatian culture through conversations with my parents. It brings us closer together and it is important to all of us to keep the culture a big part of our family” (F08).

Parent-Adolescent Conflict and Disagreements

All adolescent participants were asked, “Do you have conflicts and disagreements with your parents? What are some examples of what you have disagreements about?” When asked if youth have disagreements and conflicts with their parents, nineteen out of the twenty adolescent participants said yes. When asked to elaborate further, some specific themes were identified: personal freedom issues, cultural barriers, school related issues, and minor daily conflict (see Table 4).

Personal freedom issues. The most frequent examples of conflicts described by youth focused on personal freedom issues, particularly, having different points of views regarding
importance of social and peer related situations. Several youth expressed frustration when having to abide by social rules such as curfew, peer relationships, and borrowing the car. For example, an 18-year-old male explained, “My parents and I fight a lot about me going out and spending my free time with friends. They worry that I will get myself into trouble or stop focusing on the bigger picture, like being successful and doing well in school” (M19). Many male adolescents brought up the issue of borrowing the car for social situations and how this responsibility often causes conflict with parents. An 18-year-old male expressed,

I get into fights with my parents when they are being super strict about me using the car. I know it’s their car but I always treat it with respect and am careful when taking it for the night. I think that is what gets me the most angry, them not trusting that I am responsible and mature enough to handle borrowing the car. (M02)

On the other hand, many females discussed having conflicts over extending curfew and dating. For example, a 16-year-old female disclosed, “My parents are really strict about me dating and who I end up dating. I am still young and they don’t understand that I could potentially date a lot of guys in my lifetime and that is okay in the modern world but we still fight about it sometimes” (F04). In addition, a 17-year-old female expressed, “My parents and me usually fight over my curfew, which I don’t believe I should even have” (F07).

**Daily interactions.** Another example of conflict which occurs between adolescents and parents was the concept of daily interactions and responsibilities. Many youth mentioned that they are likely to get into conflicts and disagreements with parents when they were not being flexible in regards to chores and responsibilities. For example a 14-year-old male said, “My parents and I will get into daily little fights about chores and stuff that needs to get done around the house. Depending on all our moods, it can either be a minor conflict or it can get heated” (M05). In addition, a 16-year-old female mentioned,
My parents and I fight but they are small fights about stupid stuff, like chores and responsibilities around the house, like laundry and stuff. If I don’t get things done when my parents want, or if I don’t do a good job on something, they will talk to me about it and it usually ends up in a disagreement or argument. It is never anything we don’t talk about and resolve, though. (F04)

**School related conflict.** Another common conflict between adolescent and parents in the family was issues involving school related topics, such as grades and homework. Some youth revealed that a lot of their conflicts with parents were related to school issues. For example, a 16-year-old male explained, “I fight with my parents when they make me do homework or are always asking about my grades. I don’t like that and it makes me mad so I lash out sometimes” (M16).

**Cultural barriers.** Lastly, cultural barriers were also identified as an important theme that emerged from the adolescents responses. Cultural barriers and conflict associated with that particular theme included issues revolving around cultural expectations and language brokering. For example, an 18-year-old male revealed,

> My parents and I often get into disagreements and arguments when they try and force me to go to a Croatian event or Croatian Church. I have no problem going, but if my friends are doing something fun that night or if there is a party, I would rather do that, and that can cause my parents and me to fight. (M01)

Many youth also expressed conflicts surrounding issues related to having to language broker for their parents. An 18-year-old female stated,

> Honestly, I don’t mind translating things for my parents, filling out forms, or even going to the doctors with them. I think we fight more about when they ask me and how much they expect from me. Sometimes I will be doing homework and my dad will interrupt me and ask me to help him with some documentations or something. I want to help but sometimes I get angry when they don’t consider my stuff just as important. (F11)

In addition, a 19-year-old male explained, “I help my parents as much as I can, but sometimes we get into arguments when they need me to translate things for them or help explain things that they don’t understand because their first language is Croatian” (M06).
Parent-Adolescent Conflict Resolution Strategies

Youth were asked to discuss how they most commonly resolved conflicts and disagreements with their parents. Four themes were identified from the youth’s responses; negotiation and compromise (adolescent and parents are able to resolve conflict by having open communication with one another and coming to a common ground where both parties feel resolution to disagreement is fair), child concedes (conflict is resolved by adolescent conceding to parents’ argument), parent concedes (conflict is resolved by parent conceding to the adolescent’s argument), and unresolved/avoided (the conflict is never resolved and is most likely avoided by both parents and adolescent) (see Table 5).

The majority of youth stated that they tend to resolve conflicts and disagreements with their parents by communicating with them and trying to negotiate and compromise with each other in order to come to a mutual understanding and resolution. For example, an 18-year-old male reported,

What usually happens is we take a minute then come back together and talk about our issues and whatever we were disagreeing about. Sometimes it takes a long conversation to work it out so everyone is happy, and sometimes we can figure the problem quickly together. But we always talk about it, whatever it is, and we come to some sort of negotiation or alternative solution that we can all agree upon. (M01)

Some youth disclosed that they almost never resolve conflicts or disagreements with their parents, and that these conflicts are avoided by both parties involved. An 18-year-old female participant said, “I would say that most of the time we resolve conflict by walking away from the situation and avoiding talking about it. The problem doesn’t usually get resolved” (F14)

Another conflict resolution strategies discussed by only one adolescent was the concept of the youth conceding to parents’ wishes in order to resolve an argument. A 14-year-old male
mentioned, “It is hard to have disagreements with my parents, they are strict about a lot of things, and if they say no, it means no” (M05).

The last type of conflict resolution strategy that was discussed by adolescent participants was the concept of parents conceding to the adolescent during an argument or disagreement. For example, a 19-year-old male youth said, “I am really good at demonstrating my point and having them [parent] back off completely from the argument or disagreement” (M01). A female participant, 16-years-old, explained, “We don’t really argue because I always get my way, one way or another. I usually put up a good fight; I can hold my own when I really want something” (F08).

Culture

Youth were asked, “Since you were born in Canada and your parents were born in Croatia, are there any cultural clashes or differences, or even similarities, between you and your parents?” Adolescent participants described both differences and similarities between themselves and their parents in terms of cultural influence and upbringing. The overarching themes were organized into two sections: differences and similarities. In addition, several different subthemes were identified by male and female adolescents’ responses, including: cultural knowledge, cultural norms and experiences, cultural pressures, educational opportunities, language barriers, personal freedom clashes, work ethic, cultural pride, and dual cultural identity (see Table 6).

Cultural knowledge. Many youth described cultural differences between themselves and their parents regarding the amount of cultural knowledge each possessed. More specifically, adolescents differentiated between their cultural knowledge of the Canadian context, and their parents’ cultural knowledge of the Croatian cultural context. For example, a 19-year-old female mentioned,
My parents and I are different in many ways, but the most bipolar differences, I would say, would be the comfort level and knowledge we have about our own cultural context. I know a lot more about the Canadian culture so my parents come to me for advice about that, and when I need information or anything to do with the Croatian culture, I go to them. (F10)

In addition, an 18-year-old female said, “I have more knowledge and understanding when it comes to Canada and the cultural and historical stuff about Canada, whereas my parents know everything about Croatia. That makes us different but it isn’t a negative thing. We learn from each other” (F18). Some youth even discussed differences between their parents due to their first languages. For example, a 16-year-old male explained, “My parents and I are different because I speak English fluently and am involved in the Canadian culture a lot more. My parents feel more comfortable speaking Croatian and visiting back home, they relate more to the Croatian culture and I relate more to the Canadian” (M03).

Cultural norms and experiences. The notion of cultural knowledge was also discussed by youth (12 youth) in regards to differences in cultural norms and experiences. An 18-year-old female expressed:

My parents and I are culturally different because they grew up and were raised in a completely different cultural context than me, and they have so many different experiences that made them who they are, whereas I have different experiences living in the Canadian context which had contributed to who I am. (F14)

More specifically, many youth identified that they differed from their parents due to their specific challenges and struggles being first generation immigrants. For example, a 16-year-old female revealed, “I know that my parents have experiences a lot of different struggles and challenges than myself. They had to leave their homeland and start a whole new life. My biggest concern is if I will find a date for prom” (F15).

Cultural pressures. Many adolescent participants also revealed the concept of cultural pressures felt by adolescents from their parents. One male youth, 14-years-old, expressed, “My
parents and I are different because I would never force or push my kids to get involved in Croatian things if they didn’t want to, but my parents made me, and they still do” (M03).

Another participant, 17-year-old female, said, “Sometimes I’m expected to translate for my parents, even if I don’t want to” (F07). Furthermore, “My parents and I have different opinions and ideas about what I should be doing with my free time and how much Croatian stuff I do or take part in” (M02).

**Language barriers.** Several participants also mentioned language barriers as a significant element of difference between themselves and their parents. For example, a 16-year-old male mentioned, “The main difference, culturally, between my parents and me is the language stuff. We speak a mix and match kind of language, half Croatian and half English because that’s what each of us feel comfortable speaking in” (M03). Another youth, 18-year-old female, stated, “My parents will ramble in Croatian and I have no idea what’s going on. I need them to slow down and start again sometimes. We misunderstand what each other actually means all the time” (F13)

**Personal freedom clashes.** Furthermore, youth also discussed cultural differences in regards to views on personal freedom and independence issues during adolescence due to developing and maturing in different cultural contexts than their parents. A 17-year old male explained, “My parents were raised in a small village and had really strict rules and family obligations. Their first priority wasn’t going out; they had to farm and help provide for their families. I get to focus more on myself and establishing a success future” (M12).

Many female and male youth reported that they felt their independence and personal freedom was impacted by their parents’ cultural upbringings. For example, a 17-year-old female explained:
My parents were raised in strict families with certain gender roles and I think they have consciously or unconsciously brought that into my upbringing. My parents always give my brothers freedom to explore and make mistakes on their own, but because I am a girl, I think that they overprotect me in certain ways and don’t allow me the same independence as my brothers. (F07)

In addition, a 19-year-old female expressed:

My parents tend to shelter me because I am a girl and they think that boys and girls should be treated differently in a sense. I think it is because of they are really traditional and cultural in their views on parenting. My younger brother gets so much more freedom and independence than I did at his age. I had a curfew until I was 18 and he is only 16 and is allowed more social time out with his friends. (F10)

**Educational opportunities.** Another theme that youth discussed as a cultural difference was the educational opportunities that youth have living in Canada compared to their first generation immigrant parents. For example, an 18-year-old male stated:

I have so many more opportunities than my parents did when coming to Canada. They had a hard time adjusting to Canada and finding employment, whereas I am able to finish high school, hopefully continue my education into post-secondary school, and eventually establish a career. Those options weren’t as readily available for my parents when immigrating to Canada. (M02)

In addition, a 19-year-old female mentioned, “I have so many more opportunities than my parents had at my age, especially when it comes to education. My dad couldn’t even go to school most of the days he was supposed to because he had obligations to farm and family” (F18).

**Work ethic.** The concept of work ethic was also discussed by youth as a cultural difference between themselves and parents. Many youth described work ethic as a cultural difference because of discrepancies in how work ethic is viewed and valued by adolescents and their parents. For example an 18-year-old male explained, “My parents have a really strong work ethic and will work every day of the week if they have to. I am different; I like taking time off and being lazy sometimes. They definitely can’t relate to that” (M19). Furthermore, a 17-year old female said:
My parents had to work hard for everything in their lives, that’s why they have this really
great work ethic. They push me to have the same work ethic but it is really hard for me to
relate to that when I don’t have as many obstacles to overcome like they do as
immigrants. (F07)

A male participant, 19-years-old, stated, “I cannot understand my parents work ethic, but if they
didn’t push me, I probably wouldn’t do anything” (M01)

**Cultural pride.** Adolescent youth expressed being able to acknowledge the cultural
differences between themselves and their parents, as well as recognized some similarities, such
as cultural pride. Some adolescent youth only discussed sharing cultural pride with their parents
for their culture of origin, Croatia. For example, a 16-years-old female said:

> We are really proud to be Croatian. This family is really nationalistic and we never miss
> anything Croatian. If Croatia is on TV, for any reason at all, we are summoned into the
> living room and my dad will start telling us how amazing it is to be Croatian. (F08)

Other youth expressed how they and their parents have cultural pride for both their Croatian and
Canadian identities, and share this in common. An 18-year-old male explained, “My parents and
I always talk about how we feel really lucky to be both Canadian and Croatian, and we both
value the two cultures and what they both have to offer” (M01).

**Dual cultural identity.** Finally, another dominant theme expressed by adolescent youth
was the concept of balancing both a Canadian cultural identity with their Croatian family roots.
A 19-year-old male said, “I think it can be really difficult to have a perfect balance, but I think it
is really important to embrace both cultural backgrounds. For me, I think having such a strong
cultural Croatian background made me a more confident and well-rounded individual” (M01). A
16-year-old female stated, “I really like that in Canada we can be both Croatian and Canadian
and I’m equally proud to be both” (F08).
Discussion

The present study extends our knowledge on challenges and experiences that Croatian second-generation immigrant adolescents face, specifically in regards to their relationships with their parents. Although the literature on immigrant and ethnic minorities is gaining greater attention (e.g., Chuang & Gielen, 2009; Shearman, & Dumlao, 2008), this study was one of the first studies to explicitly examine, in depth, the adolescents’ perspectives on parent-youth relationships, with equal attention to mothers and fathers. Specifically, youth discussed their views about good relationships with parents as well as their own personal experiences, tapping into various dimensions such as communication, control and conflict, personal freedom, and cultural impact. Cultural and developmental distinctions were examined.

Immigrant Croatian Parent-Adolescent Relationships in Canada

This section discusses the immigrant Croatian Canadian family dynamics from second-generation adolescents’ perspective, as well as addressing cultural and developmental implications, social policy implications, future research directions, and limitations. From the interviews, the findings revealed several major contributions to the understanding of the dynamics and relationships of immigrant parents and their second-generation youth. The most prominent contributions of the study included: (1) how youth perceived their relationship with their immigrant parents, examining both mothers and fathers independently; (2) their experiences of conflict and communication with their parents and strategies in which they overcame these developmental and cultural challenges; and (3) cultural differences and similarities between adolescents and their immigrant parents.

Overall, the study is grounded in various theoretical perspectives, specifically, the acculturation, ecological, developmental, and social domain theories, including previous research
on immigrant families and adolescent development (Bronfrenbrenner, 1979; Berry, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Turiel, 2002; Smetana, 2006). The results of the current study suggest that a more in-depth understanding of intergenerational gaps and cultural discrepancies between immigrant parents and adolescents, cultural and family contexts, as well as developmental implications, is necessary to understand how Croatian immigrant families, particularly second-generation youth, navigate life-stage transitions into adolescence and young adulthood.

This discussion section aims to further develop a cohesive understanding of parent-adolescent relationships in immigrant Croatian Canadian families, and to examine the broader themes throughout this research process. I adopted a qualitative approach to explore adolescents’ views of relationships with immigrant mothers and fathers. I anticipated that cultural values would inform adolescents’ understandings, as well as developmental implications. The analysis revealed an emphasis on the relevance of independence during the developmental stage of adolescence, as well as the importance of being able to negotiate personal freedom with parents, and maintaining a good parent-adolescent relationship within a sociocultural context.

**Good parent-adolescent relationships.** First, before exploring youth’s relationships with their parents, it is insightful to understand their views on what they perceived as a good relationship with their parents. This will then allow us to contextualize and anchor their perspectives of their current relationships with their parents. This also taps into the youth’s expectations of parent-youth relationships and parenting.

Similar to previous research on positive parent-adolescent relationships, adolescents strongly emphasized the importance of certain core components that they perceived as fundamental to developing and maintaining strong and close parent-adolescent relationships (Crockett et al., 2009). Similar to the findings from Cuban youth (Crockett et al., 2009), the five
primary themes that emerged were: open communication, mutual understanding, support (e.g., emotional, instrumental, informational), personal freedom, and trust.

As found by Tasopoulos, Smetana and Yau, (2009), open communication, mentioned by all Croatian youth, emerged as the most important and recurring theme in maintaining a close and strong family dynamic for both parents and adolescents. They focused on open communication where trust and mutual understanding were key features. Many adolescents discussed these three constructs in a bi-directional manner, to the extent that both sides, parents and youth, needed to commit to those relationship dimensions.

As Crockett et al. (2009) found, Croatian youth who also stated that there was a need for trust from their parents in order for there to be open and honest lines of communication. Moreover, Edwards and Lopez (2006) stressed that a supportive and stable family is characterized by satisfying family communication. As Shearman and Dumlao (2009) examined with Japanese and Japan American young adults, they reported that high conversation orientation (e.g., talking often with parents about feelings and emotions) led to higher satisfaction and enjoyment in communicating with their parents. Similarly, Tokic and Pecnik (2011) also found that adolescents’ perception of familial relational satisfaction was associated with positive parent-child interaction and frequent communication. Thus, open lines of self-disclosure and, more broadly, communication between parents and adolescents supports intimacy and cohesion within the families, thus allowing for adolescents to express their opinions and views (Tokic & Pecnik, 2011).

For the theme of open communication, another important dimension to positive parent-youth relationships was personal freedom. Youth stated that parents who understood and supported their youth did so by providing allowances of personal freedom and demonstrated an
understanding and openness to negotiate and compromise on issues surrounding adolescent autonomy. When parents granted opportunities for the youth to have their own personal interests, activities, it was viewed by Croatian youth as parents acknowledging and respecting their psychological needs of independence and autonomy. Such allowances from parents promoted youth’s expressions of feeling a sense of self. This, in turn, was believed to lead parents to appreciate and understand their youth better, bringing them closer together.

The emphasis on personal freedom has been long established by many researchers as a necessity of psychological well-being (see Smetana, 2006). Researchers often define adolescence as the developmental phase in which youth need to establish and maintain both a sense of self as an individual and connection to others (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef, & Khattar, 2000). Studies with predominantly European American adolescents showed that during adolescence, youth began to question parental authority and asserted their personal interests, which has had some impact on their self-esteem and ego development (Steinberg & Morris, 2001).

Tasopoulos-Chan, Yau, and Smetana’s (2009) study on American adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, and European backgrounds found that parents who valued personal freedom used positive reinforcement from parents, such as being open to discuss, encouraging conversations, and valuing adolescents’ viewpoints and opinions. Thus, these adolescents were more likely to feel comfortable openly discussing personal and private issues. In contrast, adolescents who felt that their parents did not facilitate their independence reported more instances of conflict with parents, which most likely resulted in avoidance to communicate. This has been found to cause negative developmental and psychological outcomes such as higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in youth (Tasopoulos-Chan et al., 2009). As expected, youth discussed personal freedom as being important for parents to acknowledge because of not
only the youth’s increased desire for independence but being seen as more of an equal member of the family household that is able to positively contribute to family dynamics (Chao, 2006). Youth also believed that it was important to assert their own views and opinions in an open and safe forum with parents. Thus, a good relationship with parents would include parents being encouraging of independence, which would then lead to adolescents’ development of feeling secure, confident, and capable individuals.

As previous research on social support systems has found (Branje, van Aken, & van Lieshout, 2002), Branje and her colleagues found that Dutch youth strongly emphasized the importance of support in their family, especially from parents. More specifically, youth addressed three distinct types of support (emotional, instrumental, informational) that they viewed as essential to maintaining a strong relationship with their parents. Many youth mentioned that their core and unconditional support system should be from their parents, followed by siblings, and peers. Similar to the present findings, Branje et al. (2002) found that youth relied heavily on support from their parents in order to achieve goals, both academically and socially. Furthermore, emotional support such as caring, nurturance, and love, as well as informational support (e.g., providing guidance, advice, wisdom, knowledge) was also deemed as important. This has led to positive outcomes for children and adolescents in immigrant family contexts. For example, Edwards and Lopez (2006) found that adolescent Mexican immigrant youth who perceived their parents as a significant support system in their lives also rated high on life satisfaction and relationship satisfaction with parents. These youth acknowledged that although they desired personal freedom and independence from their parents, they also appreciated and valued the support that parents provided in order to assist them in reaching their goals. Supportive parents had youth feeling more confident and capable of achieving goals they set for
themselves (Edward & Lopez, 2006).

On good parent-youth relationships, Crockett et al. (2009) found that both sons and daughters mentioned that emotional support, encouragement, and affection were important functions of a good mother-adolescent relationship, whereas fathers set standards, restrictions, boundaries and contributed to a more disciplinary role in the family. In the current study, although gender distinctions were not a primary focus, there were some unexpected potential gender differences among Croatian youth. Specifically, daughters emphasized the importance of emotional support, whereas sons emphasized the importance of instrumental support, advice, and guidance from parents. Only female youth mentioned that their mothers demonstrated characteristics of care and control by monitoring their friends, school, and activities. More generally, the present findings revealed that youth did not distinguish between mothers and fathers on their views of “good” relationships with parents.

**Perceived relationships with parents.** Although Crockett et al. (2009) examined adolescents’ perceptions on good parent-adolescent relationship, the study was limited because it primarily focused on the “good” relationship. The present study addresses this concern by also exploring, in depth, the youth’s actual social interactions with their parents. Such explorations of actual relationships provide greater understanding of the complexities of parent-youth relationships and how youth may view their interactions with their mothers and fathers.

First, however, it is important for us to anchor our understanding of how youth perceive their relationships with their parents by providing a global sense of the quality of their relationships. The attempt was to ask youth to rate their relationship from very strong to poor. The majority of youth (15 youth) believed that they had strong or very strong relationships with their parents. The positive responses were based on similar dimensions that were mentioned for
good relationships, including open communication, mutual understanding, respect, and trust.

For communication, all of these youth experienced open lines of communication with at least one parent. Specifically, and consistent with Crockett et al.’s (2009) study, second-generation Croatian youth emphasized that open communication was a key factor that actively contributed to their closeness and cohesion they felt toward their parents.

Although the majority of adolescents discussed being able to communicate with either mother or father, or both, many made explicit distinctions on which parent they would most likely confide in, seek help from, or disclose personal and private information to, which was not necessarily determined by the parent’s gender but rather, by the topic of discussion as well. For example, Croatian youth expressed feeling more comfortable talking with their mothers about their peer and romantic relationships whereas they talked about school and finances with their fathers. More generally, a common trend among these youth was that whichever parent provided a positive and open outlet for communication, without being perceived by the adolescent as controlling, judgmental, critical, or confrontational, felt much more inclined to communicate with parents on a regular and frequent basis (Davidson & Cardemil, 2009).

In describing their strong relationships with their parents, youth also focused on mutual understanding, mutual respect, and trust. It is important to stress that as youth described their relationships, many emphasized the importance of a bi-directional process, where both parents and youth were active participants in the relationship process. Specifically, it was the openness and acknowledgement of both sides, parents and adolescents, which the youth interpreted as their parents valuing their views and opinions, and willingness to compromise on the situation at hand. Especially for these youth, they emphasized that these mutual agreements with each other have also led to providing a good foundation for future interactions as well. In contrast, youth who did
not perceive strong relationships with their parents mentioned that there was a lack of understanding, respect, or trust in their relationships. Such barriers then limited their social interactions with their parents, and their decision-making process had serious future life implications (Driscoll, Russell, & Crockett, 2008).

To add to the complexities of the relationship dimensions, youth frequently included their desires for personal freedom and independence as they discussed mutual understanding, mutual respect, and trust. Similar to Fuligni (1998) findings, parents who were seen to promote requests for independence had youth believing that their relationships with their parents were strong. Moreover, youth expressed that independence from parents required certain boundaries to be negotiated.

As found in responses on good parent-youth relationships, support was a dominant theme in describing their actual parent-youth relationships. Support was acknowledged when youth felt loved, cared for, confident, and secure in their relationships. Youth made distinctions between types of support they receive from parents, as well as parental roles in providing these types of support to adolescents. According to present study, youth viewed fathers as supportive in more instrumental and informational means such as driving youth places and providing financial aid in certain situations, and were most often sought out for practical advice or guidance (e.g., social gatherings, sporting events, school, work, extracurricular activities, employment). For mothers, they were described as a source of nurturance, affection, compassion, patience, and sensitivity.

According to some youth, mainly daughters, unexpectedly revealed that both fathers and mothers provided similar levels of support. On the other hand, mostly sons mentioned that their fathers support them emotionally and spent quality time with them in a positive way (e.g., fishing trips, sporting events, helping with homework, watching favorite television shows together,
going to the movies but not necessarily by displaying overt affection. These potential gender differences need to be further explored as it is important to better understand the nuances of family dynamics among sons and daughters, as well as mothers and fathers.

These unexpected potential gender differences may have some association with historical and traditional patriarchal roles in Croatian culture. Historically, there has been some evidence of traditional gender roles that immigrant parents’ of youth experienced during their upbringing in Croatia that have been passed down as they navigate through the Canadian cultural context with their children. However, examining contemporary families, these traditional gender influences have not been supported (Tokic & Pecnik, 2011). But, in the present study, there may be some indication that expected traditional behaviours may still exist in Canadian Croatian families. For example, these families were from a small village in Croatia, where perhaps traditions may be less inclined to egalitarian parenting. These gender differences were minimal, and thus, further research is needed.

Findings that are consistent among these youth is the importance of family cohesion and connectedness as fundamental in their family functioning and dynamics. Youth also stated that they used more of a strategy for fulfilling needs in their family context. For example, those youth discussed that they would choose one parent over the other, based on the topic at hand. Similar to Tokic and Pecnik (2011) and Shearman and Dumla (2008), gender roles were not perceived as important as compared to family cohesion and working together as a family unit (Tokic & Pecnik, 2011). Thus, it was not the gender of the parent that determined the lines of communication but rather, which parent was willing to listen, and engage in meaningful conversations with their youth.

Although many youth described both positive and negative aspects in regards to their
relationship with parents, the conflicts were discussed by majority of the participant youth and how conflicts were resolved were dependent upon the quality of their relationships with their parents. For example, if parents were able to negotiate and compromise with youth, then adolescents viewed that as a positive conflict and reported positive feelings of communication with one or both parents. Youth who discussed resolution strategies, such as avoidance and having to concede to parents’ wishes, reported negative feelings towards communication with parents and often avoided communication due to high frequency of conflict, no understanding or negotiation, and feelings of stress and anxiety. Youth who described their communication and resolution strategies with parents as negative also emphasized their desire to have more productive and positive experiences of communication with parents but were unsure how to make this possible. As Bui (2009) found, poor communication among immigrant families, especially between adolescents and their parents, were linked to high stress and anxiety within family context. In addition, poor communication and frequent instance of conflict within the family were linked to more risk factors for adolescents such as delinquency, school troubles, and a decrease overall psychological well-being.

**Cultural Implications**

A common theme often discussed by these Croatian youth was the concept of cultural impact which was both positive and negative. The issues of culture, immigration, and acculturation were viewed as impacting their relationship with parents. Overall, youth discussed the component of culture in several ways: language barriers, cultural and language brokering, intergenerational conflict, cultural knowledge, cultural expectation and obligation, dual cultural identity, and cultural pride.
Participant youth described positive experiences related to cultural implications and components in their relationship with parents. Other participants who rated their relationship with parents as weak discussed more negative experiences with parents surrounding issues about culture/cultural clashes/intergenerational conflict. This is consistent with previous research that found that family cohesion and strong parent-child relationships mediated the relationship between stressors and parenting behaviours, emphasizing the importance of positive parenting practices such as nurturing, connectedness, involved, open communication, acceptance, family cohesion and support (Behnke, MacDermid, Parke, Duffy, & Widaman, 2008).

Adolescents of immigrants face especially complex issues, as they deal with exposure to possibly conflicting sets of cultural values while simultaneously negotiating the developmental transition to adulthood (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). This can be especially difficult for second-generation immigrant adolescents who are born in a different country than their parents (Dennis, Basanez, & Farahmand, 2010). In previous research, the developmental phase of adolescence is a difficult time for both parents and adolescent because of struggles surround autonomy and personal freedom, as well as intergenerational conflicts. This was evident in this study; however, culture appeared to play a significant role in parent-adolescent relationship according to youth.

When these youth discussed conflict, communication and cultural discrepancies between parents and youth were mainly linked to how parents and youth were at different rates. This led to intergenerational conflict, cultural or acculturation gaps (Wu & Chao, 2011). Wu and Chao found that the greater the discrepancies or cultural dissonance reported by immigrant youth were mainly due to their perceptions of their actual relationships with their parents. With European American adolescents and second-generation Chinese immigrants, youth were asked to describe
their relationships with parents. Many reported similar cultural discrepancies such as language brokering, as found by past researchers (Costigan & Dokis, 2006a), but many who rated their relationship as strong with their parents discussed positive aspects of culture and the role it played in their relationship with parents.

**Intergenerational Conflict and Acculturation Gap**

There is a growing body of research examining how opposing heritage and settlement culture orientations affect youth adjustment and family functioning. Most of this research is grounded in the acculturation gap-distress model which is predicated on two assumptions: (1) youth are more oriented toward the settlement culture than their parents; and (2) this difference exerts a negative effect on youth and families.

More recent studies (e.g., Eva Telzer, 2010) have examined the acculturation gap-distress model and found that immigrant youth who acculturated to their new culture at a quicker pace than their parents, led to family conflict and youth maladjustment (Telzer, 2010). In contrast to the original model, Telzer (2010) discussed four different types of acculturation gaps: (1) the child is more acculturated than the parent in the host culture, (2) the child is less acculturated than the parent in the host culture, (3) the child is more acculturated than the parent in the native culture, and (4) the child is less acculturated than the parent in the native culture (Telzer, 2010). Theorists suggest that different levels of acculturation between parents and their children compound the normative intergenerational gaps present in most families, causing stress in family relationships that leads to family conflict, youth problem behaviours, and maladjustment (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). For example, Portes and Rumbaut proposed that a clash between generations occurs in almost all immigrant families when youth interact actively with the host culture and this leads them to clash with parents in terms of values, norms, personal freedoms.
Through the present interviews, it was evident that youth had perceived cultural discrepancies between their first generation immigrant parents often causing intergenerational conflict and cultural barriers. As others have found, youth described cultural discrepancies with their parents on specific issues and topics in family context. For example, many youth mentioned that they had different viewpoints when it came to language brokering, cultural brokering, autonomy/personal freedom and expectations and obligations (Telzer, 2010).

Dennis et al. (2010) looked at Latino and non-Latino college students to examine perceived intergenerational conflicts with parents are related to acculturation, family dynamics, and psychosocial functioning. First and second generation Latinos reported experiencing more acculturation conflicts than third generation Latinos and European Americans or African Americans. Conflicts with parents were predicted by acculturation variables, lower family cohesion, and increased family control. Both types of conflicts were significant predictors of depression and lower self-esteem, even after controlling for generation status and family variables. In the current study, youth that reported high family cohesion and open communication also expressed having positive feelings towards their cultural background and were happy that their parents implemented their cultural background throughout their childhood. However, youth that reported a weaker relationship with parents almost always described high conflict and negative overall experiences with parents when discussing their regular daily interactions, as well as cultural expectations and obligations. These youth also described feelings of distress because they felt that they were unable to get along with their parents due to the cultural gap and intergenerational conflict (misunderstanding, cannot relate to parents) that was evident in their relationship with parents. Similar to the current study, family cohesion was deemed as a protective factor during adolescent development (Dennis et al., 2010).
Other studies have shown that if there is a large discrepancy between adolescents’ perceptions of values, beliefs, rules, roles and their parents, then there is a higher risk for negative behavioural and psychological adjustment outcomes for adolescent as they continue developing into early adulthood (Wu & Chao, 2011). This study supports this result: the larger the gap, the less youth related to their parents or understood their rationale, stress increases, conflict increases. Youth that discussed conflict with parents also mentioned that there were strains and stresses in their relationship with parents often involving discrepancies in viewpoints, revolving around both developmental and cultural issues. For example, many youth described conflict over attending Croatian school, church, clothing, dating, personal freedom, peers, how they spend their free time, school. On the other hand, youth that discussed having a strong relationship with parents mentioned instances of conflict as well and described similar cultural discrepancies between themselves and their parents, but they had positive perceptions related to communication, trust, negotiation and compromise. Also, many of those youth reported feeling less stressed over issues and conflicts that do arise in family context.

These findings were consistent with Wu and Chao (2011), adolescents’ understanding of the cultural norms of their immigrant parents can reduce their conflicts with them and serve as protective factor against negative consequences of such conflicts on youth’s adjustment. This study supports this idea, the more pride and cultural knowledge about their parents’ country of origin, the less negative conflicts and stresses surrounding topics of culture, development, and personal freedom mentioned by youth.

**Language and Cultural Brokering**

As previously mentioned, language and cultural brokering has been a complicated topic in immigrant research, often reporting negative developmental consequences for youth who are
put in the position to help parents navigate through unfamiliar cultural context, translate
information. Chao (2006) reports extensive research on psychological adjustment and pressures
of family obligation and expectations when youth are expected to language and cultural broker
for their parents. This has led to negative developmental outcomes such as low self-esteem,
anxiety, resentment, and stress. In this study, youth’s perceptions on brokering for parents
appeared to be dependent on the extent to which youth were used to broker for family. For
example, youth who perceived their parents as having lower levels of dependence and
demandingness expressed minimal to no stress or anxiety over helping, versus higher levels of
dependence and demandingness on youth resulted in youth expressing more negative emotions
towards parents and brokering in general. Youth also expressed that the brokering experience
was dependent on how they were approached by parents. For example, youth felt particularly
respected for helping if parents showed appreciation towards youth and some level of
understanding, and/or in turn were rewarded positively for this behaviour (e.g., more personal
freedom). More specifically, youth discussed that if parents gave them an adequate amount of
notice for doctor’s appointments or translating documents, youth felt positively about helping
parents and enjoyed the role of broker. However, if parents demonstrated little respect,
understanding, and appreciation towards youth when asking to help, youth reported more
negative feelings such as anxiety, stress, pressure, and resentment towards parents.

Several youth expressed feeling grateful that they could contribute to the family,
specifically when brokering or translating, and were especially thankful that they were able to
learn and maintain the language through their parents’ teachings. Many youth also said that it
was an important way to spend time with parents, especially since there is limited time together
as they enter into early adulthood. Many had reflected on leaving for college or university soon
and enjoyed these cultural connections and being able to assist parents was a way to keep them close. These activities served as a forum for them to give back to their parents.

Other studies support that impact of family obligations on daily activities and psychological well-being among youth had minimal negative implications. These findings support the present findings of the complexities of relationships in which adolescents in immigrant families attempt to negotiate their cultural traditions with selected aspects of Canadian society on a daily basis. Some researchers found that if adolescents reported a strong ethnic identity and felt close to their cultural background, there was less negative feelings and perceptions towards family obligations and expectations (Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002).

Dual Cultural Identity

One of the major issues that youth expressed was the difficulty relating to their parents because they were born in a different cultural context (second generation youth, first generation immigrant parents). At the same time, many youth also expressed positive elements to having a cultural background and first generation immigrant parents. Many youth also described struggles and challenges, as well as positive aspects, when discussing their ethnic identities and balancing between both the Canadian cultural context and the Croatian-immigrant context. Youth explained their experiences of navigating through the Canadian culture while maintaining their Croatian heritage, traditions, language, and overall connection to their parents’ culture of origin. Youth who reported that their parents were too demanding in relation to cultural obligations and expectations appeared to be more open to rebelling against parents and reported frequent conflict towards parents. On the other hand, adolescents who perceived their parents as having a good balance between Croatian and Canadian cultural background reported in the interview data
positive feelings towards their own dual cultural identity and many expressed wanting to make efforts in maintaining both a Croatian and Canadian ethnic identity.

In sum, the present research provided support for the acculturation gap-distress model, in that youth were generally more oriented toward settlement culture and values than their perception of their parents, who were, in turn, more oriented toward heritage culture and values than their children. Moreover, perceived cultural discrepancies were associated with increased intergenerational conflict and cultural barriers/conflict. However, this study also demonstrated the positive perceptive and perceptions of youth, their relationship with parents, and their connection to their parents’ culture of origin and how this impacted their own dual cultural identity while living in an immigrant family context in Canada.

The present results suggested that parents played a significant role in how their adolescent children perceived themselves, as well as their relationship with parents and their cultural background. Positive experiences were associated with open communication, trust, understanding, support, and closeness, whereas negative perceptions were marked by control, conflict, demandingness, restricting personal freedom, lack of communication, generational and cultural barriers. Moreover, some youth who described a close, supportive, and communicative bond reported less instances of major conflict, even when faced with perceived cultural discrepancies, but perceived the experience of conflict and resolution and communication as possible, open and a more positive experience in order to move forward from the issues. However, the association between perceived cultural discrepancies, parental control, and negative outcomes is qualified by the nature and quality of the parent-youth relationship. For example, in a study of immigrant Chinese triads (mother, father, child) living in Canada, Costigan and Dokis (2006b) found that acculturation discrepancies occurred to a larger extent in
families characterized by lower levels of parental warmth. This is consistent with other research that has found that cultural discrepancies are associated with decreased family cohesion (Ho & Birman, 2010).

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that immigrant families may be the source of both stress and support (Ward, 1996). In the case of immigrant youth, parents may be stressors to the extent that they respond to cultural change by imposing strict boundaries, which ultimately make it difficult for parents and youth to relate to one another and/or impede adjustment. For example, in a qualitative study of Latina mothers and youth living in the United States, Wagner, Ritt-Olson, Soto, Rodriguez, Baezconde-Garbanati, and Ungar (2008) found that mothers and youth had different ideas around freedom and independence. Specifically, youth believed that their parents were stricter than American parents and did not understand the pressures that they were under to fit into the new environment. Discrepancies in parental and youth perceptions of appropriate levels of strictness and autonomy promotion, in turn, were associated with poorer individual (e.g., depressive symptoms; Suarez-Morales & Lopez, 2009) and familial outcomes (e.g., intergenerational conflict; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2010).

Further, perceived cultural discrepancies may not be associated with poorer outcomes if youth have positive perceptions of parental control. For example, in a qualitative study of immigrant Mexican American families, many youth equated parental control with care and concern (Edwards & Lopez, 2006). This is consistent with the idea that youth may be more receptive to parental influence, rules, and values if they occur within a supportive and warm environment (e.g., Hall & Brassard, 2008). Importantly, this idea also supports previous literature that has argued that parental warmth and control can be compatible in non-Western families. As
Chao (1994) argued, authoritarianism and control were maladaptive for European American but not for Chinese or Chinese American families. Chao then explored other important aspects of Chinese parenting that had been overlooked by Western researchers. Focusing on the cultural context of Chinese families, Chao found that parenting also included a warmth dimension, referred to as guan (“training”). In European American families, behaviours on the training dimension were considered controlling. However, because training in Chinese and immigrant Chinese families is accompanied by warmth, it is not only adaptive but also conducive to Chinese youth’s adjustment.

Acculturation theory (Berry & Sam, 1997) and prior research (Nguyen & Williams, 1989) led to the prediction of gradual change of immigrant values toward the values of the dominant group. However, because of dissonant acculturation (Portes, 1997), that is, more rapid change among adolescents than among their parents, discrepancies in immigrant families are expected to increase over time (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000). This study shows that the change is even more rapid for adolescents when they are second-generation immigrant youth who are born host country, but youth who perceived their relationship with parents as strong were still able to see the value in their ethnic cultural background and use that “cultural knowledge” of the Croatian culture passed down by their parents in order to try and understand their parents, decrease conflict, and increase feelings.

Social Policy Implications

The current study contributes to our current understanding of adolescents and their immigrant families. Greater attention has now focused on protective factors of immigrant families, rather than only focusing on negative issues such as challenges and barriers in adjusting into a new country. This study shows that although there are cultural or intergenerational gaps
between youth and parents, it is important to understand how coping and resolution strategies can help minimize negative adjustment for adolescents and parents.

The current study is one of the first studies to emphasize the importance of examining second-generation youth and their first-generation parents, and their unique challenges that they face. More specifically, second generation youth may potentially have a greater cultural gap than their first-generation peers because parents and youth are born in two different cultural contexts. However, researchers have tended to overlook this specific cohort. As found in the current study, those youth who described positive relationships with their parents, had good communication and conflict strategies, were able to deal with some of the cultural and developmental challenges with less negative outcomes than those with poor relationships with their parents. Thus, these findings would be beneficial for service providers as well as researchers. Specifically, service providers should place significant attention to the relationships that youth have with each parent, mothers and fathers (and/or other significant adults), and develop strategies and programs that would strengthen these relationships. As found in the present study, one of the key aspects for strong relationships was based on the openness of the communication between parents and their youth. Perhaps programs (and not only for immigrant families but youth and families in general) can focus on effective communication skills, and how parents and youth can share their ideas and opinions in a safe and supportive environment. For example, providing settlement services with information for both youth and parents about how to approach adolescents for assistance with language and cultural brokering tasks could potentially allow for more open lines of positive and productive communication within a family context, as well as provide a safe environment for families to work on their relationships. Parents and youth can learn about what components can
help facilitate and strengthen their relationships, as well as helping immigrant families develop healthy coping and conflict resolution skills.

Moreover, settlements agencies could foster youth’s cultural identity by proving an outlet or resources for learning about their cultural backgrounds and history, which will, in turn, lead youth to more likely be proud about their heritage and to embrace their dual ethnic identities, both Canadian and their family’s country of origin.

The majority of settlement services are spread across the country, and more services and funding tend to be designated to provinces with high immigrant populations (Li, 2003). Currently, there are almost 1,000 settlement agencies across Canada. However, these organizations only serve newcomers, individuals who were in Canada three years or less (Chuang, 2011). These youth services and resources need to be more readily available and accessible for all immigrant families, regardless of their children’s country of birth (native or Canada), or length of residency in Canada.

Although settlement agencies and service providers are helpful resources for the immigrant population, there has been a particular focus on newcomer immigrants (in Canada within three years) with the assumption that these individuals face the greatest obstacles in regards to acculturation and adjustment in Canada. However, as evident in the present study, newcomer immigrants are not the only cohort that may need effective services and resources. From the present study, protective factors were explored such as the quality of relationships adolescents have with their parents.

Unfortunately, settlement services and resources for immigrants are not available without funding from the government. Immigration is a concurrent power between the federal and the provincial levels of government. For much of Canadian history, the federal government
dominated the policy area of immigration but since immigration and the immigrant population is higher in certain provinces throughout Canada, the federal and provincial levels of government have been known to give the provincial governments more say in the decision making processes involved in creating and maintaining effective immigrant services (Canadian Heritage, 2004). In addition, the federal government has allowed certain provinces to make their own decisions about how they want to use their funding. Thus, collaborative research with policy makers is important because it is effective to learn about immigrant and refugee challenges and barriers and what needs improvement for this particular population (Li, 2009).

There are many different factors and components that all work together in order for immigration policy to be put into place and implemented into society. Having background knowledge of the history and trends of immigration in Canada can help broaden perspectives in terms of immigration policy and practice. In addition, it is equally important to understanding and learn about specific cultural values, historical relevance, cultural parenting practices, traditional attitudes, and customs of countries of origin from which immigrants come from so that proper and effective resources and programs can be put into place in order to help ease adjustment and the acculturation process for the individual, as well as the family as a unit.

In conclusion, this current research suggests that it would be beneficial to develop a program that fosters strong parent-youth relationships to protect against negative acculturation outcomes. Importantly, such a program could be effective in improving youth and familial adjustment for immigrant Croatian Canadians, who may be at increased risk for maladjustment and negative behavioural and psychological outcomes, not only benefiting the family context, but has positive implications for community and settlement resources for immigrants (from different cultures and generations).
Limitations and Future Directions

The present study was unique because it examined the challenges that Croatian second-generation immigrant adolescents face in their lives, particularly focusing on their relationships with their parents. Although the literature on immigrants and ethnic minorities are growing, this study was one of the first studies to qualitatively examine the similarities and differences in the types of issues that immigrant and second-generation youth go through from a cultural and developmental perspective. There are some limitations in the present study that should be addressed. One limitation is the small sample size. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings to other Croatian groups who may differ in their background (e.g., SES). In the future, it would be useful to collect a larger, more diverse, sample size to gain a broader understanding the complexities and challenges of Croatian youth living in Canada.

Another limitation is the specific focus on second-generation Croatian youth families. As expected, second-generation youth do not face some of the same immigrant challenges as their first generation peers, such as learning a new language, creating a new social network of friends; there are some commonalities between these two cohorts. Although focusing specifically on a second-generation immigrant youth sample could be seen as a limitation, it could also be seen as a strength because there is extremely limited research currently available on second-generation immigrants, both youth and adults, and the resources they specifically need in order to have a more positive acculturation experience. Thus, in order to gain a broader understanding of immigrant and second-generation youth living in Canada, future studies should compare these two generational groups in order to achieve a greater understanding of the struggles that both immigrant and second-generation youth face in their lives.
Despite the fact that interviews allowed for a more in-depth understanding of an individual’s life experience, there were some notable disadvantages as well. First, although the researcher was an active part of the interview, the influence or statements by the researcher (e.g., tone and wording of questioning) were not part of the analyses, and potentially important information between the researcher and participant may be lost. Also, qualitative research is especially dependent on the researcher’s biases, interpretations, and social science agendas (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Thus, it is essential that qualitative researchers recognize their biases and epistemological stance at the beginning of the study (Fontana & Frey 2005). However, the advantages of interviews greatly outweighed the limitations, as this method of study allows for an in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences as a Croatian and immigrant adolescent. Keeping these disadvantages in mind, prior to and during the interview, the researcher created a positive rapport with participants, and established a safe and comfortable environment to allow for more personal experiences to be shared (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher also used an independent cultural researcher at each stage of analysis to assist with trustworthiness of analysis. Also, memoing was used to explicitly locate subjectivity as well.

**Conclusions**

Although some acculturation-specific issues are difficult to address, service provider organizations, such as settlement agencies, family services, schools, and healthcare providers, can offer assistance in developing and promoting protective factors with respect to overall positive and healthy family functioning, individual well-being, adolescent development, and acculturation and adaptation post-migration. The results of this study provided evidence that parent-youth relationships play a key role in the experience of closeness and family cohesion, intergenerational conflict, cultural barriers, perceived cultural discrepancies and overall positive
or negative dual ethnic identity. By increasing our knowledge on these issues, settlement programs and services that provide newcomer youth and families with the appropriate skills and tools to navigate their experience of cultural discrepancies (actual or perceived), conflict, and effective adjustment and resolution strategies can be designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Overall, the present study showed that, developmentally, second-generation immigrant Croatian youth were experiencing some of the typical concerns that most adolescents go through (e.g., the importance of peers in their lives, seeking more independence within the parent-adolescent relationship). However, the Croatian cultural values that these youth are exposed to can and will influence various aspects of their lives. Moreover, the exposure of both the Croatian and Canadian culture resulted in Croatian youth having to balance the Western goods with traditional European beliefs. First, for second-generation Croatian, there was a struggle in the desire to maintain the values of both cultures. However, for Croatians, the struggle to maintain a sense of balance between the two cultures was further intensified by acculturative concerns. Second-generation Croatian immigrants in Canada not only had to cope with two cultural contexts, but they also faced additional challenges of adjusting to and learning a new language, a new school curriculum and system, making new friends, and being exposed to new cultural ideas and traditions that were different from what they had known most of their lives.

The present study was one of the first studies that explicitly explored the tensions between developmental and cultural issues that Croatian second-generation immigrant youth experienced. It is essential that researchers better understand the complexities of adolescents and culture, and begin to disentangle the unique contributions of these tensions on adolescent adjustment and parent-adolescent relationships. Also, the present study is unique in its methodological design, including all second-generation Croatian youth. Much of the literature
has tended to focus on the adjustment of newcomer immigrants (e.g., Kilbride et al., 2000) with little attention given to the struggles that second-generation individuals experience. As found in the present findings, individuals who are exposed to two cultures from birth also experience cultural challenges similar to their immigrant counterparts.

Examining the psychological and emotional issues surrounding Croatian youth is beneficial on a programmatic level. The results inform the advancement and refinement of current policies associated with the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities in Canada. Improving our knowledge on the benefits and drawbacks of certain programs aimed at assisting the ethnic minority population can lead to more specialized and cost-effective programs and services. Although the school environment was not specifically examined in the current study and focused more specifically on development and culture within the family context, future research should investigate the types of challenges that immigrant youth face within this mesosystem.

Many of the findings from the present study may be relevant to other ethnic minorities living in Canada (e.g., other European immigrants), as there are commonalities among the challenges that they face as adolescents and newcomers. For example, understanding what the issues are for Croatian adolescents can shed some light on what the barriers are in terms of language and social networking. It can provide social practitioners greater insight into the types of programs that should be developed for Croatian and European immigrants (e.g., mentorship programs aimed at helping this population create meaningful friendships). The overall goal is to provide greater insight into the Canadian population so that researchers, service providers, and social policy makers become more culturally sensitive to the needs of a multicultural society. It
is also important that immigrants do not feel as though they are coming into this country with a deficit, and that ethnic minority groups are contributing to society in positive and valuable ways.
References


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Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.


Appendix A: University of Guelph Research Ethics Certificate

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: February 18, 2011 to February 18, 2011
REB NUMBER: 10JA037
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1
RESPONSIBLE FACULTY: SUE CHUANG
DEPARTMENT: Family Relations & Applied Nutrition
SPONSOR: N/A
TITLE OF PROJECT: Parent-Adolescent Relationships, Conflict, and Communication in Croatian Families

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human subjects in the above named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement.

The RFB requires that you submit to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the RFB. The RFB must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please complete the Change Request Form. If there is a change in your source of funding, or a previously unfunded project receives funding, you must report this as a change to the protocol.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the HEB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Responsible Faculty, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility or a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of these facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the RFB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, a final report and if the approval period is longer than one year, annual reports. Continued approval is contingent on timely submission of reports.

Membership of the Research Ethics Board: M. Dwyer, Legal Representative; M. Fairbairn, Ethics and External; D. Emelle, Physician; B. Ferguson, CME; LaChapelle, S. COA; J. Minogue, EHS; Saunders, P. Alternative Health Care and External; Sprang, L. CBS; I. Trick, Psychology; J. Turbodd, FRAN, T. Turner, SOAN

Approved: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Chair, Research Ethics Board
Appendix B: Advertisement

Are you an immigrant?

Are you Croatian?
Do you have an adolescent between the ages of 14-19?
All participants will receive $20 for taking part in the study!!!

Contact: Barbara Samarin
bsamarin@uoguelph.ca
519-993-8612

Are you second generation Croatian-Canadian immigrant?

Between 14-19 years of age?
All participants will receive $20 for taking part in the study!!

Contact: Barbara Samarin
bsamarin@uoguelph.ca
519-993-8612
Appendix C: Telephone Screening

Hello,

How are you doing?

My name is Barbara Samarin and I am a graduate student at the University of Guelph, studying under Dr. Susan Chuang at the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition. I am contacting you in regards to potentially participating in my study on second generation Croatian immigrant you.

The main purpose of my study is to broaden our understanding of the difficulties that Croatian immigrant families experience when living in Canada and how this may impact their parent-adolescent relationship. This study is also interested in exploring the youth’s perspective on good parent-adolescent relationships and communication. Most importantly, this study aims to gain a better insight into second generation immigrant adolescents’ perspectives on contributing factors that may either facilitate or hinder their relationship with immigrant parents.

Are you interested in participating?

One sample group will be targeted and recruited to participate in this study: 1) you must be between the ages of 14 to 19 years, 2) you must be a second-generation Croatian immigrant, 3) at least one parent must be first generation Croatian immigrant, and 4) participant must be living with parents.

Do you meet this inclusion criterion?

When are you available to participate in the interview portion of this study? Let’s set a date that is most convenient for you.

Thank you.

See you soon. Have a great day!
Appendix D: Consent Form

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition

Parent-adolescent relationships, conflict, and communication in Croatian immigrant families
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I (please print name) _________________________________ have been informed that Barbara Samarin, a graduate student from the University of Guelph (Canada) studying under Dr. Susan Chuang from the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, is conducting an exploratory research on parent-adolescent relationships among Croatian-Canadian immigrants. More specifically, she will be examining communication, conflict, and conceptions of what makes a good parent-adolescent relationship through the perspective of the adolescent. She will be interviewing adolescent second-generation immigrant youth between the ages of 14 – 19 years individually. I am aware that questions will be asked in an open-ended interview format and my participation involves answering questions about my experiences and views.

The interview will be approximately forty-five minutes to an hour in length and during the interview we will be tape recorded to ensure accurate transcription. The recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed in 5 years. I am also aware that I will be asked to fill out a background questionnaire. I have been informed that every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study. I have been told that my responses in the interview may be anonymously used as verbatim quotation when the study is submitted. In addition, I am aware that the interview process is entirely confidential, unless a participant discloses instances of abuse within the family. If a participant discloses unanticipated responses about abuse, the researcher will have to notify the appropriate authorities/services.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Cross-cultural social scientists and social workers that study and work with immigrant families may benefit from this research. This research may improve their understanding of the parent-adolescent relationship and how culture plays a role in immigrant families. This research may help provide new ideas about how to help parents and adolescent communicate and resolve conflict in a more positive manner.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

In recognition of the valuable contribution you are making to this research, each participant will receive a small token of our appreciation in the form of a $20 gift card.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study, to the extent allowed by law. The questionnaires and digitally recorded data files will be kept in a locked office and in a locked storage cabinet, or on a password protected digital file on a computer which is accessible only to the study researcher (Barbara Samarin) and advisor (Dr. Susan Chuang). Information that identifies your name and contact information will be kept separately from the audio-records and questionnaires in a locked storage cabinet. Audio records that are being transcribed by someone other than the two principle researchers will have any identifying information removed prior to transcription. Audio-records will be erased at the completion of the study. Transcriptions will be identified by code only with any identifying information removed, and will be held for five (5) years before being shredded.

You will not be identified in the dissertation or any other publication, discussion or presentation of this research. Any direct quotes that are used will not identify you by name or by any other information that would make your identity known. If there is any doubt whatsoever about whether or not using a quote will identify you, then the researchers will contact you directly for your permission to use it.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may exercise the option of removing your data from the study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise that warrant doing so.

We are aware that our participation is voluntary and one or all members of the family can refuse to answer any question that we feel uncomfortable answering. Also, we can withdraw from this study or have our data withdrawn at any time without any negative consequences.

We have read and agreed to participate in this study.

_____________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent 1 Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

_____________________________________________________________________
Signature of Parent 2 Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

_____________________________________________________________________
Signature of Adolescent Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

_____________________________________________________________________
Signature of Researcher Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
My name is Barbara Samarin, and I am a graduate student at the University of Guelph studying under Dr. Susan Chuang from the department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition. If you have any further questions regarding this project or this consent form, please contact me at bsamarin@uoguelph.ca or 519-993-8612. Additionally, my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Susan Chuang, may be contacted at schuang@uoguelph.ca or 519-824-4120 ext. 58389. Lastly, feel free to include your contact information if you are interested in receiving a copy of the results to my study.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact:

**Research Ethics Board**
University of Guelph  
437 University Centre  
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1  
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca  
Fax: (519) 821-5236  
Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
Appendix E: Background Questionnaire

Background Questionnaire for Adolescent Participants

Identification # ________ (To be filled out by researcher)
Date of interview # ______________________________ (To be filled out by researcher)

Demographic Questions

Please report:

1. Gender: € Female € Male

2. Date of Birth: Year ______________ Month ________________ Day _____

3. Race/Ethnicity __________________________

4. Religion (circle all that apply)
   a. Atheist/agnostic   b. Catholic   c. Non-Catholic Christian (e.g., Presbyterian, Baptist, etc)   d. Other ___________________________

5. If you currently belong to a religion, how often do you engage in religious practices (e.g. pray, attend place of worship, attend bible study)?
   Never            Sometimes            Frequently
   1               2               3               4               5               6               7

6. If you currently belong to a religion, how important is your religion to you?
   Not at all important   Somewhat important   Very important
   1               2               3               4               5               6               7

7. State your current level of education:____________________

8. What is your current average grade (circle one)
   A+   A   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D
9. Out of your five closest friends, what are their:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Language used to converse with them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Do you work? € No € Yes, € part-time € full-time

11. If yes, the number of hours per week you work: _____________

12. Do you volunteer? € No € Yes

13. If yes, the number of hours per week you volunteer: _____________

14. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities (clubs/organizations/sports) in your community?
   € No € Yes, how many? _____________

15. List ALL extracurricular activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Organization (that offers this program)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____________</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. What is your current living arrangement? € Live in a house € Live in an apartment

17. Does your extended family live with you? € Yes € No

18. If no, does your extended family live close to you? € Yes € No

19. What are the top 3 challenges of being a Croatian second-generation immigrant?
20. What are the top 3 challenges of being a teenager?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

21. List the top 5 people or social support you have in order to help you with the challenges of being a teenager or Croatian-Canadian? How are these people/support systems related to you?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

22. What advice would you give to other Croatian-immigrant families and adolescents living in Canada?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
Appendix F: Interview Questions

Good morning/afternoon/evening!

I’d like to first thank you for taking the time to sit down and talk with me. I invite you to be as open and honest as possible with your answers. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview, we can either take a break for as long as you need, or you have the option of stopping the interview.

Are there any questions/concerns before we begin?

1. How would you define a good parent-adolescent relationship?

2. How would you rate your relationship with your parents? Mother? Father? (5 point likert scale: 5 = strong, 1 = poor)


4. How is the communication with your parents? Mother? Father? What do you talk about?

5. Do you have conflicts and disagreements with your parents? What types of conflicts and disagreements do you have with your parents? What do you argue about?

6. How do you resolve these disagreements and conflicts?

7. Since you were born in Canada and your parents were born in Croatia, are there any cultural differences or clashes, or even similarities, between you?
**Table 1**

*Components of a Good Parent-Adolescent Relationship*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable to discuss and disclose personal, private, and daily issues or topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual understanding</td>
<td>Understanding issues and situations from more than one perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Freedom</td>
<td>Personal choice and preferences (e.g., acknowledging adolescents development and certain needs and wants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Providing some level of help or assistance for another individual in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Providing support in the form of care, closeness, and nurturance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Providing helpful and relevant information to other family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Providing materialistic and/or financial aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable and confident about relying on another individual in the family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Adolescent Perceptions of their Relationships with their Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable to discuss and disclose personal, private, and daily issues or topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Impact</td>
<td>Cultural aspects and elements in family dynamics that allow for increased closeness and cohesion among family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Understanding</td>
<td>Understanding issues and situations from multiple perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Having respect for each other; being treated equally and fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Freedom</td>
<td>Positive encouragement for adolescent autonomy and independence, as well as, expression of personal choices, opinions, interests and preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Providing some level of help to another individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Providing support in the form of helping to fulfill the emotional needs and wants of another individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Providing helpful and relevant information to another family members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Providing materialistic and/or financial aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Feeling comfortable and confident about relying on another individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict and Control</td>
<td>Contradictory viewpoints on issues, most often resulting in conflict or disagreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Impact</td>
<td>Cultural expectations, obligations, barriers, or cultural differences between parent and adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation/Generational Gap</td>
<td>Challenges between parent and adolescent due to generational differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Respect</td>
<td>Desire from adolescent to receive respect from parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Freedom</td>
<td>Adolescent needs and desires for more independence from family, and encouragement for self-identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Parent-Adolescent Communication*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Barriers</td>
<td>Cultural differences and challenges that impede negatively on the parent-adolescent lines of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Barriers</td>
<td>Difficulties communicating with each other due to language proficiency in speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about the Culture</td>
<td>Conversations on Croatian culture, values, traditions, language and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Interactions</td>
<td>Discussions on everyday activities and daily issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating Personal Freedom</td>
<td>Communication between parent and adolescent to negotiate more independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Private Disclosure</td>
<td>Discussions with parents about personal and private emotions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of Education</td>
<td>Discussions regarding importance of education, school related issues, and/or extra-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

*Parent-Adolescent Conflicts and Disagreements*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Barriers</td>
<td>Conflict between parent and adolescent surrounding cultural issues or expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Conflict</td>
<td>Conflict regarding everyday events or daily situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Freedom Conflicts</td>
<td>Conflict between parent and adolescent on negotiating adolescent autonomy, personal preferences, opinions and choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Related Conflict</td>
<td>Conflicts or disagreements on issues related to school or education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Conflict Resolution Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Concedes</td>
<td>Adolescent concedes to parents’ wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation and</td>
<td>Having open and honest discussions about issues, problems, situations, and disagreements that involve family members through negotiation and compromise from both parents and adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Concedes</td>
<td>Parent concedes to adolescents’ wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unresolved/Avoided</td>
<td>Issues and disagreements are never resolved, or completely avoided and not openly discussed or addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

*Cultural Similarities and Differences among Youth and their Parents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Knowledge</td>
<td>Discrepancies on the level of cultural knowledge between parent and adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Norms /Experiences</td>
<td>Individual differences in one’s cultural experiences and norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Pressures</td>
<td>Differences in views on the amount of involvement in cultural practices, traditions, and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Opportunities</td>
<td>Youth having more educational opportunities compared to their parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Barriers</td>
<td>Difficulties communicating and understanding one another due to language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Freedom Clashes</td>
<td>Discrepancies on issues of personal freedom and independence between adolescent and parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>Working hard and being persistent in attaining success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Pride</td>
<td>Sense of pride and connection to family culture of origin and current Canadian cultural context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Cultural Identity</td>
<td>Having two cultural identities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>