EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIVIDUALS IN INTERMARRIAGE

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore what facilitates and hinders intermarried individuals' adjustment in their marriage. A Critical Incident Technique was used to elucidate the incidents that facilitated and hindered their adjustment. In this study, only facilitating incidents were analyzed. The intermarried individuals consisted of five Indo-Canadians and six Caucasian (Canadians). The participants took part in an interview in which they were asked to describe incidents that have hindered and facilitated their adjustment in their intermarriage. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The transcripts were then analyzed and critical incidents that facilitated their adjustment in the intermarriage were explicated. As a result, 22 critical incidents were described as facilitating their adjustment in intermarriage. These incidents include: interest in, appreciation of, acceptance of, respect for, and partaking in spouse's culture; support and acceptance from key people in the immediate and extended family for self and spouse; view of cultural differences as enhancing the relationship; commitment to resolving differences and conflicts; having fun together through shared interests and a sense of humor; flexibility and openness towards raising their children; common values and beliefs; shared future goals, love, commitment to, and trust in the relationship; honouring personal convictions in the face of challenges; personal philosophies, attitudes, values, and beliefs; willingness to compromise on, ability to accommodate, adjust, and accept their differences; personal characteristics of spouse; acculturation to the partner's (Caucasian-mainstream) culture, balanced by the desire and the ability to maintain some aspects of their own (Indian) culture; viewing personal and cultural differences as an opportunity to learn a different way of doing things; familiarity with spouse's cultural context prior to
marriage; complementing and balancing gender roles; ongoing recognition and awareness throughout the marriage of initial hardships in getting together as a couple; recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating parents' willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs; supporting each other; being able to anticipate challenges and struggles that would be involved in intermarriages prior to getting married forced the individuals to examine commitment; resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to or through the wedding; sibling marrying out.

These critical incidents were then presented to each of the participants in a follow up interview for validation. The findings of this study are discussed in terms of implications for further research as well as implications for counselling individuals and couples who are experiencing challenges as they pursue and adjust in intermarriages.
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also given me the grace to see life's challenges as rich opportunities to grow and develop, and has continually provided the light at the end of the tunnel.
CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

While interracial and interethnic marriages are increasing rapidly, research has failed to keep up with this social reality. This may reflect the fears associated with delving into a field that is prone to value judgements and that challenge our ideas of supremacy and the transmission of culture to the next generation. (Goldstein & Segall, 1985; Hall, 1976). The empirical research in this area is particularly sparse in Canada, and a majority of the existing research is sociological in nature (Sussman, 1982; Goldstein et al., 1985; Tucker & Mitchell-Kerman, 1990). The bulk of the research examines the demographics of intermarriage, motivations behind intermarriage and the presumed sociocultural and psychological implications of intermarriage, while ignoring the developmental perspective.

My interest in this topic stems from my cultural identity development in the context of various interracial experiences and relationships. I emigrated from India at the age of 12. Having come to Canada at an early age, I struggled and to some extent continue to struggle with maintaining elements of my original culture and integrating the values of the new culture. This experience of cultural conflict became even more significant later in life, as I began to explore romantic relationships. For the first couple of years, I was relatively certain that I would not date anyone that was not Indian. This was a simple fact of my life, and something that was expected by my family and community. However, as I was presented with the opportunities to meet and date people of different backgrounds, I began to rethink my position. Much of the struggle stemmed
from thinking that I was abandoning my cultural traditions and showing disrespect to my family and community.

After much struggle and contemplation about these experiences I have come to realize that my culture is a core part of my identity. To the extent that an individual is able to appreciate, respect and validate this cultural aspect of myself I should be open to pursuing a relationship with this individual regardless of their race or culture. However, I am also aware that this may be more of a theoretical statement, and the situation may be quite different in reality. I am aware that many individuals who have pursued intermarriages have faced many challenges not only within the relationship but also from family.

Reflecting on my own experiences, and having talked to others like myself who have also dealt with, and in many cases continue to struggle with a similar situation, has inspired me to examine this phenomenon more systemically. Although in a present day Canadian reality of increasing interracial mingling, this is an area of interpersonal relationships which will expand rapidly in cross-cultural counselling, very little research of practical value has been done in this area. I am aware that my own experiences will have an impact on how I will approach this research. Being cognizant of this fact, I will make every effort to recognize my own biases and to maintain objectivity throughout this study.

Cottrell (1990) reports that of the existing literature on intergroup marriages, only 20% (73) of all studies published before 1930 through the 1980’s dealt with interracial marriage. Moreover, only 8% (5) of the studies of intergroup marriage published in the 1980s were related to interracial marriage. Even in the 1970s when the greatest number
of studies were published, only 26% (37) of the 143 studies addressed interracial marriage. In part, this sparsity of research has been attributed to the authors' desire to avoid criticism and controversy (Jeter, 1982). The expectation that intermarriages conform to intervention models designed for intramarriages (Falkner & Kich, 1987) may also contribute to this phenomenon. The consequence of this pessimistic preoccupation with intermarriage has been that researchers have produced very little research of practical value for either the couples or their counselors.

Ironically despite the attitudinal barriers of both the majority and the minority cultures, one goal in a racially mixed society, especially in Canada, is that of achieving racial harmony. However, such a goal is formidable when there is a diversity of groups, each with its own brand of ethnocentrism; group differences in variables such as power, prestige, wealth and status; the existence of barriers such as prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination and racism. Thus, the problem in America is further compounded by the number and diversity of its groups so that history, race, class, color and nationality affect each other in ways that make simple generalization very difficult (Kitano, Yeung, Chai & Hatanka, 1984).

The principle of intermarriage or exogamy remains an issue of importance or concern to many subcultural groups. For example, Castonguay (1982) documents that intermarriage between English and French Canadians is continuing to undermine the establishment and preservation of bilingualism in Canada. Many sociologists would argue that outmarriage symbolizes the epitome of ethnic assimilation. Farber (1964), for example, states that mate choice is the major factor by which families regulate change and stability across generations.
Shifting Attitudes Towards Intermarriage

Although Canadians have shown a higher level of tolerance towards intermarriage than their American counterpart, 70% vs. 43% in 1983, the overall attitude towards intermarriages has become increasingly favorable over the past fifteen years (Lambert & Curtis, 1984; Canadian Institute of Public Opinion, 1983). In supporting Canada’s multicultural policies and programs, Hedy Fry (The Vancouver Sun, 1997), the Vancouver Centre MP, cites intermarriage as being one indicator of success. She states that the policies are fostering integration of immigrants into Canadian society rather than creating ethnic separatism. Fry also notes that attitudes towards intermarriage have changed. In 1968, before the introduction of multiculturalism programs, 42 per cent of Canadians approved of interracial marriage. Today it’s 81 per cent—“so we are fostering a tolerant society” (Fry, p. A1).

Prevalence of Intermarriage

According to some American research, although there has been an increase in the rate of intermarriages from the 1950’s to date, the increase has been smaller and non linear than expected (Porterfield, 1982 and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990). The general characteristics of those who intermarry are such that ethnic minorities have a higher incidence of intermarriage than the general population or whites. Also, female intermarriage is higher than male intermarriage for every major ethnic group except Blacks (Tucker et al., 1990). Richard (1991) summarizes that research in the United States generally indicates that ethnic intermarriages occur most frequently, followed by religious intermarriages, and racial intermarriages occur least frequently. Also, in most
cases (Jewish being the exception), group size is inversely related to the amount of intermarriage.

Canada has also experienced an increase in the rate of intermarriage (Goldstein, et al., 1985). Richard (1991) reports that intermarriage is more common among Western and Northern Europeans than Southern Europeans, Caribbeans, and Asians. Among these groups, the factors of group distribution, size and generation, which will be discussed in further detail, also predict the rate of intermarriage.

**Factors that Influence Intermarriage**

As stated earlier, much of the literature related to intermarried couples has been concerned not with the interactional processes within cross-cultural marriages but with the demographics of intermarriage, the motivations behind intermarriage, and the presumed socio-cultural and psychological implications of such marriages. The following sections will provide a summary of some research in these areas.

**Sociological and Demographic Studies**

Among the sociological studies, wars, immigration, slave trade, and segregation are some of the historical events that have been cited as determining the nature and rate of intermarriage (Cretsor & Leon, 1982; Kitano et al., 1984; Richard, 1991). The disproportionate number of Japanese "war brides" from the post World War II period is pointed out as being one case in point. The racial tolerance and softened sociopolitical barriers resulting from the 1960’s civil rights movement and anti-miscegenation laws in the United States have also been seen as contributing to shifting some of the negative attitudes towards intermarriage (Tucker et al., 1990).
Richard (1991) states that in North America immigration has played a central role in its development, and it has been a key factor in intermarriage. According to Richards, immigration has also contributed to the character of the nation. It has shifted with the ongoing changes in the immigration policy. Richard also states that these changes have had a significant impact on ethnic groups and their marital choices. Between the years of 1869 and 1945, the immigration policy seemed to favor mostly British, U.S., and some Western Europeans. Visible minorities were restricted through the raising of head taxes and the Act of 1910 which aimed to keep out those who would be unlikely to assimilate. The post war era (1946-47) brought some changes to the ethnic composition. The repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923 allowed Asians into the country. Furthermore, as a way of objecting to the restrictions of non-White immigration in 1962, a landmark change took place in regulations. The amended regulations stated that “regardless of origin, citizenship, country of residence or religious beliefs, who is personally qualified by reason of education training, skills or other special qualifications” is eligible to apply for permanent residence in Canada (Richard, 1991, p. 9). Finally, education and the secularization of the marriage institution have gradually replaced religion as a consideration in spouse selection. According to Richard, the changes in the regulations have not only effected the ethnic character of the immigrant stream towards greater diversity, but have also favored those with a higher education. These individuals, in turn, have been shown to have higher propensities for ethnic intermarriage. In summary, the increased cultural and ethnic diversity, combined with changes in educational and occupational characteristics of immigrants are some of the factors that have directly affected immigrant assimilation and ethnic intermarriage.
Psychological Studies

Researchers not concerned with “how many” or statistics of intermarriage seem to be preoccupied with “why” intermarriages take place. More recently, the search for the psychological predispositions of individuals to intermarry has come to replace Cretser and Leon’s (1982) focus on sociological and demographic variables. For example, it has been suggested that intermarriage may allow one to either differentiate from family of origin or it may pull the individual away from the family (McGoldrick & Preto, 1984). Furthermore, Resnick categorizes the intermarried individual into four types: “the emancipated person, the rebellious person, the detached person, and the adventurous person” (as cited by McGoldrick & Preto, 1984, p. 350). Cottrell (1990) suggests that “people who marry out are, to some degree, psychologically, culturally, or socially marginal” (p. 163). It is also possible that intermarried individuals are operating on some stereotypical beliefs about their spouse’s culture, or they may be attracted to their spouse’s exotic qualities, such as physical, cultural or ethnic.

Culturalist and Structuralist Perspectives

There are also a number of models that attempt to explain and to predict the outcome of interactions between various racial and ethnic groups. The culturalist perspective (Labov & Jacobs, 1986) basically advocates some level of assimilation. It states that some type of amalgamation is found in all cases of interethnic cases. Richard (1991) reports that assimilation is a dominant theme in North American policy making, despite claims made otherwise. Her research supports Gordon’s (1964) ideas that intermarriage is a definition of marital assimilation (1991, p. 20). Gordon identified seven stages into full assimilation, with marital assimilation being an “inevitable by-
product of structural assimilation” and a minority group’s final stage of assimilation (1964, p. 80). As mentioned earlier, Canadian multiculturalism policy supporters have also used the rising rates of intermarriage as one indicator that these policies are fostering integration of immigrants into Canadian society rather than creating ethnic separatism.

Structuralists, on the other hand, focus on social and demographic issues of sex ratio, propinquity, socioeconomic status and group size in examining the phenomenon of intermarriage (Cretsor & Leon, 1982). Some studies do show that there is an inverse relationship between the size of a group and intermarriage for that particular group, and the heterogeneity of population is also related to an increase in intermarriage (Blau, Beeker & Fitzpartick, 1984). However, Imamura (1986) argues that these factors are not commonplace situation, but rather represent “special case”. Furthermore, she argues that hypergamy, for example, fails to explain the union of a middle class woman from a developed society with a man from a developing country.

These perspectives have led to theorizing of some other factors that create an environment that is conducive to intermarriage. Richard (1991) states that of the ethnic, religious, and racial intermarriages, ethnic intermarriages are most frequent followed by religious and racial intermarriages respectively. He also cites propinquity as a variable that impacts the social and demographic factors in intermarriage. The acculturation of a group is also seen to effect the rate of intermarriage, whereby intermarriage increases over generations (Kitano et al., 1984). Richard also points out that the largest increase seems to occur in the third generation. He notes that generation is, by far, the most important factor related to intermarriage rates.
Kitano et al., (1984) describes a model of outmarriage for Asians in which change is related to generation. The third generation is “presumed to be more acculturated, further removed from historical circumstances, less under the control of the family and community, more familiar with American roles and values, and more apt to use individual-personal motives for marrying than is first generation immigrant” (p. 180). Kitano et al., also discuss variables associated with the family and community which impact marital choices. Some of these include cultural expectations towards marriage, the degree of social control over marital practices and the existence of marital brokers or “go-betweens”. Finally, they mention the personal-individual factors that encompass more than “attraction, sex and love”. Some of these factors include gender role expectations, and individual motives for marriage.

Moreover, individuals with high levels of education or occupational attainment are more likely to intermarry than are those who stay in traditional occupations or remain in the same business as their parents. This may be a result of increased social mobility, shared values and goals, and decreasing religious boundaries (Glenn, 1982). Individuals in “unconventional” occupations, such as actors, musicians and writers also tend to intermarry more frequently compared to those in conventional occupations.

According to Richard (1991), research indicates that men from a minority group seem to marry wives belonging to the dominant group. Age or birth order also appears to be a factor in that the youngest child of a family outmarries more frequently than either the middle or older child. Although much of the research examines intermarriage in terms of external (environmental) or internal (personal) factors, Kitano et al., (1984) emphasize a multidimensional model which incorporates the myriad of factors involved in
individual propensities to intermarry. Kitano et al., underscore the importance of observing how the variables of race, religion, ethnicity, language, and race interact with other factors such as education, socioeconomic status, and the attitudes of family, ethnic groups, and dominant community in creating optimal conditions for intermarriage.

**Cultural transition**

According to Falicov (1985), the term “transition”, derived from two Latin words, means to “go across”. In the developmental literature, this term signifies a passage from one place or state to another. Marriage can be defined as one such transition. For cross-cultural couples, yet another transition is superimposed to the process of adjusting to a married life. In Falicov’s words, “…the spouse’s main developmental task during the cultural transition period of the marriage is to arrive at a balanced and flexible view of their cultural similarities and differences. This would make it possible to maintain some individuated values, to negotiate confusing and conflictual areas, and even to develop a new cultural code and a joint cross-cultural identity that integrates parts of both cultural heritages” (p. 234).

Woodruff (1989) uses McCoy’s integrated model which combines Adler’s descriptive model of cultural transition with Kelley’s conceptualization of culture and role construct theory to argue that successful cross-cultural interaction is possible without each individual having to assimilate into the other’s culture. However, she points out that they must be able to effectively construe the other partner’s and his or her group’s outlook. Moreover, the couple must move beyond just understanding each other to valuing and incorporating the core aspects of each other’s culture. In short, the partners
must move towards becoming bicultural. Woodruff describes how this model can help conceptualize if, and how, intercultural couples achieve the transition from stage one to stage five. At stage one, acceptance is based on a superficial understanding of the other’s culture, whereas at stage five they are presumed to accept themselves and their partner on the basis of a deeper understanding.

More specifically, according to Woodruff, during stage one, both partners may be perceiving each other through their original cultural construct system. As such, they may be more aware of their similarities than their differences. Woodruff notes that McCoy assumes that couples surpass this stage before approaching marriage. However, she points out that in Immamura’s study of English/Nigerian couples who met and married in England, the case is different. Upon completing their education, these couples returned to the husband’s home in Nigeria. The wives in particular had not recognized or been aware of the potential impact of the cultural differences or the problem of living abroad prior to beginning this journey.

During stage two, with continued cultural contact and exposure, couples become more sensitized to each other’s differences. Couples begin to realize that their partner’s behaviour does not make sense. This may result in considerable confusion, possible withdrawal and/or depression. This stage of disintegration may be followed by a reintegration of self. Although this stage is characterized by an increased awareness of one’s own and the partner’s culture, it does not lead to acceptance. Each seems to live in parallel construction of the two cultures. This creates a perception that is stereotyped and constricted.
Stage three seems to represent a crisis or decision point. Some individuals may succumb to the difficulties of this stage, while others transcend this stage by becoming accepting and comfortable with the new culture. Couples who successfully transcend stage three demonstrate flexibility and the development of coping skills for the second culture, which represents stage four. Finally, Woodruff summarizes that the achievement of stage five is characterized by couples moving beyond acceptance of differences to becoming competent and creative within the second culture. It is then that they become bicultural.

**Statement of the problem**

The first major problem with the existing research in the area of intermarriage is that it has mostly been conducted in the United States. Consequently, the focus has been on the Black-White, Jewish, Hispanic and Eastern European populations. Most of these groups also have a long and salient history in the United States. Secondly, a large portion of these studies focus on the external forces (socio-economical, political and racial forces) that affect the incidents of intermarriage among these various groups. The scant amount of literature that does address intermarriages in the Canadian context, focuses on the more dominant (religious) groups, such as Anglican, Baptist, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Protestant and so on (Larson, and Munro, 1990). The Eastern religious or ethnic groups are given no mention. Moreover, the bulk of the literature deals with the incidence of intermarriage, leaving a gap in applied research regarding the counselling needs of the couples.
More importantly, majority of the research has focused on what can go wrong in an intermarriage at the expense of examining the adaptive cross-cultural interaction patterns within marriage (Falicov, 1985; Tseng, McDermott, & Maretzki, 1977; and McGoldrick & Preto, 1984). The couple’s own experience of the intermarriage has been largely neglected and, as a result, the reasons for why intermarriages can be particularly difficult remains unexplored. We do not know, for example, if the demands of intermarriages differ in kind or degree from those of same-culture unions. We also do not know if the couples perceive their difficulties as culturally related or as individual conflicts. Most importantly, researchers have overlooked the developmental perspective in examining the experience of intermarriage. Consequently, little is known about if and how nonclinical couples overcome their culturally related difficulties and move towards achieving an identity that is bicultural or one that transcends their cultural differences.

**Purpose and Rationale for the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative analysis of the developmental process by which nonclinical intermarried couples might adjust in marriage by developing a scheme of what facilitates and hinders an individual’s adjustment in intermarriage. More specifically, I would like to explore the following areas:

1) Which situations or conditions, that seem to be culturally related or otherwise, facilitate the individual’s adjustment in their intermarriage.

2) Which situations or conditions, that seem to be culturally related or otherwise, hinder the individual’s adjustment in their intermarriage.
As stated earlier, the literature that examines the psychological process of the couple in the intermarriage is quite limited. Most theoretical literature uses individual clinical case descriptions to make their point. There is no study that systematically examines the couple’s experience of being in an intermarriage. Research on intermarried Indo-Canadians is even more sparse.

Considering the fact that majority of the Indo-Canadian immigrant population is of the first and second generation, many of them, particularly the second-generation Indo-Canadians, may be in the midst of negotiating their bi-cultural identity. The Indo-Canadian community in B.C. is quite tight-knit, and conservative in their outlook. The adoption of Western values, especially by the children, is greatly feared as it is perceived to lead to the obliteration of their ethnic identity. This closed attitude of many parents and grandparents only serves to intensify the difficulties of negotiating one’s bi-cultural identity. It is quite conceivable that among these second generation individuals, those who do decide to enter into an intermarriage may not only face the challenging task of attempting to adjust to the intermarriage, but also must negotiate their precarious identity simultaneously. In addition, they also have to come to terms with the ostracism and alienation that they will likely experience from the family and the larger community. Since according to Gordon (1964) intermarriage is the final step towards full assimilation, it is not surprising that the idea of intermarriage arouses considerable fear and anxiety among those who are concerned with the preservation and transmission of the Indian culture.

However, to date, no research has addressed this group and the unique challenges that the younger generations of Indo-Canadians face as they contemplate the idea of
intermarriage or as they adjust in their intermarriage in an environment that openly
condemns this practice. Consequently, as a way of examining the experience of Indo-
Canadians, I would like to focus on intermarriages in which one partner is Indo-
Canadian, and has been in Canada for one or more generations, and the other partner is
Caucasian-Canadian.

Definitions

Intermarriage generally refers to a marital relationship between two people from
different cultural, ethnic, national or religious backgrounds (Ho, 1990). According to
Falicov (1985), culture is seen “as those set of shared world views and adaptive
behaviours derived from simultaneous membership in a variety of contexts, such as
ecological setting (rural, urban, suburban), religious background, nationality, and
ethnicity, social class, minority status, occupations, political leanings, migratory patterns
and stage of acculturation, and values derived from belonging to the same generation,
historical period, or particularly ideology” (p. 232). Furthermore, Falicov states that
although similarities and differences may be objectively and subjectively traced to
experiences of inclusion or exclusion in various social settings, the totality of a couple’s
relationship involves many other areas of similarity and differences, such as gender
differences and personality differences. This statement highlights the complex task of
delineating the influence of the various factors that operate in one’s life.

The search for an appropriate definition of intercultural marriage leads to the
related concept of interracial marriage. As race has been perceived to be based on visible
physical characteristics, interracial marriages seem easy enough to discern. However,
fundamental to racial distinctions is the common concern with ancestry and with relative
values given to one's own ancestry when compared with others. The term “ethnicity” seems to signify both concepts of race and culture.

More specifically, ethnicity refers to “a sense of commonality transmitted over generations by the family and reinforced by the surrounding community. It involves conscious and unconscious processes that fulfill deep psychological needs for identity and historical continuity” (McGoldrick, & Presto 1984, p.1). Furthermore, ethnicity molds individual thinking, feeling, behaviour in obvious and subtle ways: eating/working/relaxing patterns, celebrating rituals and traditions, feelings about life, death, disease, and so on. Hence, ethnicity interacts with the family life cycle at every stage (McGoldrick and Presto). More wholistically, intermarriage generally refers to a marital relationship between two people from different cultural, racial, ethnic, national or religious backgrounds (Ho, 1990). While dealing with differences is a central issue in the lives of all couples, the adjustment or accommodation may be longer and more complicated as the differences in culture, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds widen (Perel, 1992). These factors, most often subconscious, make intermarriages challenging and susceptible to continuing conflict (Tseng et al., 1977).

In this study, the term “Indo-Canadian” will be used to refer to individuals who are or identify themselves as being of Indian descent and have been in Canada for one or more generations. The term “Caucasian/white Canadian” will refer to individuals who are or identify themselves as being of European descent and have been in Canada for one or more generations.
CHAPTER II:
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Theories of Intermarriage

A majority of the intermarriage theories has been derived from information gathered from Black/White or Jewish/Gentile relationships. Also intermarriage theories tended to shift according to the type of dyad studied (Cretsor, & Leon, 1982). The motivations recounted for intermarriage have been sociological, demographic, and in some cases, psychological in nature (Cretsor, Leon, 1982; Imamura, 1986). Some theories have received support while others remain unsubstantiated.

Woodruff (1989), in a phenomenological investigation of cross-cultural couples, viewed intrapersonal motivations as the most tangible. As anticipated, Woodruff found that the effects of culture did seem more significant in cross-cultural than in same culture unions. Her study supported the prediction that the couples would experience the most difficulties in those areas in which their cultures were most different. More specifically, an individual’s values and beliefs, being at the opposite ends of the individualism/lineality continuum were experienced as most stressful. As a result of their differing belief systems, the intermarried partners were unable to meet each other’s role expectations. This, in turn, seemed to have a disruptive effect in the area of communication and intimacy.

Char (1977), who studied outgroup marriages in Hawaii, where cross-cultural marriages are the norm was also less preoccupied with societal factors. He stressed the importance of considering the personal, not societal determinants of cross-cultural
attraction. He suggested several intermarriage motivators, both "healthy" and "unhealthy", and noted that "one must appreciate that the conscious reason given for a mixed cultural marriage might not be the actual and that it is often the result of a combination of several factors, conscious and unconscious" (p. 33). The reasons included love, propinquity, the need to be different, practicality, to enhance social status, unresolved childhood conflicts, parental influence, unfounded beliefs toward another race, idealistic fantasies, and sadomasochistic needs. Each motivator may be viewed as positive or negative depending on one's orientation.

Davidson (1992), in her review of Black-White interracial marriages, on the other hand, criticized the major unconscious and conscious hypothesis commonly promoted concerning this type of dyad. In her view, unconscious views suggested that Black/White couples were somehow deviant because their choice of spouses was a manifestation of self-hatred. Rebellion against social norms and family was another unconscious reason given for Black-White unions. Davidson also countered three paradigms that operate at a more conscious level. They include stereotypical sexual preoccupations between the races, the need to marry for symbiotic social and economic benefits, and the desire to overtly display their relationship to the public.

Through her focus on international couples, Imamura (1986) also discussed personal motivations for intermarriage. She found that several hypotheses failed to explain cross-national unions. Cretsor and Leon's (1982) sex ratio and propinquity hypotheses only explained specific circumstances, and did not account for a majority group member marrying a minority group member. Imamura also stated that there was a lack of studies that substantiated the psychological hypotheses of intermarried couples.
Imamura’s results also conflicted with Cottrell’s (1973) study which found that cross-national marriages between Indian and Western individuals were a way of extending a formerly created international network, as opposed to the spouses being introduced to a foreign culture after marriage. Imamura (1986) postulated that international couples in Nigeria married as a result of interpersonal attraction. The results of her study demonstrated that similarities, more than differences, drew the couples together. It was pointed out, however, that the initial attraction is rarely sufficient to overcome the additional stresses created by socio-cultural differences, such as different nationalities. Similarly, in their study in Hawaii, Ahren, Cole, Johnson, and Wong (cited in McGoldrick, Preto, Hines, & Lee, 1991) indicated that intermarried individuals were similar in their personalities despite dissimilar backgrounds. This study also revealed that intermarried women were more assertive than their intramarried counterparts. Romano (1988) explains, however, that there is no one way to define intermarried couples, as each couple is unique.

**The Impact of Differing Value Orientations**

**Individualistic/Collectivistic Orientations**

As the intermarried couple may have conflicting value orientations, each of their value systems may be challenged by the other. These values may have very different underlying philosophies and, as a result, subscribe to opposing values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, potentially creating immense dissonance or bi-cultural conflict in the individual. This may lead couples to become uncertain of their values and react defensively to the other.
The amount of dissonance or disparity inherent in two cultures can be conceptualized along a continuum of individualist/collectivist value dimension (Hui & Triandis, 1986). The individualism-collectivism dimension has been used to explain a host of interpersonal-related concepts such as romantic love (Simmons, Wehner & Kay, 1989), conflict styles (Ting-Toomey, 1983), perceptual selection (Triandis, 1985) and information processing (Triandis, 1981).

Kluckhohn (1951) identifies five major value orientations. These include 1) the temporal focus of past present and future. Disagreement between the couple on the amount of time spent together may arise from this dimension. This dimension also speaks to the individual's differing focus on the past, present or the future. While one partner may be oriented to the future and be concerned about “planning”, another partner who is oriented to the present, may experience planning as unnecessary attempts to control; 2) the preferred pattern of action in interpersonal relationships speaks to an activity mode that emphasizes doing, being or being-in-becoming; 3) the preferred way of relating in groups. This dimension may affect relationship issues such as power, friends, demonstration of affection, and dealing with parents and in-laws; 4) the relationship with natural or supernatural environment. This dimension uncovers attitudes about recreation and lifestyle issues in relation to nature; and 5) the attitudes held about the innate goodness or evil in human nature. Within this dimension, issues may arise in the relationship concerning philosophy of life, religious beliefs, and spirituality. These values and beliefs, in turn, may impact such specific areas as financial management, sexual adjustment, religion, child rearing practices, communication, and identity (Ho, 1990).
Essentially, collectivism refers to the broad value tendencies of a culture in emphasizing the importance of the “we” identity over the “I” identity, group obligations over individual rights, and ingroup-oriented needs over individual wants and desires. In-groups tend to influence a wide variety of interpersonal situations in collectivistic cultures more so than individualistic cultures. As a result, a collectivist is likely to be more conforming, and expect more conformity from members. Hui and Triandis (1986) also state that they are more involved in their children’s choice of friends, studies, career and living arrangements than their counterparts in individualistic cultures. This pattern is prevalent in most of Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific (Ho, 1990).

Individualism, on the other hand, is characterized by the belief that one’s personal goals take precedence over collective or group goals, which may include family or community. This pattern is commonly found in Northern and Western regions of Europe and in North America (Ho, 1990). These value dimensions may have various implications for individuals in an intermarried relationship. In the following sections, I will discuss some specific areas which might prove challenging for intermarried individual and may have implications for their adjustment.

**View of Love, Marriage and Family.** As culture seems to be intimately connected with one’s definition of marriage, one’s beliefs and values will inevitably inform interactional patterns within marriage. While the ideal in the West may be that of an “intrinsic marriage” in which each partner expects the other to fulfill both the physical and psychological needs, in the East, one may enter into marriage out of practical necessity, moral commitment or family pressures (Adler, 1991). Love may be viewed as the fundamental reason for marrying in the West, and intense intimacy is considered
necessary to sustain the relationship. However, the couple’s obligation to their family and community is considered more important in the East than the intimacy between husband and wife.

Unfortunately, some American researchers’ inability to comprehend and appreciate these cultural differences is epitomized by Jeter’s (1982) statement. This Hawaiian-based researcher specializing in the area of intercultural and interracial marriage area concludes, “The bottom line is whether the union provides necessary warmth, love, affection, excitement, caring, intimacy and solidarity all human beings require. This is the prerequisite behind the masks of two racially different people” (1982, p. 111). While Jeter’s remark illustrates the expectations and desires of only one type of marriage, the one regarded highly by the Americans, it is quite conceivable that individuals in intermarriage will hold differing viewpoints. Some cultures may expect all their goals and needs to be met through their marriage, while other cultures may not see the union of two individuals as a means to their happiness. Of course, these differences may also be evident among individuals of the same culture.

**Romantic Love, Intimacy, Friendships and Conflict.** Simmons, Wehner, and Kay, (1989) revealed that German and US respondents scored higher in their attitudes of valuing romantic love than did Japanese respondents. It seems that in families where kinship ties are strong, romantic love is not seen as important, and in times of loneliness, solace and comfort is found through family and through close social/friendship networks. Among the intermarried couples in her study, Woodruff (1989) found that the male partner was given the status of the dominant partner and, as such, the disclosure of personal vulnerabilities or the sharing of secrets between the spouses was considered
inappropriate. Self-disclosure and sharing were actually considered disruptive to the marriage, and were perceived to be more appropriate to the relationship between same-sex friends.

On the other hand, in individualistic cultures where family ties are seen to be weaker, romantic love is treasured, and passionate love is seen as more important than companionship love. The collectivists view romantic love as pragmatic, caring and responsibility-based and they expect a sense of harmonized companionship from the feelings of being in love. Thus, intercultural conflict can occur when individualistic spouses do not live up to the relational expectations of the romantic ideals of their collectivistic partners. Woodruff (1989) found that the individuated orientation predisposed the Western partner to reach outward to their partner for the validation of thoughts and feelings. When their expectation of wanting to be listened to by their partner was left unmet, they stated being considerably distressed and disappointed.

Intimacy, for individualists, may mean working out autonomy or privacy issues while learning to deal with the loss of personal freedom and feeling the pressures of relational constraint. On the other hand, for collectivists, intimate conflict may mean working out connection as a couple and separation from immediate family, extended family, and/or network influences. In addition, while individualistic spouses believe in actively managing and controlling the relational conflict process, collectivist spouses often believe in relational karma or fate in accepting and flowing with the ups and downs of the relationship. This belief is captured by the agency versus field force orientation concept (Woodruff, 1989). Individualists tend to believe that power and control are located in the individual, and that the individual has the power to control his or her
destiny as well. Woodruff found that this belief contributes to the American partner’s eagerness to change his or her partner’s beliefs and actions to conform to his or her demands for more verbal interaction, for example.

Collectivists, on the other hand, believe that power and control are located in the field of forces that extend beyond individuals. This orientation is closely connected to the orientation of time. Woodruff found that all of the intermarried partners in her study were cognizant of the American partner’s need to structure and plan and the other culture partner’s resistance to doing so. She found that the while the American partners are oriented to the future, and as a result are concerned about “planning”, other culture partners who are oriented to the present, experience “planning” as unnecessary attempts to control. She also found that the non-American partner, rather than confronting and offending, relied on the strategy of evasiveness as a way of retaliating.

**Cognitive Processes.** According to Triandis (1981), other potential problem areas that can lead to differing expectations include differences in perceptual selectivity, information processing strategies, cognitive structures, and habits. The perceptual selection dimension determines whether people within a culture pay more attention to people’s actions or their characters or roles. Perceptual selection also affects the degree to which people trust each other, the extent to which in-groups influence behaviour, the degree to which people follow norms and roles, and the degree to which people distinguish on the basis of age, sex, religion, language, race, tribe or status. This invariably impacts what people consider to be intimate behaviour and with whom one has an intimate relationship. In summary, this dimension affects the relative importance ascribed to conforming behaviours within and outside the family.
Intercultural tensions may also result from the differences in one’s information processing strategies. A Westernized individual who values logical, empirical and linear thinking may judge his or her Eastern counterpart as unclear, immature and impractical. On the other hand, the non-Western individual who values subtle verbal and nonverbal cues and metaphors may view the Westernized individual as “cold, overpractical, unimaginative, and narrow” (Triandis, 1981, p.299). Triandis also discusses the impact of these differing styles of thinking in the context of a client/counsellor relationship, with the client and counsellor coming from Eastern and Western cognitive processes. For example, a therapist who uses an abstractive-pragmatic style of thinking and focuses on the spoken word may experience difficulty communicating with a minority client who relies on the context along with verbal and nonverbal cues. As noted above, partners coming from different backgrounds may experience a similar difficulty.

Habits, which are considered to operate at an unconscious level, can also cause considerable unrest in a relationship. Subtle nonverbal behaviours may be especially prone to intercultural miscommunication. Triandis states that, “the extent to which people maintain eye contact and touch, the interpersonal distance with which they are comfortable, and the tendency to speak loudly or softly can lead to misunderstanding” (Triandis, 1985, p. 24). Couples as well as counsellors and clients must learn to accommodate to or adjust to such differences.

Finally, it can be inferred that when romantic couples encounter intimate conflict in collectivistic cultures, family and close social/personal networks become actively involved in the conflict mediation process, more so than do comparable romantic couples in individualistic cultures. Moreover, while individualistic partners prefer to turn to
professional help in resolving major relational crises and problems, collectivistic spouses prefer to either “wait the crisis out” or turn to close friends or family members for solace and comfort (Ho, 1990). Thus even in third-party help-seeking arena, special attention needs to be paid to the different attitudes and expectations that intercultural partners hold toward the role of third-party mediation process.

However, we also need to keep in mind some remarkable similarities between the collectivists and individualistic cultures. Buss et al., (1990) found that nearly all of the 37 samples examined placed tremendous value on the mate characteristics of dependability, emotional stability, kindness, understanding, and intelligence. There were also gender differences that cut across the cultures. Males tended to evaluate potential mates in terms of physical appearance, youth and health. Females tended to evaluate potential mates in terms of earning potential, ambition, and industriousness.

**Financial Management.** The issue of money is an area that causes immense conflict in many marriages, and especially in intermarriages because it relates to differences in values, the issue of gender roles, and in-laws (Romano, 1988). For example, the couple may disagree on how they should manage money, who should earn money, and what responsibility they have to their family of origin, and in-laws to provide financial support.

**Sexual Adjustment.** How gender roles are defined may also determine how power is distributed and exercised among males and females in most racial and ethnic groups (Ho, 1990). Cultural and religious beliefs have an immense influence on individual’s attitude towards sex. Since one’s cultural attitudes have a strong impact on an individual’s life, it is inevitable that they will also affect an individual’s sexual
relationship with their partner. As a result, the issue of sex in intermarriage is far broader than that of reproduction, and contraception. "The sex act is a form of marital behaviour by which and through which the married couple develop, express and enrich spiritual, physical and emotional relationship with each other." (Ho, 1990. P. 17)

**Religion.** Differences in religion can be detrimental to successful intermarriages because the different religious teachings and understandings are deeply rooted in one’s psyche (Ho, 1990). Religion also gives meaning to a wide range of events in people’s lives, for example, life, death, birth, disease, purpose of life, and so on. Although an individual may sacrifice his or her religion and adopt his or her partner’s, or reject it all together, Ho warns that in compromising religious beliefs, “an individual is weakened in his or her internal strength, spirit, and commitment essential to becoming a happy individual to achieving a successful intermarriage” (p. 16). Intermarried couples in conflict may also either underemphasize or overemphasize their cultural and religious differences (Falivoc, 1985; Ho, 1990). In order to have a more balanced perspective, it is important that couples have a continuous exchange about their distinctiveness and similarity (Perel, 1992).

**Child Rearing.** The arrival of children may reactivate the intermarried couple’s memories of their own early childhood. It may also arouse differences in their individual philosophies, values, beliefs, and traditions. Sometimes couples who initially denied their differentness and abandoned their cultural traditions may not experience the full impact of this decision until new family structures emerge. The birth of a child, for example, may uncover the couple’s desire to reconnect with family members, and share their concerns and anxieties with their own parents. It may also represent the
transformation of two cultures into a new system. However, the birth of a child may also create new challenges or highlight current ones. The couple may disagree on child rearing practices from the moment the child is conceived until he or she reaches adulthood. Concerns may center on discipline, religion and the language that the child is taught.

**Communication.** Communication seems to be the most crucial component of any type of marriage. Communication skill has been shown to differentiate between maritally distressed and nondistressed couples (Schapp, 1984). Yet, what constitutes adaptive marital behaviours still remains unclear (Halford, Hahlweg & Dunne, 1990). There seem to be considerable differences across cultures in communication that is associated with marital problems. Halford et al., summarize, for example, that while Israeli couples living in America reported higher levels of verbal conflict than Anglo-Saxon American couple, these high levels of conflict were not associated with either marital dissatisfaction or violence. In intermarriage, this example serves to highlight the importance of recognizing each partner’s preferred way of communicating. Depending on their background, individuals may place a different emphasis on verbal and nonverbal communication. One’s background may also determine, often subconsciously, the emphasis placed on emotional expression, rationale, and form of behaviour in communication (McGoldrick, Pearce & Giordano, 1982). Since the researchers in the West seem to emphasize the importance of open verbal communication (Jeter, 1982), one must exercise caution in determining what constitutes adaptive communication among intermarried couples. However, problems may arise when the two partners are unaware of their own unique cultural repertoires. This may lead to resistance as they may be
unprepared or unwilling to accommodate the other partner to create harmonious interaction.

**Culture and the Self.** The issue of identity becomes implicated in intermarriages because the transitional process within intermarriages “begins with the encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self” (Adler, 1975, p. 18). According to Marsella (1985), the concept of self is the “experiential representation of culture” (p. 297). As a result, the experience of self differs across cultures. The collectivist culture contextualizes the individual in a social and interconnected milieu (Hoffman, 1990). In the Western culture, on the other hand, the individual is encouraged to separate and individuate from one’s social context. The need for control and autonomy is stressed.

Hsu (1985) defines the self as having seven layers. The third layer is the most relevant to the present discussion as this layer consists of the individual’s social network with which the individual has an intimate relationship through verbalized communication, emotional support, and mutual receptivity. This layer is emotionally charged as it represents a web of most significant interpersonal relationships.

Hsu states, “Man’s need for layer three is literally as important as his requirement for food, water, and air...This is what basically gives the individual his sense of identity and fulfillment. Sudden loss of inhabitants in layer three may be so traumatic as to cause the individual to feel aimless” (p. 33). Hsu refutes the Western concept of self which is experienced as individuated, independent and autonomous and argues for the Eastern concept of self which is perceived as socially contextualized, interconnected and experiential. Ishiyama’s (1989) self-validation model further substantiates the multi-layer nature of self. It represents the physical, familial, socio-cultural, transcultural and
transpersonal selves. Ishiyama’s concept of self-validation refers to the “recognition and affirmation of all aspects of self and the value and meaning of personal existence” (Ishiyama, 1989, p. 42). Intermarriage may represent a situational or social circumstance that can invalidate one’s personal, cultural, and transcultural identity and create a profound effect on an individual’s sense of well being and belonging. McGoldrick, Pearce and Giordano (1982) also emphasize the importance of race, ethnicity, culture and religion as they provide an individual with a sense of belonging and historical continuity, and represent a basic psychological need. Furthermore, cultural identity offers the individual the rituals, symbols, and traditional meanings that absorb the stress of various life transitions (death, job loss) and life cycle changes (marriage, rearing children) (McGoldrick & Preto, 1984; Ho, 1990).

Considering the intricate interaction between identity and culture, it is not surprising that intermarried couples are forced to contemplate and clarify the meaning of their respective cultures. Both partners are also required to confront their internalized negative stereotypes and ethnic ambivalence, and fully examine their prejudices and their attraction to their own, and their partner’s background (Perel, 1992). Thus, for the intermarried couple, awareness and insight into one’s own and one’s partner’s structures of self is necessary to foster a deeper understanding and a positive relationship between the couple. Moreover, how they function in different contexts, and what sources validate them, becomes of utmost importance in order for individuals to achieve an integrated sense of self, and to feel close to their partners (McGodlrick & Preto, 1984; Ishiyama, 1989).
**Marital Satisfaction**

Marital satisfaction is defined as an individual's subjective impression of the specific components within his or her marital relationship. Some of the general factors that are particularly relevant include roles, interpersonal relationships and reciprocities, proprieties, and relationships (Glick, Clarkin, and Kessler, 1987). Roles engender the manner in which spouses perceive themselves, which differs from culture to culture. Interpersonal relationships and reciprocities highlight the reliance and the obligatory factors. Propriety is defined as a standard of correct and incorrect behaviour within cultural norms.

It seems that the desire to be understood, accepted, or generally affirmed and validated is an integral part of a healthy functional relationship. One way in which validation is given to the other person is through interpersonal communication (Matthews & Clark, 1982). Matthews and Clark (1982) found that subjects who felt validated by their spouses reported more relationship satisfaction, greater relationship stability, more assistance from their spouses in intellectual and emotional growth, and greater sexual satisfaction than did subjects who did not feel validated by their spouses. According to Matthews and Clark (1982), some behaviours which were described as validating were the willingness to listen, to attempt to understand and respond to emotional needs and difficulties, encouraging the pursuit of personally satisfying careers and outside interests and verbally expressing caring.

In fact, in an assessment study (Snyder, 1979) on marital satisfaction of nearly 200 married couples, communication emerged as the single best predictor of marital satisfaction, outranking other variables such as leisure time together, sexual relationship,
and family finances. While this study focuses on the same culture couples, Imamura’s (1986) study of intermarried couples confirms this finding. She emphasizes that a cross-national marriage demands good verbal and nonverbal communication. Lack of understanding of each other’s thoughts and feelings may lead to feelings of isolation, and may cause unrest in other areas of the couple’s life. Indeed, communication seems to occupy a central role in marital bonding. Considering the immense importance of communication, it is quite conceivable that the greater the cultural or world view differences between the couple, the greater might be the difficulties they will experience in understanding each other (McGoldrick and Preto, 1984).

However, depending on the type of culture one comes from (high context vs. low context), partners may also place different emphasis on verbal and nonverbal communication (Hall, 1976). Ho (1990) points out that the difference emphasis placed on verbal and nonverbal communication becomes especially salient in an intermarriage because “ethnicity is experienced and persists through language”. Problems may occur when either partner is unaware or unwilling to understand and accommodate the unique cultural repertoires. Thus it is imperative to remember that each member of the couple may define communication or marital satisfaction differently. Western researchers, who describe the goals and expectations of marriage as being emotional fulfillment, verbal communication, and openness between the spouses may inadvertently overlook individuals who perceive marital union as primarily providing a social and economic foundation, and only secondarily as providing emotional satisfaction.

Furthermore, ethnic factors also play a definitive, and often a subconscious, role in one’s use of emotional expression, reason, and behaviour as a form of communication
(McGoldrick et al., 1982). For some cultures, Italians and Hispanics, for example, sharing of sadness and grief is expected, and talking about problems is experienced as natural and considered to be the best cure. British Americans, on the other hand, may value self-control and restraint. These views, in turn, may affect one's attitudes towards, health and illness, for example. “Italian partners may dramatize their pain, expect quick relief, and put it aside as soon as their pain eases, whereas, Jewish partners, on the other hand, may fear a quick relief to their problems” (McGoldrick et al., 1982, p. 7). Needless to say, differences in style of emotional expression may lead to significant misunderstandings among intermarried couples. Ultimately, the type and degree of emotions and behaviours displayed may depend on what is “allowed” within a certain cultural context, traditional orientation regarding cause and effect, and expectations regarding outcome.

Within the intermarriage context partners in conflict also typically underemphasize or overemphasize cultural/religious differences (Ho, 1990). Falicov (1985) confirms this dynamic by pointing out that distressed couples may unwittingly use their differences and similarities as a constraint or a resource. The perspective proposed here is that the spouse’s main developmental task during the cultural transition period of the marriage is to arrive at a balanced and flexible view of their cultural similarities and differences. This idea of gaining a flexible viewpoint supports Cottrell’s (1990) statement that cultural differences do not, in themselves, cause stress in intermarriage, and the degree of difference is not necessarily related to degree of stress. Encountering a very different culture is usually stress at first, but in the long run it is not the cultural
difference per se, but rather personal rigidity regarding those differences which account for interpersonal conflict.

However, much of the research that is available points to an increased amount of conflict with heterogeneous, as opposed to homogeneous, couples (Cottrell, 1990; McGoldrick, Pearce & Giordano, 1982; McGoldrick & Preto, 1984). McGoldrick and Preto (1984) stated that “in general, the greater the difference between the spouses, the less common the pairing and the greater the difficulty they will have adjusting” (p. 348). McGoldrick and Preto (1984) listed what they considered to be significant factors influencing intermarriage adjustment. These factors included:

1. The extent of difference in values between the cultural groups involved.
2. Differences in the degree of acculturation of each spouse; couples are likely to have more difficulty if one spouse is an immigrant and the other a fourth-generation American.
3. Religious differences in addition to cultural differences.
4. Racial differences; interracial couples are most vulnerable to being alienated from both racial groups for their union and may thus be forced into couple isolation.
5. The sex of the spouse from each background; sex roles intensify certain cultural characteristics.
6. Socioeconomic differences; as Americans move upward in socioeconomic status, their cultural patterns and values tend toward the mainstream. Partners who come from very different socioeconomic backgrounds or from cultures placing a differential value on socioeconomic status may have added difficulties.
7. Familiarity with each other’s cultural context prior to marriage.
8. The degree of resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to the wedding. (pp. 349-350).

Romano (1988) adds additional adjustment factors such as cultural expectations regarding the care, raising, and disciplining of children; how sexual intimacies are
expressed; and differences between the type of food and drink to which individuals are accustomed.

**Differences in Marital Satisfaction Between Cross-Cultural and Same Culture Couples**

Cretsor and Leon (1982) reviewed the literature concerning various intermarriage correlates, such as age, number of previous marriages and marital stability. Studies indicated that the interracial couples tended to be older than intraracial couples. Interracial marriages tended to also involve previously divorced persons. Divorce statistics between homogenous and heterogeneous couples were mixed. Data showed divorce statistics of interracial couples to be equal, or higher than those of intraracial couples (Cretsor & Leon, 1982). Cottrell (1990) emphasized that research on intermarried couples tended to stereotype the couples prone to divorce without closely examining cultural factors impinging on the likelihood of divorce. In her study of stressors in marriage, Hedgeman (1987), concluded that the marital stress experienced by interracial couples was not different from the White couples and the Black couples. McCabe’s (1990) comparative study of marital locus of control and coping resources of Black and White women in interracial and intraracial marriages also found that these are similar on the dimensions of marital locus of control and coping resources. She concluded that this would support the notion that one’s racial background does not imply a higher or lower risk factor for marital success in the United States.

Woodruff’s (1989) study, although it did not include a same culture couple comparison group, clearly illustrates how cultural differences can lead to immense, sometimes unresolvable, difficulties in the areas of communication and intimacy. The couples themselves defined some of each other’s behaviours as related to culture, and
pointed out that it is imperative to sufficiently understand one's culture in order to illuminate his or her behaviour. Woodruff points out that each partner's differing value orientation was an important factor in ensuring that the couples began their marriage with quite different expectations, in the area of communication, for example. In this study, communication was one area where neither the American nor the non-American partners seem able to adapt.

Furthermore, Durodoye (1991) examined differences in factors related to marital satisfaction for Nigerian male/African American female and African American couples. However, these results revealed significant differences between the two types of couples in the areas of overall marital distress, time together, disagreement over finances, and conflict over child rearing. The intermarried couples consistently expressed greater dissatisfaction on each of these scales. The difference between the two studies may have attributed to the fact that Hedgemans' study (1987) involved interracial couples who were White and Black Americans. Thus the acculturation level and cultural competence of the Black Americans may be very comparable to the White partners. The similarities in their cultural context may have reduced potential cultural conflicts. Nevertheless results regarding marital satisfaction among intermarried couples continue to be mixed.

**Individual Differences**

While psychological theorists and anthropological explanations may emphasize personality differences or broad generalizations respectively at the expense of the other, neither is sufficient to account for intercultural or intracultural differences. Stiramon (1995), in a phenomenological study of nine Thai women married to Canadian men, found that while some women thought it was the cultural differences that caused the most
serious problems, the majority identified personal differences as the main source of
collision in their marriage.

**Advantages of Intermarriage**

Ho (1990) points out that although intermarriage has been treated in the past as an
abnormality, defiance or disgrace, the truth is that intermarriage, like any other marriage
in itself, is neither good nor bad, right or wrong, successful or unsuccessful. It all
depends on the couple involved and what they make of it. He further states that
intermarriage can actually offer many advantages. Firstly, due to the fact the individuals
contemplating intermarriage may encounter opposition and unsolicited advice, he or she
is forced to think seriously about intermarriage. He or she also has to begin to think, feel,
and plan beyond his or her present romantic feelings. Thus these individuals begin to
deepen their communication and increase the likelihood of their marriage succeeding.

Ho (1990) also offers that intermarried couples are more likely to have a greater
commitment to their marriage. Ho explains, “Couples of the same ethnic or racial
background, who have encountered relatively mild or no opposition (perhaps even
encouragement) from parents or friends, may not be as committed as an intermarried
couple who has had to struggle every step to make their marriage a reality.” (p. 19). Thus
the initial opposition usually strengthened their commitment to make their marriage
succeed. Ho also suggests that intermarriage provides an opportunity to understand and
to accept oneself. One’s values and beliefs are not taken for granted. The differences in
ethnicity among the couple forces the individual to be more aware of, and to work toward
gaining acceptance and recognition of his or her own identity. Accepting one’s own
identity also leads to the accepting and respecting one’s partner’s identity. Furthermore,
according to Ho, intermarriage provides broader opportunities for learning and growth. A couple of different racial and ethnic background has ample opportunity to learn from each other. He also states that real learning occurs when one is allowed and encouraged to be different.

Moreover, Ho (1990) believes that children of successfully intermarried couples have greater opportunity to learn and to express themselves. They are likely to have a heightened awareness, a better integration of themselves and their environment, and satisfying relationships. Collins (1984) also states that due to the opportunity for assimilation and integration of both of their parents' backgrounds, children of intermarriages are more “cultured” than children with parents from the same racial or ethnic background. Due to their exposure to differences in their own family, these children are also more accepting of differences in others. Finally, Ho observes that with a variety of interests and pursuits, and observance of different ethnic festivities, intermarriage provides greater vitality in family living. He also states that intermarried families have a sense of belonging, stability, identity, and continuity that are essential to their social, psychological, emotional and spiritual development.

**Indo-Canadians**

Indian culture stands in contrast to the majority Canadian culture. As a collectivist culture, it emphasizes strong kinship ties, interdependence and a great respect for authority, which differs from the Canadian culture’s emphasis on independence and individualism (Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). As a result, culture conflict is a reality for many of the second-generation Indo-Canadians who are grappling with these
opposing beliefs and values (Basu, 1989; Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). Ramcharan (1984) observed that “the impact of cultural conflict has not escaped this group, and conflicting parent-child value systems can lead to severe tensions in the home” (p. 39). Many Indian immigrants’ suspicion and disapproval of various aspects of the Canadian culture has created an urgent need to keep their children from falling under the majority culture’s negative influence (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981).

Second-generation Indo-Canadians are continually placed in a compromising position where they are constantly struggling with two sets of cultural values that often contradict each other. The values inherent in their parents’ culture of origin may conflict with those expressed by their peers, the media and the educational system of the majority culture (Buchignani & Indra 1985). Their loyalty to and identification with both cultures may create a feeling of being torn in polar directions. The pull in opposite direction may no doubt create stress and affect their judgement in choosing the right course of action.

However, their socialization through school, media, and their peers, may eventually lead second-generation Indo-Canadians to identify more with the Canadian culture than with the Indian culture (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984). This shift in primary identification may lead to conflict within the family. This apparent change in loyalty or allegiance may lead Indian parents to feel threatened. As a way of preventing their children from losing touch with their culture and traditions, parents may feel compelled to intervene in their process of assimilation into the dominant culture. Wakil, Siddique & Wakil (1981) found that Indo-Canadian children’s preference for the Canadian way of life may be perceived by immigrant parents as a sign of disrespect and
rejection of their ancestral traditions and values. Clearly then, the dilemma created by the opposing values of the Indian and Canadian cultures has an impact on both the second-generation and their parents. The pressures created by such a dilemma can lead to psychological and emotional conflicts for both parents and children (Ramcharan, 1984).

Although there has been very little focus on the experience of culture conflict within the Indo-Canadian population in Canada, the small amount of research that does exist on this topic suggests that the main source of conflict for Indo-Canadian concerns the subject of dating and marriage. (Buchignani 1984; Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ghosh, 1984; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). Indian immigrants’ ideas of marriage are shaped by a culture in which marriages are arranged by parents and family members. This tradition differs from the Canadian practice of choosing one’s own marriage partner. Most Indian immigrants express a strong disapproval of dating and marrying for romantic love (Buchignani, 1984, Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). Wakil, Siddique & Wakil (1981) reported that Indian immigrants viewed dating and romantic love with “great alarm and horror” (p. 939), and as a result, they wanted to prevent their children from becoming involved in such activities.

Their Canadian born children, on the other hand, are decidedly critical of and resent the lack of choice and independence that they perceive to be inherent in arranged marriages. Having been socialized into the Canadian culture, these second-generation individuals are far more receptive to the majority culture’s views on dating and marriage (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984). In opposition to their parents, they wonder “How can you marry a person whom you don’t love?” (Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981, p. 939).
Their children’s comfort with and closeness to the Canadian culture causes considerable concern for many Indian parents. In an effort to prevent their children from being led astray by a culture that they consider permissive and lacking in moral values, these parents go to great lengths to limit their children’s participation in many aspects of the Canadian culture. These limitations are especially apparent with activities that involve interaction with the opposite sex (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). Due to the traditional views on female roles and family honor, the restrictions placed on daughters are even greater than those placed on sons (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ghosh, 1984; Ramcharan, 1984; Wakil, Siddique & Wakil, 1981). This controlling behaviour causes further conflict and gap in their already differing viewpoints. Moreover, due to the emphasis or value placed on respect for age and authority, the lack of obedience or acceptance of the parental authority is considered an insult (Buchignani & Indra, 1985; Ramcharan, 1984).

One particular area that is especially problematic for both the children and their parents is the differing perceptions of an appropriate marriage partner. In a phenomenological study, Sohi (1992) points out that all of the participants felt that their parents would prefer their marriage to be with an Indian. However, Sohi found that, there is some variability in this preference, some are strongly opposed to exogamous marriage while others would not totally object. According to Sohi, the preference for an Indian son-in-law is strongly related to the parent’s need to preserve their cultural heritage. According to one participant in her study, the parents would prefer an Indian son-in-law because “it’s easier; it’s something they can understand more, like the other family” and “…it’s easier to keep the culture and traditions alive” (p. 65). Still for other parents the
issue extends beyond just a simple preference. It involves the family’s name and honor. As a result, for those who may be romantically involved with or contemplating marrying a non-Indian or a white person, the threat of being disowned is very much a reality. According to Sohi (1992), another participant recalled her mother’s warning: “if you ever marry a white person, I’ll never speak to you again” (p. 65). Along with the fear of being disowned, there is also the fear of being ostracized by the Indian community.

However, the conflict experienced by the participants is not just the external conflict between themselves and their parents, it also takes the form of an internal conflict within themselves. Herein lies the difficult process of negotiating their bi-cultural identity. There is the recognition of the Indian aspects of themselves, and wanting to do things the “Indian” way; however, the Western or Canadian values are equally pervasive. The situation of interracial dating or marriage is one instance, among many, when these individuals are faced with reconciling these conflicting values.
Chapter III:

Method

The Critical Incident Technique was the method used for data analysis. This method's development, procedures, applications, reliability and validity are discussed below.

Developed by Flanagan (1954), the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) "is essentially a procedure for gathering certain important facts concerning behavior in defined situations" (p. 335). In most recent applications CIT consists of a set of semi-structured interviews that collects direct observational information from people of their own or others' behaviour. This is followed by an analysis in which the responses are categorized. Critical Incident Technique provides descriptive data and exploratory information useful for theory-building while maintaining methodological rigor. Although Flanagan's formulation of the CIT dates back more than 40 years, it continues to be the clearest articulation of the method. As a result, Flanagan's work will be used extensively in review of CIT.

Flanagan initially developed the Critical Incident Technique to identify effective pilot performance during WW II. The pilots were asked to report incidents that were significantly helpful or harmful to their mission. These descriptions were then analyzed and a list of the components critical for task performance was produced. Studying the critical incidents based on behaviour that was effective and ineffective was necessary to establish an effective training program. The use of CIT later broadened to include nonmilitary settings. Some of the areas studied include group process (Cohen & Smith,
However, as the use of quantitative methods became more popular the use of CIT declined after being used extensively in industry (Woolsey, 1986). Nevertheless, the last decade has witnessed a resurgence of CIT. Its popularity has recently grown in use in counselling research. For example, it has been used to study high school counselling interventions (Neely & Iburg, 1989), clinical supervision (Ellis, 1991), and parental influence in children’s career development (Young & Friesen, 1992). These studies represent a notable departure from earlier studies using the CIT, in that the descriptions of behaviour made by observers were replaced by the phenomenological observations provided by the subject.

**Definition of Terms**

Flanagan used the term “incident” to mean “any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about a person performing the act” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327). “Critical” referred to incidents which “must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects” (p. 327). Once a particular situation has been decided upon, “critical incidents” of that situation, both positive and negative, are collected through interviews and records. “Critical requirement” or critical factors are drawn from the critical incidents. A “critical requirement” is a “requirement which is crucial in the sense that it has been responsible for outstandingly effective or definitely unsatisfactory
performance of an important part of the job or activity in question” (Flanagan, 1949, 420).

In this study, an “incident” is an event or situation that occurred or continues to occur in the course of the marriage as a result of differences or differences between the couple that may or may not be culturally related. An incident will be considered “critical” if it especially helped or hindered their adjustment or commitment to their marriage. “Critical requirements” or factors refer to the key things or aspects of the situation that significantly helped or hindered the participants’ adjustment or commitment to their marriage.

**Justification for Using the CIT**

The Critical Incident Technique was chosen as the research method for this study because of its suitability to the research question. Due to its inherent characteristic of identifying critical incidents or features, the CIT is well suited to identifying the factors that are perceived by intermarried couples as being significantly helpful or hindering to their adjustment in their marriage. The CIT is also useful in eliciting the outcomes of incidents and allows for elaboration of the personal meaning ascribed to the experience through the interview.

The decision to use CIT was also based on its ability to provide descriptive data while maintaining methodological rigor. The two basic principles of the critical incident technique are that factual reports of behaviour are preferable to ratings and opinions based on general impressions and that only behaviours that make a significant contribution to the activity should be included. Thus the descriptive information encapsulates a more thorough understanding of each factor’s significance by providing
the context of the contributing responses. This knowledge is important in developing programs that adequately interpret and apply the results of the research to their particular situations. Moreover, as the research studying the dynamics of intermarriage is relatively scarce, the CIT was chosen because it generates exploratory information useful for theory-building (Woolsey, 1986).

**Procedure**

As a way of ensuring that couples identified themselves as being fairly satisfied in their marriage, two procedures were used. Firstly, the couples were asked for a self-report on their satisfaction level in their marriage. Secondly, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale was used as more of an objective method of confirming their self-reports.

**Objective Instrument**

**The Dyadic Adjustment Scale**

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) was chosen as the "objective" assessment instrument. This instrument was selected to obtain data on the respondent's perception of the quality of his or her marriage. The assessment was also obtained to ensure that all individuals met the criteria of being fairly satisfied in their marriage.

The Dyadic Adjustment Scale is designed to assess the self-perceived quality of a respondent's marriage. The 32-item instrument uses a 6-point Likert-type scale. Spanier, the scale's author, reports adequate criterion-related and construct validity. He also reports total scale internal consistency reliability of .96 (Spanier, 1976).

The scale was mainly used as a tool to confirm the participant's verbal response. However, it must be recognized that the DAS is not a completely objective measure.
Spanier (1976) stresses that dyadic adjustment is a process rather than a state, which means that it can be studied over time. However, in this study the dyadic adjustment was measured only at a specific point on this continuum. Consequently, the results of the DAS may be biased by the state that participant was in at the time of filling out the questionnaire, and may not represent an overall level of adjustment in the relationship. It is also important to note that the DAS has not been normed on cross-cultural couples. Nevertheless, due to a high acculturation level of both partners (both partners had been in Canada for two or more generations), the use of the scale was deemed appropriate. It was assumed that both partners would be able to understand and identify with the various concepts inherent in the scale.

**Administering the Objective Instrument**

The Dyadic Adjustment Instrument was mailed to the participants before the first interview. They were asked to return the completed copy before they could be invited to participate in the first interview. They were asked not to discuss the questionnaires with their mates. As the instructions for this instrument were fairly clear, no additional information was required.

The total scores of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale for each individual were as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total DAS Scores</th>
<th>123</th>
<th>123</th>
<th>114</th>
<th>116</th>
<th>125</th>
<th>130</th>
<th>104</th>
<th>117</th>
<th>107</th>
<th>102</th>
<th>101</th>
<th>( \bar{M}=114.8 )</th>
<th>SD=17.8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

With the exception of four individuals, all of the participants exceeded the mean score of 114.80 (Spanier, 1976). However, all of the scores fell within one standard deviation of the mean. Nevertheless, due to the fact that DAS scores may be biased by
the participant’s state at the time of filling out the questionnaire, the four individuals who scored below the mean were once again asked about their overall satisfaction in the marriage. All four of the individuals expressed being fairly satisfied in their marriage.

The Critical Incident Technique

Flanagan’s (1955) formulation of the CIT included five steps: (1) general aims, (2) plans and specification, (3) collecting the data, (4) analyzing the data, and (5) interpreting and reporting the findings. Another important aspect of the Critical Incident Technique is the second interview. Alfonso (1997) considers the second interview to be an innovation to the Critical Incident Technique. It provides a phenomenological component to this study. The participants have an opportunity to validate the meaning and accuracy of the thematic categories. These steps will be described in this section.

(1) General aim

The basic condition for the CIT is a general statement of aim of the activity to be studied (not the study itself). The aim provides a reference point from which the specific behaviours that contribute to the performance of the activity can be evaluated. The various situations or conflicts that arise due to cultural differences between husband and wife in an intermarriage will be the activity to be studied. Illuminating the factors that facilitate and hinder the resolution of these situations or conflicts will be the aim.

(2) Plans and specifications

During this stage, a set of instructions are developed for observers, with the standard to be used for evaluation and classification of critical requirements. Also the group to be studied is specified.
The number of critical incidents not the number of people, determine the size of the sample. The general rule of thumb is to collect incidents until redundancy appears. In some cases as few as 50 incidents are sufficient while in others several thousands may be required (Flanagan, 1954). After each 100 incidents, Flanagan recommended keeping a running count of each new critical requirement added; when only two or three new categories are added, data collection can be discontinued. For this study, the sample size was set at 11 participants.

Finally the planning must include the specific behaviours or experiences to be observed. The incidents must adhere to specific criteria to be used in the analysis (Flanagan, 1954). The criteria for inclusion of incidents are:

1. The factor is described in detail either as a concrete activity or as a well defined psychological process.

2. The factor is clearly linked to an antecedent, either a person or another incident.

3. The factor is directly linked to a specific outcome.

a. Participants

Participants were recruited through a number of means. Word of mouth and the method of “snowballing” (Kerwin, Ponterotto, Jackson & Harris, 1993) in which participants might recommend and inform other couples known to them, were the main sources of recruitment. Posters describing the study were also placed at strategic locations in Greater Vancouver.

The participants included in the study were required to meet the following criteria:
1. One member of the couple must identify him or herself as an Indo-Canadian (preferably he or she should be a second-generation Indo-Canadian or have come to Canada as a child) while the other must be “White” or be Caucasian-Canadian.

2. This must be the couple’s first marriage. This requirement was set to try to ensure that the individuals had not entered his or her marriage with vastly different expectations as a result of being, or not being, in a previous marriage.

3. The couple must have been married for five or more years. This requirement is based on the assumption that couples who have been able to stay together for five years have shown some competency in negotiating their differences.

4. The couple must have at least one child. This requirement was based on research that indicates that conflicts within cross-cultural marriages are exacerbated by the presence of children.

5. The couple must have expressed some awareness that some of the conflicts in the marriage are related to their cultural differences.

6. Each partner must report being satisfied on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

b. Demographic Information

Demographic Information for Each Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Age Immigrated to Canada</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Years Married</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39 B.C.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indo-Canadian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44 B.C.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Canadian/Caucasian</td>
<td>Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31 B.C.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Program Assistant</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indo-Canadian</td>
<td>Sikh*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35 B.C.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Store Manager</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Canadian/Caucasian</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30 India, Punjab</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indo-Canadian</td>
<td>Sikh*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of the demographic information, the participants ranged from 30-40 years of age. Five of the individuals participated in the study with their spouse. However, all of the participants were interviewed individually. Eight of the participants had been born in B.C., one was born in Calgary, and two participants were born in India and immigrated to Canada at the age of one. For all of the individuals this was their first marriage. They had been married for 6.5 to 17 years. Five of the individuals identified themselves as being Indo-Canadian, one identified self as being Polish-Canadian, one identified self as being Scottish-Canadian, and four identified themselves as being Canadian or Caucasian. In terms of religious affiliation, five individuals identified themselves as not having any religious affiliations, three identified themselves as being Sikh, two identified themselves as being Christians, and one identified self as being a Hindu. All the individuals had one or more child(ren). Furthermore, along with stating that they were fairly satisfied, all individuals scored as being fairly satisfied to being very satisfied on the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.
c. Critical Incident Interview

There are two main procedures to choose from in collecting the critical incidents. They can be collected by direct observation or retrospectively. For this study, it is necessary to use the latter as the participants are asked to identify critical factors after having been in an intermarriage for five or more years. Also retrospective data can be collected from a variety of sources: interviews (individual or group), questionnaires and record. Individual interviews were considered to be most suitable for this study. The value was deemed to be in the experience of individuals, and interviewing allowed for the inclusion of individual perspective and ensured that all relevant and essential detail was collected.

Questions were asked throughout the interview to guide and elicit more specific information and to stimulate the process of dialogue. The interviewer also used empathic listening and reflective responding to ensure that she correctly understood and fully captured the essence of what the respondents were describing. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed in the participants' own words.

In this study, the Critical Incident Interview involved two parts, an orientation and an elicitation of events. The orientation served the purpose of communicating the purpose of the study and clarifying the nature of the study. It was also used to establish rapport with the participants. The phrasing was selected to convey clearly the aim of the study. The second part of the interview was used to elicit the events that facilitated or hindered the individuals' adjustment in their intermarriage. Participants were encouraged to describe events clearly in as much detail as possible. The researcher attempted to ensure that the events were stated clearly and completely. In order for the event to be
considered complete, participants had to be able to describe what led up to the event, what actually happened as well as the outcome. Again, the researcher used empathic listening and reflective responding to ensure that she clearly understood and fully captured the essence of what the respondent was describing. For example:

**Example of Questions**

**Participant:** We know there are some cultural differences but we value the person more. Part of that may be their culture, and part of that may be who they are as individuals.

**Interviewer:** So, how does having common value of respecting the individual have a positive impact on, or facilitate your adjustment in your intermarriage?

**Participant:** My husband and I accept these different parts of each other. As a result there hasn’t been much conflict that has come up because we value so many similar principles and all those sorts of things.

**Orientation to the Study**

The participants were provided with information regarding the purpose of the study. The following general statement was used by the researcher:

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. As I described to you before, the purpose of this study is to find out what helps and what hinders the adjustment in an intermarriage among Indo-Canadian and Caucasian couples. By examining your experience, I am hoping to generate resources so that other intermarried couples can benefit from
your experience so they can also be successful in their intermarriage.

Again, I appreciate your willingness to share your experience with me.

Prior to the initial interview, the participants were mailed a consent form, which explained the purpose of the study, listed the questions to be asked, emphasized the confidential nature of the study, along with the option of withdrawing from the study at any time. The consent form also contained the number to call if they had any questions regarding the study. At the time of the interview, the participants were given another opportunity to ask for clarification. Once the administrative details of the study had been addressed and the participant was satisfied with his or her understanding of the study, the form was signed by the participant.

Elicitation of Events

The interview duration ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and a half. All the interviews were audiotaped. All the interviews took place at the participants' residents. In order to develop rapport and facilitate an enriching discussion in relation to their married life, the researcher initiated the interview with a general question which was followed by a series of more specific questions:

Example of Introductory Question

Can you think back to the time when you first got together. What attracted the two of you? How was the process of telling your parents about your partner. What was the wedding like?

Now let's move into the area of your adjustment in the intermarriage.

Please describe specific situations or events that may or may not be related to
cultural values or differences. How have these situations or events helped or hindered your adjustment in your intermarriage? Can you please describe the general circumstances leading up to or surrounding this event?

Participants were given time to remember the specific situations or events which involved culturally related values or differences in their intermarriage. Participants were continually asked how these events or situations helped or hindered their adjustment in their marriage. Participants were also asked clarification questions in order to ensure understanding and to ensure completeness and specificity of the incident that helped or hindered the individual’s adjustment in the marriage. Examples of clarification questions include:

**Examples of Clarification Questions**

Why was support from your family so important?

How has this support helped you and your spouse in your relationship with each other and with the family?

How did the initial family struggles to get together effect your marriage?

How does being close to family or in-laws impact your marriage? How is this connection with family helpful or unhelpful in your marriage?

As the participants described each incident, they were also asked to discuss how that incident has been important in their lives, and how it has helped them in their marriage. When the participants were finished recounting the event, they were asked to think of other events that have helped or hindered their adjustment in intermarriage. This process was continued until the participants could not think of any more events. Reflecting on hindering events was helpful in thinking of events that were also helpful
and in enriching the description of the helpful incidents. As a result, asking about hindering events provided information that strengthened the validity of the study.

The interviews were conducted during the months of November and December of 1998. The duration of the interview ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and a half. Each interview was audiotaped. Upon completion of the initial interview process, events were extracted and worked on according to the specified criteria below, until a set number of categories were developed. Categories were then validated in several ways, which are discussed in the following sections.

Second interviews are considered to be a nuance in Critical Incident Technique because they add a phenomenological approach to the study. The second interview further validate the emerging categories (Woolsey, 1986). Second interviews were arranged over the phone with participants from 6-8 weeks after the initial interview. Data had been partially analyzed by this time according to the procedure that will be described. Follow-up interviews gave participants the opportunity to check the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of their accounts of incidents that have helped their adjustment in their intermarriage. Participants were asked and encouraged to comment on the accuracy of interpretations and to make any correction, additions or deletions as they felt necessary in order to make the interpretations as accurate as possible. Participants were also given the opportunity to add any other significant events that helped or hindered their adjustment in their intermarriage.

The following is a sample of the questions asked during the second interview:

Follow-up Interview Statement
As I had mentioned to you before, the purpose of the second interview is not only to provide you with an opportunity to review the results, but also to check the accuracy of the incidents, which I have identified. You are also encouraged to add any other helpful or hindering events that you may have identified since our last meeting.

**Question**

These are the incidents that I have identified as being important in facilitating your adjustment in the intermarriage from our first interview. Majority of the accounts appear in your own words, and in some cases for the sake of clarity, the accounts have been paraphrased. In order to maintain the accuracy of these results, please take your time to read them over carefully to ensure that the content of each account is captured correctly. Please feel free to make any corrections, additions, or deletions that you see necessary as you are the expert on your own experience. Your feedback will be important in presenting accurate results.

(3) **Data Collection and Procedure**

As mentioned earlier, the first step in a Critical Incident is to identify the purpose of the study in simple, concise terms (Woolsey, 1984). Flanagan (1954) offers a five step approach to a Critical Incident approach: The first step is to determine the aim of the study, and the second step is setting plans, and the criteria for the information to be observed. The third step is the data collection, and fourth, the theme analysis from the
Finally, the fifth step is reporting the findings. Another important aspect of the Critical Incident Technique is the second interview. It adds a phenomenological component to this study, where the participants validate the meaning and accuracy of the thematic categories.

**Data Collection**

The researcher conducted the Critical Incident interviews with one participant at a time. Participants were required to provide the researcher with informed consent, by reading and signing a consent form prior to the interview process. These interviews were audiotaped for the purposes of transcription. The first interview involved an orientation to the study and an elicitation of events. A shorter second interview was also conducted over the phone for verification of the results. Participants were given a copy of the categorized themes to read on their own time after which they were asked to review the incidents that were extracted from their descriptions. They were asked to verify them and recommend any changes. The second interview was not audiotaped, however participants’ feedback was recorded in detail. All participants were invited to answer the same thematic questions, which were decided upon by the researcher in advance of the interview. Follow-up interviews were scheduled upon completion of data interpretation. Total time commitment was approximately one hour and thirty minutes for both interviews. Confidentiality was strictly maintained at all times. The data from the interviews was analyzed using the Critical Incident Technique.

**Procedure**

Participants for the study were recruited through posters and a network of contacts in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Large part of the recruiting was
accomplished through word-of-mouth. For people who expressed an interest in the study, an informational package consisting of participation criteria, and a thorough description of the purpose of the study was provided for their use. These individuals were then encouraged to contact the researcher by telephone if they wished to participate in the study. The time and location were arranged at the convenience of the participants. All participants found it most convenient to be interviewed at their residents.

(4) Analysis of data

Three steps were utilized in analyzing these incidents. First, incidents were extracted from the audio-taped interviews, and these were recorded on 4X6 inch cards, one incident per card. Second, the incidents were grouped according to thematic similarity, in order to form categories. Third, these categories were then subjected to several tests which examined their reliability and validity.

Extraction of Incidents

The 11 interviews were audiotaped and each was assigned a code number. The incidents were transcribed verbatim. Each audiotape and transcript were carefully studied by the researcher in order to understand the full meaning. The transcripts were read several times to get a sense of the meaning of the participant’s words. All statements resembling critical incidents were extracted and examined according to the criteria relating to the purpose of the study. Incidents were included if they fulfilled the following criteria: a) they were stated in a complete way; b) the event was clearly defined; and c) the outcome was related to the purpose of the study (the critical incidents mentioned had positive or negative impact on their adjustment process in their intermarriage).
**Process of Forming Categories**

After the incidents were extracted and placed on cards, each incident was recorded in its three constituent parts: source, action taken/what actually happened, and outcome. This facilitated sorting the incidents into categories. Each of the 248 incidents was typed onto separate cards. Due to the lack of clarity in some incidents, this task proved to be somewhat challenging. As a result, sometimes it was necessary to paraphrase events to convey the full meaning of the participant’s intent. Whenever possible, the participant’s exact words were retained to maintain the essence of what was said.

Incidents were then sorted into categories that seemed similar. The focus of the sorting is on the second criterion: the action taken/what actually happened. To ensure that the incidents comprised of the three criteria, prototypical incidents were identified and used as templates for further decisions. A prototypical event was one that best described the thematic group in question as it had the greatest number of defining characteristics for that category. Prototypes served as examples for future sorting of events into similar groups/categories. Ambiguous or questionable events were set aside to be used as challengers to the first attempt at category formation. The categorization was then subjected to the supervisor’s examination and as a result, the categories were further refined and revised. Ambiguous events were used in the second attempt at categorizing when they were used as challenger. Again, categories were refined as a result. This process was continued until stability was achieved. Two rounds of correction were needed to make the necessary changes to the placement of the events into the categories in an accurate way. Some of the categories also had to be renamed as a
result to accurately represent the content of incidents within the category. Also, with some of the categories it was necessary to re-circulate the incidents from previously selected categories to enhance the description of each category as well as the quality of relationship between each category. Eventually, all of the incidents were encapsulated in 22 categories.

Validation Process

Andersson & Nilsson (1964) provide research on the reliability and validity of the Critical Incident Technique, and they conclude that this method is both valid and reliable. In categorizing the incidents of their study, they found acceptable rank correlation between sizes to be .85, with explainable inter-rater inconsistencies. The necessary level of agreement among independent raters was between 75%-85% with respect to placing incidents of the same nature in the same categories. Andersson & Nilsson (1964) reported their experience of the critical incident technique was extremely valid in representing content domain, so much so that other methods of assessing the same content failed to add new information.

Woolsey (1984) also utilized the Critical Incident Technique and she found her categorizations to be reliable if independent inter-rater agreement was between 75%-85% for placing incidents into categories. This is consistent with recommendations made by Andersson and Nilsson (1964).

In this study, two independent judges were asked to participate in verifying that two different people can use the categories in a consistent manner. One of the judges was a Master's students in the Department of Counselling Psychology, at the University of British Columbia, while the other works as an officer of the court. At different occasions,
each judge was provided with brief descriptions of each category and then was asked to place a sample of 45 incidents into the appropriate categories. The placement of the incidents by these independent judges were compared with the original placement of incidents, and as a result, the number of correctly placed and incorrectly placed incidents could be summarized statistically as a percentage of agreement. For example, if an independent judge placed 45 incidents in the correct categories, the percentage of agreement would be 100%. A high level of agreement indicates that different people can utilize the categories to categorize the incidents in a reliable manner.

Another issue to be considered in the validation of categories is that of the categories being sound or well-founded. In order to form a category, the researcher must identify a significant similarity in a group of incidents as they are reported by different people. If only one person or a few people report a category of event, then it can potentially be dismissed. One person might have misunderstood or distorted an event, for example. However, when many independent people report the same kind of event the possibility of distortion or misunderstanding diminishes considerably. As such, agreement among independent people or participants reporting the event is one criterion for the objectivity of the event. Agreement is assessed by the participation rates in each category, which is the number of participants reporting an incident in a category divided by the total number of participants.

In a study involving the facilitation of healing among B.C.’s First Nations, McCormick (1994) describes additional techniques of assessing the trustworthiness of the categorizations. He suggests that the levels of agreement among participants in the study should attain at least 75% agreement. Flanagan (1954) suggests that a category should
surpass a 75% agreement. Borgen and Amundson (1984), in their unemployment research, suggest that a 25% participation rate can be considered sufficient in establishing validity of categories.

Andersson & Nilsson (1964) and McCormick (1994) suggest another approach to establishing validity. They describe withholding 10% of data and later categorizing these incidents in previously determined categories to check for category reliability. In this study, to establish the comprehensiveness, approximately 10% of the incidents (25 incidents) were withdrawn and not examined until the categories were formed. Once the category formation was complete, these incidents were analyzed and classified. This process allows one to test whether the existing categories are sufficient. If the incidents cannot be placed in the categories, then new categories might have to be formed. However, if the incidents can be placed in the existing categories, one can surmise that the existing categories are comprehensive. In this investigation, all 25 incidents were placed in the corresponding categories.

As another approach to validating the categories, McCormick (1994) and Woolsey (1984) suggest accessing related research literature and checking whether there is agreement with previous research. McCormick notes that if a category disagrees with previous literature, although it is not sufficient reason to discount it from the data, it is sufficient reason to question its validity. If, on the other hand, a category of event agreed with previous research, it provides even more reason to be confident in its soundness. However, if a category of event was unique, and it was neither confirmed nor disconfirmed by the previous research, then it would be a finding that stands to be confirmed or disconfirmed by future research (McCormick, 1994). In the present study,
where possible, the categories were compared with previous research to assess agreement.

Alfonso (1997) established validity in a Critical Incident Study on Overcoming Depressed Moods after an HIV+ Diagnosis by following the criteria for qualitative research as supported by Maxwell. This involves three types of validity: descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity. The first type of validity is descriptive validity, which involves the accuracy of the accounts. Accuracy is ensured by audiotaping the interviews and utilizing transcripts to use the participant’s words (Alfonso, 1997).

Alfonso (1997) states that a second interview is also an opportunity to ensure validity since the unclear incidents and emerging categories can be verified with participants so that one can avoid inaccurate interpretations of the participant’s accounts. Alfonso ensured interpretive validity by asking questions during the first and second interviews that were directed toward obtaining information and a clear understanding of what the events and behaviours meant to participants. This type of validity maintains the authenticity of the participant’s voice, without any modification of meaning. Finally, theoretical validity refers to the explanation of the phenomenon and its relationship to the validity of the assumptions of the study, which are based on theory and previous research.

In the present study, interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, to ensure descriptive validity. Participant’s own words were maintained as much as possible, so very little to no interpretation of their words was necessary. The follow-up interviews also allowed for valuable discussion and reflection on the initial interviews. To ensure interpretive validity, clarification questions were posed during both the first
and the second interview. The interpretive validity was further enhanced by the second interview as the participants could check over the categories of events as determined by the researcher. Second interviews also provided an opportunity for the participants to take ownership of checking the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretations. The participants appreciated being given the opportunity to review categories and events, as it deepened their understanding of the phenomenon being studied as well as the research process. Finally, the theoretical validity was assessed by checking with the previous research in this area.

The Critical Incident Technique was deemed appropriate for studying the factors that facilitate and hinder individual’s adjustment in intermarriage, and the categories were expected to arise naturally from the incidents mentioned in the data. However, like other qualitative methodologies, this method can be limited because the data interpretation is subject to the researcher’s bias and orientation. The subjectivity becomes especially salient if the data can be interpreted in another way. Subsequently, having independent judges to categorize incidents to check for the reliability of the categories becomes very important. The participants taking the opportunity to review the results should also aid in alleviating the potential investigator bias.

Finally, another way in which the Critical Incident Technique could undermine the data is through the wording of the research questions being asked. If the questions are unclearly or inconsistently posed by the interviewer then the results may not be capturing the incidents which are being sought to study. Furthermore, the accuracy of the content of the research questions is very important because a lack of clarity in the wording may result in misinterpretation of the phenomenon (adjustment in intermarriage)
being studied. Reliability and validity may also be questioned because of the lack of empirical research published on this aspect of the Critical Incident Technique.
Chapter IV:

RESULTS

A total of 248 critical incidents were identified by eleven individuals in interracial marriages (five of the individuals were Caucasian men, five of the individuals were Indo-Canadian women, and one of the individual was a Caucasian woman) regarding what facilitates their adjustment in their intermarriage.

These 248 critical incidents were sorted into 22 categories. In the next section, categories will be described, followed by validation procedures.

Description of the Categories

The twenty-two categories will be presented in order of decreasing frequency. Categories sharing the same number of incidents are presented according to higher participation rate. For each category, examples of critical incidents descriptive of each category are presented.

Table 1. Participation Rate in Each Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Indo-Canadian</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Total Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in, Appreciation of, Respect for, and Partaking in spouse's culture</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to Resolving Differences and Conflicts</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support and Acceptance from Key People in the Immediate and Extended Family for Self and Spouse</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing Cultural Differences as Enhancing the Relationship</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Philosophies, Attitudes, Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Future Goals, Love, Trust in and Commitment to the Relationship</td>
<td>15 4 4 3 5</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility and Openness Towards Raising Their Children</td>
<td>14 4 5 5 4</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honouring Personal Convictions in the Face of Challenges</td>
<td>13 3 5 5 3</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Fun Together Through Common Interests and a Sense of Humor</td>
<td>11 5 5 4 6</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Compromise on, Ability to Accommodate, Adjust, and Accept their Differences</td>
<td>10 3 4 3 4</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Characteristics of Spouse</td>
<td>9 3 4 3 4</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Each Other</td>
<td>9 4 0 0 4</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation to the Partner's (Caucasian-Mainstream) Culture Balanced by the Desire to Maintain Aspects of Their Own (Indian) Culture</td>
<td>8 3 3 3 3</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing Personal and Cultural Differences as an Opportunity to Learn a Different Way of Doing Things</td>
<td>7 4 3 3 4</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity with Partner's Cultural Context Prior to Marriage</td>
<td>7 1 5 4 2</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing Recognition and Awareness Throughout the Marriage of Initial Hardships in Getting Together as a Couple</td>
<td>7 1 3 2 2</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementing and Balancing Gender Roles</td>
<td>6 2 3 2 3</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Able to Anticipate Challenges and Struggles in Pursuing an Interracial Marriage Forced the Individual to Examine Commitment</td>
<td>6 4 4 3 1</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution of Emotional Issues About the Intermarriage Reached by Both Families Prior to or Through the Wedding</td>
<td>6 1 4 4 1</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing, Acknowledging, and Appreciating Parents’ Willingness to Learn and Shift Some of their Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>4 0 4 4 0</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Marrying Out</td>
<td>3 2 1 1 2</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=11

Frequency indicates the number of participants reporting an incident in a category and the participation rate indicates the percentage of participants reporting an incident in a category.

**Category 1: Common Values and Beliefs (23 Incidents-82% Participation Rate)**

Complementary values, patterns, and attitudes may enhance the potential of a marriage. Ibrahim and Schroeder (1990) state that one of the most significant variables in establishing trust in cross-cultural relationships and communication is establishing a shared world view. World view refers to the beliefs, values, and assumptions that
mediate communication, relationships, modes of problem-solving, decision-making, and individual’s life style. Ibrahim and Schoreder believe that world views are culturally based variables that tend to be implicit and, to some extent, unconscious. Furthermore, they are influenced by such factors as ethnicity, culture, religious or spiritual beliefs, language and semantics, social class, educational level, life stage, lifestyle preferences, and gender. World views are considered to be important as they provide comprehensive information about the individual’s assumptions on a multiplicity of factors.

This category stresses the importance of having common values that the couples perceived to be fundamental human values transcending cultures. These values encompass such areas as the importance of family, importance of valuing and seeing the individual beyond their race, the importance of equality between men and women, importance of loyalty, commitment, and respect in the relationship. Some participants reflect on how some of their common values have emerged as a result of having similar upbringing and life experiences. Other values developed as one or both of the spouses began to question the norm and the ignorance in their own families and cultures, and began to embrace beliefs that they considered to be more inclusive and desirable. The overarching theme in all of the participants’ statements was the importance of valuing people as human beings before cultural beings, and the importance of passing on this value to their children.

Example 1

I mean when I talked about family, he could understand. Every couple of months they get together, and have a family dinner where everybody comes. Everybody always
brings something. So, they've always had family pot luck dinners, and his dad used to cook at home every Sunday when he grew up for all the kids. So, I think a sense of family and togetherness is pretty important for both of us. Although we didn't talk a lot about these values, but as we talked about these things later on, we understood each other, and what it meant for us to be close to family.

Example 2

I think we both believe that kids need some structure, and they need some limits, and they need nurturing and love at the same time. You need a balance between the two. And they need to learn to handle frustrations, they need to be able to soothe themselves, because you actually do them a disservice if you don't allow them to handle certain things on their own, like if you try to fulfill every need they have, and never let them experience frustration. Then you never allow them to set up their own resources. And we're together on that. We see how other people disagree on child rearing, but we're both in agreement on this. I think we both have the same value that you respect people from all walks of life.

Example 3

Our beliefs around raising kids are very, very similar. We're prone to telling each other about what we're doing with the kids. We don't get into arguments about how we're raising kids differently.

Example 4

In terms of our relationship, I think the biggest thing that connects us as that we both come from big families where both of our parents are still married, so family is important for both of us, whether it's his family or whether it's my family. Like never
does a holiday go by where we’re not thinking about having a get together. Family is number one priority for both of us. Neither one of us cares about climbing the corporate ladder. To us, kids are first, and our immediate family. If we haven’t seen our family for a while, we say we have to get together. It’s both of us feeling this. We both come from similar values. Just the packaging is different colour, that’s about it, Our values are very, very similar, and that’s a big part of what makes our relationship work

Example 5

I think we want to see our children grow up and go to university. The kids are our life. Our life revolves around our kids. This is a value that I have acquired from my family. Us children were very important to my parents. They built their lives around us. And as kids, we were the center of their lives. They made a lot of sacrifices for the kids. Our kids have a lot of perks. We have them in Brownies, Girl Guide, like every night there’s an activity. So, we have made that same commitment to our children.

Example 6

We know there are some cultural differences, but we value the person more. Part of them may be about their culture, and part of them may be who they are as individuals. So my husband and I just accept different parts of each other. There hasn’t been much conflict that has come up because we value so many similar principles and those sort of things.

Category 2: Interest in, Appreciation of, Acceptance of, Respect For, and Partaking in Spouse’s Culture (20 Incidents-100% Participation Rate)

This category captures each partner’s willingness, desire, and curiosity about his or her partner’s culture. Each partner took time to, formally and informally, learn about
the partner's religion, food and etiquette, about the cultural traditions, and the language. Furthermore, the spouses took advantage of the opportunities offered through the various cultural social events, family gatherings, religious functions, weddings, helping out mother-in-laws in their day to day chores, to fully immerse them selves and partake in these occasions. They also used these opportunities to enhance their understanding of the culture, and to utilize their knowledge.

Many spouses were hoping that by understanding their partner's cultural background and heritage, they would not only acknowledge their spouse's cultural identity, but also have better insight into their partner and the relationship. Majority of the individuals describe experiencing and receiving acknowledgment, a greater sense of credibility and respect, sense of belonging in, and a sense of connection to the extended family and the community as a result of showing their interest and respect for the culture. This sense of belonging, sense of connection, and a greater sense of self-confidence in the partner's cultural milieu also enhanced the marital relationship.

Example 1

He wanted to learn the language even before we got married. He would follow me around with the tape recorder wanting to tape every word I said. So any way, then he went to Punjabi school for a while at the Temple, because he was determined to learn the language, and he learned how to write the letters. I can't do any of that. He was quite persistent. He really wanted to learn about the culture. He really wanted to experience all facets of the culture, he wanted to get into the history of the religion, even I don't know the history of the religion and what not. He took a keen interest, some things I
couldn’t even answer, some things I didn’t even know. And he was always reading
books. So, I think my family and other relatives were really impressed by his interest in
the culture. They all thought he was really nice, and others who are just getting to know
him are very accepting of him. So, that makes things a lot easier.

Example 2

And a lot of the relatives that I have known for a number of years have been very
supportive. A lot of this is because mom (mother-in-law) has been living here though.
With mom living here, and me driving her around, we do things together, like dropping
off goodies for weddings or births or whatever at relatives’ house. That way, I’ve gotten
to know the relatives, and some of them, you can tell that some of them are more
accepting than others. Some of them are great, they have accepted me right away. That
acceptance has meant a lot.

Example 3

I was going from Vancouver back to the Island-I had been down to Main Street,
and someone gave me a flyer all written in Punjabi, and I hung on to it. As I’m on the
ferry-I was just sitting there trying to copy the words and letters and stuff like that-had no
idea what it meant. I took it back and threw it on the coffee table, just to get it out of my
pocket. And someone said did you do that! All of a sudden I said, yeah I did. I asked
them, can you tell me what it means. So, I asked them questions. So, I started to develop
an interest in the community and in what was going on. So, that’s what kept it going for
me.

The fact that if I didn’t accept and respect these traditions, it would have
repercussions on my relationship with my wife- that has a lot to do with that. It does, it
improves the relationship. I think about the relationship if I didn’t do it that way. The potential repercussion—I can see them being very negative. I see us getting into a fight because she’s not going to fight with her parents. It’s not fight with her parents, they would say why doesn’t he, and she would come back to me and say, I got into a fight with my parents because you didn’t... So, by going, I actually please a lot more people, and it’s really not a big deal. It’s no skin off my nose. For as long as our relationship progressed and the more time I spent with my in-laws and me meeting the community and stuff like that, I actually started to develop in it.

Example 4

His interest in the culture has been a good thing for us. He enhances that part of me. Everybody in the family always laughs because we went to a wedding that was-most East Indian weddings have mixed music-like East Indian and Western, but we were at this wedding that had all Indian music, and me and my cousins are sitting there saying I don’t like this. It wasn’t very nice of me, but being brought up so differently than my cousins, we didn’t listen to it. So, it was new for us to do that, and he’s out there dancing. And like my cousins say, he’s East Indian. He’s just got the White coloured skin. They think that he’s way more into it than I am, so, it’s kind of neat to hear that, and I think that’s the way mom sees it too. Like I said if my brothers won’t go to Main street, he will. He picks them up from the ferries when they come over. He does everything that a family member would. That makes a huge difference in him being so accepted by the family. And I think that’s what they were afraid of, that he wouldn’t be into having them over, and he’s nothing like that. He’s like any time. They thought he
would take me away from the culture, which he didn’t. He probably brought me more in because I probably took myself out.

Example 5

He knows more about my religion than I do, for sure. I have no idea. Yeah, when we have Akhand Paths (Sikh religious services and ceremonies), he’s the one who is always the leader and he wants to know, and he knows more about the bible, and he knows all about that, and he is really, really interested in the culture and the religion. He’s had conversations with my brothers and my uncles about politics and religion where as I just, it doesn’t interest me at all. This is how he’s gotten the respect of all my relatives, my uncles and cousins. You know he’s there, I guess the biggest example is when my mom and dad held the three day Akhand Path held at their house. There he was, like at twelve o’clock at night, with my older brother just sitting there and he found it so soothing just listening to them read the bible. And he was asking all these questions. So here’s all these relatives coming and they look and there’s a White guy sitting there in the corner and he was just so involved in it, and he would ask questions. He’s gotten books on the religion from my older brother, so he’s got a real interest, so I think that what really won my relatives’ respect, and he’ll get up at parties and get involved in the Indian dancing, eat the food. He was doing the Indian dancing before it was okay for the guys to be doing that. So, and then all of a sudden my cousins and relatives saw this and they were quite amazed, and it made a big difference in them accepting him, and I noticed he is a lot more accepted as a result. I thought it was great, I think it’s made it easier for us because now people are sort of accepting of our relationship, and he has
been responsible for this. See, I have this attitude this is who we are, if you want us-great, if not-goodbye.

Example 6

Marriage is a really serious job. The two of you just have to talk it out, and get an understanding of the other’s culture. Try to understand where the other person is coming from. Sometimes the hard thing is trying to figure out is this where the person is coming from or is this person’s personality and upbringing, or is it culturally based, you could spend millions of dollars thinking about that one. But because my husband came from an extremely traditional culture, and I lived in his culture, and I lived with his family, sometimes it’s pretty clear where it’s coming from, that is his culture, and it’s not anything else. And it makes it easier. I think so, I can say, yeah, it’s a culturally based thing, and that’s who he is, whereas the other stuff is just his personality. So, knowing where and what kind of culture he’s coming from helps me to sort that stuff out.

Category 3: Commitment to Resolving Differences and Conflicts (20 Incidents-92% Participation Rate)

This category describes the conscious efforts made by the husband and wife to find effective ways to resolve issues and differences. Top priority is given to resolving difficulties and problems that come up in their marriage. Some individuals realize that that whether the marriage succeeds will be contingent mainly upon the individual’s or couple’s determination and willingness to make it work. These individuals express the importance of communication, and articulating the issues and making sincere efforts to work towards a “solution”. There is also a theme of determination to bring about a change to a situation that is perceived to be stressful and conflict ridden. While
experiencing the conflict, the individuals are also able to project into the future and foresee positive outcome that will result from achieving a resolution.

The determination inherent in the motivation to resolve the issues also highlights the couples' ideology that resolving differences is a better approach for the well-being of the relationship than avoiding the issues. Some of the strategies used to resolve conflicts or differences include making efforts to please and appease, and willingness to adapt to, and accommodate these differences.

Many of these incidents of resolution elucidate the importance of remaining connected to the extended family. One can appreciate that efforts made by either a spouse or extended family to ignore or denigrate the other's spouse or his or her extended family will increase the pressure on the couple and may in the long run lead to marital breakdown. Consequently, each spouse's ability to remain open and make efforts to reestablish and reconnect with each of their own (in cases of disownment) and their spouse's families was considered essential for the well-being of the relationship. This category also highlights the persistence with which some individuals pursued a reconnection or resolution with a parent that had disowned the individual due to the exogamous choice of a marital partner.

This category also provides evidence that successful resolution stems, in part, from the ability of the spouses to empathize with one another, verbalize concerns, and solve issues together.

Example 1

We continue to have conversations about it. We have actually gotten to the point where we actually make conscious efforts to remember to kiss when we come home from
work or when one of us is leaving, as opposed to it working the other way. I think I've been doing things her way, so we go through periods where we are not openly affectionate for long periods of time. Intimacy is not the right word, it's more showing affection through kissing or holding hands. It is important and I get, I actually get a feeling of being rejected. And I actually have to, after a few weeks of this going on, I actually have to physically sit down and talk to her about it, and I always feel better the next day after I have brought it up with her. But it's my way of getting her to tell me that things are still okay with her... discussing this topic has gotten us very involved in other conversations. It almost always comes up at 1:30 when we're in bed, and in some ways it has helped us talk about other discussions. Sometimes this topic ends up being what we start the conversations with, it's the same icebreaker that we use every time, and then the conversation will turn to hundred other things that need to be discussed that we don't necessarily have the time for, and it brings us closer. Yeah, I mean we've actually had our best discussions starting off with that. And I don't think, until tonight, that I actually realized that we use this as an icebreaker all the time.

Example 2

His dad was never really fond of me. He kind of had this image of what East Indian people were like-stereotypical image. He told my husband that he didn’t want to see me. We had a really tough time with that. Family is really important to me because it was like all the families got together for Christmasses, and we would have big family oriented things, but also our little family did stuff together. But I don’t know if that is just my own value as well, because I thought, I always thought I wanted to have kids. I wanted kids. I probably could have handled the two of us doing things with our separate
families. But I thought the two of us are married as a couple, I want to be a couple, but kids to me-I’m not letting them be pulled back and forth. That’s just not okay-I guess I was more worried about what value that would teach them.

So, I told my husband that you’re accepting it, and that’s not okay. You need to make a choice in terms of where you stand because this is a big step for the both of us. So, there was big division between the two of us, because it could have compromised our relationship, but because we both loved each other, and wanted this, I thought we could work through it, and in the end, he agreed.

Example 3

There’s a difference between a parent raising a child and a community raising a child—which is how it seemed to work. We had an issue where our daughter was being disciplined because she wasn’t behaving. She was just being a kid, and she was being disciplined. They would undermine that discipline by saying things like that’s okay, don’t worry, you come with me. You know being those big old affectionate grandparents. I said no, you can not do that. After that incident though, it never happened. So, this got the point across. Yeah, after that, I never had a problem. So that was good. It’s kind of unfortunate that it had to come to that, but that’s how it happened. In the end, the result was positive. And I don’t think it had any repercussions on our relationship.

Example 4

So, with my sister who didn’t approve, I knew I couldn’t really see her, but she was still okay with me seeing the kids or making sure I got gifts to them, through my cousins or brother. Sometimes I would see them-my brothers would bring them out to
some place. So, I could connect with people, I really wanted to. I called my mom, and they would say, don’t call mom-that would just upset her more. I said, well that’s okay, I’m not dead. My dad would pick up the phone and he would just pass it to her. He wouldn’t stop her from talking to me. But he wouldn’t acknowledge me. I said, well, he cannot, not acknowledge me, I had sort of decided that I wasn’t dead, and I’m not going to let them think that. It’s too easy. That’s easy for them for me to walk away. I said they need to acknowledge me. This isn’t easy for me to be away from them, so I’m not going to let them off the hook that easy. So, I called on my dad’s birthday, and my mom’s birthday, and all sorts of those things. I sent them flowers. So although my dad wouldn’t talk to me when I went to visit, he softened definitely over time. I know my dad, he just says things in the heat of things. That’s just the kind of person he is. But I knew he wouldn’t stop me from getting the family support. So, every time I came I stayed a little bit longer, and I would bring small gifts for my grandmother. And everybody acknowledged me when I was there. And with my persistence my dad softened over time.

Example 5

There were times when my dad would put stress on me. He would say something about my husband, complain about him-he did this or he did that, and I would try to tell my husband about it. I think it was talking to my sister that I realized that I just have to leave what dad says to dad, and not bring it to him, and maybe if I do bring it to him, then maybe the way I bring it to him should be different. Rather than saying dad said this or that, maybe just direct it differently so it doesn’t sound like he’s being ganged upon. I think this approach has really improved things in our relationship.
Category 4: Support and Acceptance From Key People in the Immediate and Extended Family for Self and Spouse (16 Incidents-100% Participation Rate)

Research emphasizes the importance of social supports in the development and maintenance of mental health and well-being (Brown & Harris, 1978). In other words, the absence of social support systems is viewed as a stressor and has been found to correlate positively with psychological distress. Social support systems are generally defined as having access to a social network (e.g. friends, neighbours), or intimate relationships (e.g., family, relatives). Social support networks may intervene between stressful life events and psychological distress, and may have a beneficial effect on emotional makeup. This positive effect of social support can be seen to cut across all kinds of marriages, however, its importance is magnified due to the general lack of acceptance around intermarriage.

This category speaks to the incredible, and often unexpected, sense of support and acceptance experienced by one, and or, both of the spouses from either of the spouse’s immediate and extended family in their pursuit, and in the course, of their intermarriage. This support and acceptance resulted in an (re)establishment of a relationship with parents and in-laws, a greater sense of belonging, feeling understood, and a greater sense of self confidence for the spouses-both in their marital relationship and in their own and each other’s families. In addition, this support and acceptance created a stronger sense of connection between the spouses and their families.

Example 1

Everybody has treated me really well. I really got along with one of her brothers, who lives next door to us. We had a good friendship, so I really did treat her sister not
talking to me as an individual person, and not as a blanket statement that all of her family
didn’t like me. And I went to a few weddings in the summer, where everybody treated
me like a king. They repeatedly made sure that I was well taken care of. They made sure
that we were invited to the different family events. So, they treat me as a person, and
accept me. A lot of that came after this one time when my parents, when my wife’s
parents, had a two day religious event (Akhand Path), and I actually stayed and listened
to the bible overnight and helped out. A lot of the close family members didn’t stay,
they had all gone home quite early. And after that, I noticed a huge difference in
people’s attitude toward me. I had stayed whereas even her brother hadn’t. I had
surpassed the standards. And I felt that I was treated differently. I felt like I am treated
like a different person. So, going back to her sister, it makes me much more certain that
hers was an individual reaction, and it wasn’t necessarily a reflection of everybody else.

Example 2

Oh yeah, it turned out great, the reception was great. And then the very next day,
his dad kissed me, welcomed me into the family the very next day. It was a complete
turn around. Completely 180 degrees, just completely different. I had to pinch myself
the next day, just to make sure it was real. But yeah, ever since he has shown that
support, I have been getting along great with him, especially since the kids have come.
He has been great. He phones every couple of days. If we need anything, he’s there. It’s
quite the change. It’s been very different than what we thought.

Example 3

Some people who marry interracially may move away from the culture, but I
think they are also shunned from the culture. They are cast off. They stop getting invited
to things. My wife really likes to go to these events. They’re important to her, and I enjoy them too. And I am often the only White guy there at some of these things. It doesn’t bother me. We have a lot of Indian friends and if a lot of the Indian friends are there, then who cares about the rest of them. My brother-in-law’s wedding was a great time because I knew everybody there. And a lot of the relatives I have known for a number of years. Some of them are great, you can tell that some of them are more accepting than others. Some of them are great, they have accepted me right away.

Support from family is very beneficial. People can do it without families, but it is a lot easier to do it with family support.

Example 4

I find that her parents have been very helpful, and supportive at a time when that help and support was required, for example, when she was going to school, they were virtually paying our rent for us. Our rent was very reasonable when we were living with them. That was helpful at a time when we needed help, rather than in my culture, people are willed things when they die, most of the time when parents pass away, the kids get all this money, property and what have you, at a time when most people already have that of their own. I will already have my own house. It would have been more beneficial to get help when you were younger. But I think that also ties in with pulling parents back in too-into the home. But I find that to be a positive attribute. To help the children when they’re young and when they need the help as opposed to when they don’t need the help.

Example 5

Everything went really smoothly with both set of parents. We thought that this is what we wanted. They’re grown ups, they can take care of themselves. If they don’t get
along, we’ll do what we want to do. They can figure out the rest. After the ceremony,
we were kind of standing there and thinking, oh my God, they’re all here together, now
what. At that moment, my grandmother got up, and came over. She doesn’t know the
protocol, she had never been to a White wedding. She came over, and hugged us both.
Her value has always been you stick by everybody, by your family-no matter what. So
that was what she did-so that was really amazing. After that, everybody mingled, and
you would have thought that the two families were best friends after that. Everybody was
totally accepting.

**Category 5: View of Cultural Differences as Enhancing the Relationship (16
Incidents-100% Participation Rate)**

McGoldrick and Preto (1984) suggest that it is not differences per se that create
problems. Rather it is the propensity in cross-cultural families to view ethnic
characteristics as negative personality traits and to criticize them as wrong rather than
accepting them as different.

All individuals in this study were adamant in expressing that their cultural
differences have provided enriching experiences in their marriage. The spouses describe
their interracial marriage as providing a greater degree of stimulation and “spice” to their
day to day life. In addition, it offers them an opportunity for greater appreciation of
diversity, and by challenging them to adapt to a different way of being, it provides an
opportunity for personal development. The participants also spoke elaborately about the
rich influences and benefits for their children as a result of living with two different
cultures. Through exposure to both of their racial and cultural backgrounds, they have
offered their children greater opportunities to learn and express themselves. It offers them an opportunity to learn about a different culture (e.g., the language, food, customs, etc.). More importantly, through acceptance and respect for their own racial and cultural differences, the parents expose and model for their children the values of respect, open-mindedness, appreciation of different cultures, and acceptance of differences.

Example 1

The bottom line is, there's no doubt in my mind, the cultural differences have been enriching experiences in our marriage. Because I got exposed to a lot of things I never would have otherwise. Whether I like them all or not, it was good to have that experience. I know a lot about the East Indian culture than a lot of people I know, and I have a lot more insight as a result.

Example 2

I think the differences is what makes life interesting! I wouldn't want to marry someone who was just like me. That would not be my choice. I wanted to marry someone who was different. The cultural differences-the cultural events, the dancing, the music. I enjoy that. I love going to these events. These are also important to my wife. It's important for both of us to share things together.

Example 3

I feel like our differences enhance our relationship. I feel like we can offer so much more to our kids than people from the same background. I think that is a value—that's important for both of us to give them as much awareness of things. Like when they had their first roti, we had their pictures taken, when they had their first pergoies we had their pictures taken. And they know which parent's background it comes from. They
both wanted to learn how to make perogies, and they both have. Because when we get
together with his family we do that the whole afternoon-they make perogies. So the kids
have all started doing that. The family value is there for both us, because we do things
with both side of the family-like samosa and roti making and perogie making and stuff
like that. So, we make it well known for them. It's not just making perogies, but we also
explain that it's from your dad's background. We like to tell them. We give them a little
history of how their grandfather used to make it and then their dad used to make it, and
now they're interested in it. So, things like that we both want to pass on to them from
both of our backgrounds to them. I feel like it's more enriching because they get a two
for one deal. If we were both from the same background, we would still be doing that
kind of stuff, but it would be less focussed. We're international about teaching them.

Example 4

There's a definite potential to learn. You are learning more and more about the
culture. It's personal development. It enhances one's personal development, if that's
what they are interested in any capacity. Some people are satisfied with just existing and
they don't really care about that. That's fine. But it's an opportunity to go and learn
about another culture, and you are at liberty to adopt different ways of being and have the
freedom to choose. Yeah because I grew up in a certain way, not knowing anything
different. I would never question that until I saw another way of doing it. It's at that
point that you say, gee, that's a better way of doings thing. So, it gives you another
option to adopt, something different, again, to grow as an individual in your marriage.

Example 5
It’s interesting to see the kids having the benefit of growing up with different cultures. It’s like in the beginning they ate roti and daal. And then they hit a stage where they don’t want the roti and daal, and they don’t want to speak the language—I can see that already with her brother’s kids. With our kids—the oldest went to a wedding this summer—and he was totally into the Indian dancing. And he just loved it. He’s really proud of being Indian. And it’s been instilled in him very much so.

**Category 6: Personal Philosophies, Attitudes, Values and Beliefs**

(16 Incidents-64% Participation Rate)

In this study, Personal Philosophies, Attitudes, Values and Beliefs represent a subsection or a part of the couples’ Common Values and Beliefs. Common Values and Beliefs subsume each individual’s personal values and beliefs. Similar to the common values and beliefs, one’s personal philosophies or values mediate and influence the decisions, and solutions that are meaningful to the individual. One’s personal philosophies or values are critical factors that can facilitate (and potentially obstruct) the adjustment in any marriage, and particularly intermarriage.

This category encompasses individual’s explicit, and in some cases implicit, philosophies, attitudes, values and beliefs about the quality of relationships, personal development, life style, rearing of children, way of being, and the manners of conducting one self. This category is also a reflection of a process whereby the husband’s and wife’s different racial and cultural backgrounds provides them with an opportunity to not only recognize and assess their values, beliefs, attitudes, etc., in relationship with their spouse, but also to clarify and solidify them. These philosophies, in turn, seem to be the guiding principles towards defining the role of self in the relationship, development of the marital and other relationships, dealing with the outside world, rearing of children gender roles
and so on. These personal philosophies and values facilitate couples' adjustment in an
intermarriage by nature of having an underlying theme of being flexible, open minded,
respectful, and accepting. Although most of these personal values seem to complement
their partner's, in cases where they don't, the nature of these beliefs allows these
differences to coexist in harmony with their own.

Example 1

The broadest identity possible, the most inclusive one. My personal belief is that
you should try to make sense of the world in a way that includes everything, rather than
trying to exclude my world view, I believe that you need to alter your world view to try
to make it fit. I think now the society is also changing that people can't stay closed to the
outside world, they have to be open.

Example 2

I'm pretty flexible, and accommodating and adaptive, and I always have been,
that's sort of, it takes a lot to get me going. And I think I'm personally quite strong. I
have lots of inner strength, and that's come over the years with personal practices and
philosophy, and I don't place a lot of emphasis on the relationship being all fulfilling
complete thing. I don't believe in that concept. That helps me in this relationship. I
think it's false. And I think it's from our culture. It makes it impossible for people these
days to live up to each other's expectations in relationships because I don't believe in
that. I believe if you have a relationship, it's for the purpose of having children and to
raise them in a certain environment. And if you share and give each other that freedom
that you need to develop as people, what else do you need. I don't know, I don't believe
that there’s some grandiose relationship waiting for me that is going to be the end all, and make me feel all that. I don’t believe in that. This belief has helped to stay grounded in the relationship.

Example 3

To some degree, I believe that the more you give, the more you get out of life. And in some ways people are happier when they are serving someone than when they’re being served. I think that’s something that comes through in my religion. It teaches you that, and I think there’s a certain amount of truth to that. I think the caring for the parents and the closeness to the family—I like that. I like the fact that cousins are still close relatives. When I grew up, I thought my cousins were close relatives, but it seems like they’re not anymore. Indian families tend to hold on to that longer. I think I appreciate that. I like to see that in my children. These beliefs are similar to my wife’s, so that’s really important.

Example 4

Rather than running away from your problems, I think you need to try to stay and deal with them—that’s what we do in our marriage. And I often think that’s what people do. They are running from their problems.

Example 5

Well, what makes the relationship work is learning to look at things differently, and understanding, part of it is sort of my beliefs around God and that sort of stuff. I believe you need to look within yourself, and that you look at who you are as a person, and the relationship is there, and if it supports you in your own thing, and who you are,
then go for it. Well, it’s called detaching yourself from the emotional stuff that you get caught into in relationships in general.

Example 6

My issue is that I don’t want to leave my family just to move in with another family when you get married. I want to create my own family within my own sub family. I think you need to grow up as a couple first, otherwise what’s the use of getting married. Each person needs to find him or herself without the parent role. We both think that’s important. So, in this way family doesn’t interfere as much, and that’s important when you are just adjusting in a married life.

Category 7: Shared Future Goals, Love, Commitment to and Trust in the Relationship (15 Incidents-73% Participation Rate)

Firstly, this category recognizes an implicit and explicit agreement or understanding between the couple that their marital union is for a lifetime. This category also speaks to the husband’s and wife’s recognition that conflict and disagreements are an inevitable part of the relationship, and that a strong sense of commitment and love is necessary to overcome these struggles and to sustain a successful relationship. This category also encompasses the couple’s shared, and desired goals and visions for their immediate and long term future as a family. In addition the individuals describe how they maintain and nurture their marriage on an ongoing basis.

Example 1

There is a strong sense of commitment. We want to raise our kids, and grow old together. We want to take our vacations together. I think we are each other’s friends as
well. We make sure we get to spend one night a week alone with each other, going to
dinner on a Friday night or something.

Example 2

Yeah, but you know, you get through that stuff. Then you think, oh, what was the
big deal? And I think in many ways, people give up too easy these days. Its interesting,
one of my co-workers, who is a first generation Canadian, she gets really upset about
people breaking up. She says that's just too easy, and I agree with that, yeah it is too
easy. Not too easy in abusive relationships, but it's just too easy for people to get out of
relationships because some of that stuff, after a couple of weeks or months, it works itself
out. Yet sometimes when you hang in there, and work things out, things get better. We
believe in working things out in our relationship.

Example 3

Well we both want to get a new home. We are anxious to get out of here. The
environment that we want to raise our child in—that's something else that we both want—
we both want to provide the best education that we can and a good environment in a good
neighbourhood. We both believe that higher education will get her farther in life.
Essentially what we both want out of our lives is to be happy together, get a nice home
and raise our child to a point where she can take care of herself.

Example 4

I think she feels the same way. We will both work towards our goal of getting a
house. If things work out, great, if they don't, we can accept that, because we have so
much to be thankful for already. In a different way, her strong family values she got
from having a strong family background, I got mine from not having a strong family
background. But we both share that value, but from having lived in different ways. And I think it's things like that that have really kept us strong through difficult times.

Example 5

I think if you find someone that you are very happy with, and you envision yourself growing old together then there's nothing in the world that should stop you. It's just like if you have goals or anything, you should never let anybody stop you from doing what you want. It's your life, so that's our philosophy.

**Category 8: Flexibility and Openness Towards Raising their Children (14 Incidents-82% Participation Rate)**

The marriage relationship between a husband and wife is profoundly influenced by many forces that act upon them both as individuals and as a couple (Ho, 1990). When we go through life cycle changes, such as bearing and rearing children, we need our cultural identity most since it provides us with the rituals, symbols, and the context of familiar meanings that cushion those changes for us. As a result, how the rituals are handled or celebrated, and how the decisions are made regarding child rearing will determine how well the couple and the family will adjust to the change (Friedman, 1980).

Firstly, this category describes the parents' general agreement and "togetherness" on approaching child rearing with a relaxed and balanced attitude in regards to passing on the cultural aspect. This category demonstrates a lack of power struggle in terms of deciding which cultural aspects are more or less important to pass on to their children. Many of them state that although they are making efforts to expose their children to their cultures, they do not want to force the cultures on their kids. They would like their child(ren) to follow their own inclinations and make their own choices about which, and how much, of the culture they would like to adopt. However, if the children express an
interest in learning the language and other aspects of the culture, the parents would
certainly ensure that they get this opportunity.

Intermarriage can break the old continuity of a family system. It can disrupt
family patterns and connections on the one hand, but opens a system to new patterns,
connections, and the possibility of creative transformations on the other. The parents
expressed their awareness that being in a family of different cultures presents enriching
experience that provides new flexibility to parenting. They emphasized providing
various possibilities and opportunities for their children to choose from. However,
parents did express that their own intermarriage, and the explicit and implicit messages of
acceptance and openness towards diversity and differences inherent in it, would make it
easier for them to instill the values of acceptance, respect and appreciation of, not only
their parent's cultural differences, but of everyone around them.

There seemed to be a general consensus that the most important things that they
wanted to pass on to their children were morals, values and beliefs. They might have
taken them from their culture, but they believe them to be universal and to cut across
cultures, and they are epitomized by their intermarriage.

Example 1

When it comes to passing on the culture on to our daughter, we are letting her
make her own choices. There are some things that we are going to enforce on her-like
being a good member of society, things like that-things that are generic or cut across
culture. But in terms of pushing a particular type of culture-it won’t be pushed. I’m not a
religious person, neither is my wife, I don’t attend church regularly. I never practiced
religion. So, that won’t be pushed, she’ll come to that when she’s ready. We’re not going
to push that on her.

Example 2

I think it would be important to pass on our basic values. Respect, love and trust
and all those sorts of values and beliefs that we have in our relationship. I hope they pick
up on them and carry them on in their lives. I think parts of our cultures would be an
important gift to pass on to them. From my culture, I make pickles and we make
perogies, and our older son is totally into that. It’s a real tradition. So there are traditions
from my family that I would like to pass on. And I feel, yeah, tradition is important, and
it’s important to pass on something to your children. And in turn they can pass those on
to their children, whatever it is, it doesn’t have to be a great big thing necessarily, any
small thing. Like with our family, we’ll get together and make perogies, and we’ll have
this great feast of perogies, and that’s our way of celebrating our culture. And that’s my
father’s legacy actually too. He and I used to do this stuff.

Example 3

In terms of passing on our culture to our kids, for both of us, first of all, it’s
important to pass on a sense of right and wrong-the morals, being a good person, and well
rounded person. I want them to appreciate both cultures. In terms of appreciating and
exposing the kids to the Indian culture, the kids go to the temple for weddings and
celebrations and things like that. We take the girls to the Indian parties. They wear their
Punjabi outfits and away we go. My mom has lived with us since the girls were born, so
she just moved out last month. She is an integral part of our lives, and in the girls’ lives.
She cooks Indian food, she speaks to them in Punjabi.
Example 4

Well, I think they should have as much choice as possible, be able to pick and choose, and I mean it's not just the East Indian culture, because of the fact that they have relatives of a particular culture, they should keep in contact with them and understand that. But they should have knowledge of other culture as well, they should be able to appreciate different cultures, and different ideas, different dynamics and whatever. I guess it's wide open, but I have some preferences as well of what I want them to learn, but that would be one value itself, that you don't reject anything absolutely, that you allow yourself to understand and then pick and choose after that, I guess be eclectic. We both agree on that.

Example 5

I think it's just going to happen, because my husband is not religious, and I'm not religious, so we don't have that conflict-whose church they should go to. They'll decide as they get older-we take them to both. In terms of language-we try not to force in on them. I think if we say you have to learn Punjabi, they won't because that's how I felt as a kid. You have to want to learn something. So the languages are there, they are in it five days a week with my mom and dad. They are picking it up.

Example 6

In terms of passing on the culture and the language to my daughter, we want her to stay in touch with it. But we also want her to grow up to be her own person. So, we're not going to push her in either way. If she's interested in something, I will teach her.

Category 9: Honouring Personal Convictions in the Face of Challenges
(13 Incidents-73% Participation Rate)
As intermarriages can represent additional benefits as well as additional sources of potential conflict, it is safe to assume that individuals involved in intermarriage will need exceptional ego and emotional strength. This category emphasizes specific personal attributes of the individuals that allowed them to stand by their relationship despite initial lack of support from their families prior to getting married. These attributes are characterized by acts of strength such as being stubborn, and being persistent. This strength to persist and follow through with their convictions in face of open objections, eventually allowed them to be taken seriously and to be respected.

Example 1

I connected at a different level with them, because I put on the table that this is who I am, it’s different than the way you probably wanted me to be, or what you had hoped for me. But this is who I am, so take it or leave it. They finally accepted me—it confirmed for what I had felt for them deep down—that they don’t judge people from the outside. That was the true test—and I think my family confirmed that for me.

Example 2

I think if you were to ask my family now, they would say that I’m stubborn, I like to get things my own way. I have always gone for what I believe in and for what I want. So, if somebody says no to me, I’m more determined to do it, and I think being this way allowed me to stick by this relationship and make it work.

Example 3
You, I think we worked through a lot of the family stuff. I wasn’t going to let them win. They had their views, but I was persistent-that allowed me to get to where I am today with this marriage.

Example 4

I think my parents were thinking that in the long run, you’re looking at a harder life for yourself if you marry outside the culture. It’s kind of what they wanted to protect me from—that’s how I looked at it. And I said, yeah, but I’m not locked into this culture so much either. I can live without it, and in some ways, I can take what I want. Like I know—I had that sort of sense of myself already back then, and I think it continues to help in how I make decisions that impact our marriage.

Example 5

Actually I thought we would have more of a problem with my family because of the cultural difference. But my parents actually relaxed, and thought I’m a very stubborn girl, and that she’s going to do what she wants any ways. So the pressure came off, they thought they would leave me alone for a while and see if this is serious, or if it’s a phase, that’s what I think. So, I said, yeah, yeah, yeah, and I’ve always been strong willed. For example, my parents didn’t want me to go and get a degree, they wanted me to go out and get married early, I said no. So, I’ve always been strong willed. And then when my relationship became serious, then my mom said you better marry him. So, first she tried to get me to reconsider, and then she resorted to saying well you better marry him. And I said, we’ll do what we’ll do, and I was kind glad for the space, because I knew ultimately what I wanted. And this is where I am today!
Category 10: Having Fun Together through Shared Interests and a Sense of Humor
(11 Incidents-92% Participation Rate)

This category emphasizes the importance of having a sense of humor to lighten up the day to day interactions between the couple. Sense of humor can also act as a buffer to the day to day stresses of life. In addition this category includes couples' common interests and other adventurous activities which allow them to connect, enjoy each other’s company, add vitality to their relationship, and to keep the romance alive. More importantly, with the variety of interests, pursuits and observances of different ethnic festivities that is provided by the different cultures, life is rarely boring. Partly by virtue of using their own differences, individuals create opportunities for experiencing and expressing happiness and their affection for each other.

Example 1

I think what helps a lot in our marriage is that we both have a lot of the same interests. We used to curl together. We both like to go to parties, and socialize, I’m always a social butterfly. I love going to parties, throwing parties. We like drinking wine, we both enjoy food, meeting people. I think because we have a lot of the same interests, it keeps the relationship alive. We always make a point of going out for dinners together on Fridays. We have always done that. Just the two of us. We used to go out dancing a fair bit, but we haven’t done that recently. We take vacations now. Before we used to take one vacation with the kids, and one without the kids.

Example 2

We had a lot of fun together, we did a lot of new things together that really added to our relationship. She hadn’t experienced like going out to different restaurants, going
to movies, and stuff like ordinary things to me, but for her because of the way she grew up, they never did stuff like that. We did a lot of that, and we had a great time.

Example 3

The next morning we went for our trip. And we were gone for four weeks. We just drove down the coast and camped and stuff. That was really good. It was really good for us. It really got us to get to know each other really well. It gave us time to figure out that this was a good relationship. It was kind of what we both wanted. And we had that strength when we came back.

Example 4

And it was New Year’s, we went out, the two couples. We went to this questionable venue—it was a country bar. But in spite of all that, what I realized was that being with her, she made it all worthwhile, she made it fun. If it was anybody else, I would be saying let’s leave.

Example 5

Having a sense of humor makes things a lot easier, and it allows us to have fun with each other, and just enjoy each other’s company.

**Category 11: Willingness to Compromise on, Ability to Accommodate, Adjust, and Accept their Differences (10 Incidents-64% Participation)**

Interruption requires that each spouse have flexibility to deal with the differences of each other’s background. This category also represents a distinct set of strategies to resolve cultural, and/or personal differences. Moreover, this category reflects the individual’s ability to gradually come to the realization and understanding that the differences between themselves and their spouse, and in some cases their own
and their spouse's family, that were initially felt to be stress inducing were proportionally less significant, and in some cases irrelevant, compared to the positive things happening in the relationship.

These differences encompassed the areas of child rearing, expression of emotion, communication, manner of conduct, and so on. As a result, the spouses made efforts to accommodate, adjust, accept and compromise on these differences to maintain the harmony in the relationship. There was also the recognition that as a result of coming from different cultures, naturally, differences would emerge between the couples and their families. Thus, the need to be understanding, patient, and compromising was considered necessary and inevitable. "Accepting", "compromising" and "working within oneself" appeared to be the most effective strategies in achieving a harmonious relationship.

Example 1

I think another one of the cultural differences is the socializing aspect of it. Just because East Indian culture is so much about socializing, with big gatherings-with extended family and stuff. I think I feel more comfortable going to those settings whereas he's not used to that. That's difficult for him, and part of it just his experience. He finds those kinds of gatherings overwhelming and over stimulating. He wants to get out of there usually. Whereas I enjoy it and I thrive on it. I want to take the kids into that. So, we've compromised over that. Depending on what the event is, like it it's a wedding or a reception, like he may come for a little bit knowing what he's going to leave a little bit earlier, and then I'll stay until later and get a ride with someone. So, we
kind of compromise in a way that works for both of us and the kids. I’ll come home and put the kids to bed and then go back while he stays with them.

Example 2

I’ve learned to accept it. At some point, it became not worth losing sleep over. Everything else was going so well, and I thought if this is the one thing that’s causing a lot of the problems, I decided to give up on letting it bother me. Because I don’t want to lose this relationship. It’s important to me, so that one little thing didn’t seem worth fighting over.

Example 3

The major conflict was the roles, and his perception of what my role should be and my inability or disinterest in fulfilling those roles even though he was very Westernized. The test was on, especially in the beginning of the relationship, in a new country, where there is stress of immigrating and stress of everything else. So, we got through it. Well, my perception is that as a woman and as a compromiser, I made an awful lot of compromises. Whereas now that we have been in the relationship for 17 years, it’s not so one sided anymore. And I have the kind of personality where I’m not one to get into power struggles—my way or your way. I’m usually the one who will give up and will try to find a way to create some even waters to try to get through it—and we did. As he became more comfortable in his role and became able to support the family, a lot of that pressure came off and we started to settle more.

Example 4

I’m a pretty affectionate guy. But I find that when we go out, there’s not that much affection, outside of the house, around other people. She tends to keep it very
private. Whereas I tend to be more affectionate. I mean again, that's something I have to understand. I understand the way she prefers to be. And that's okay. I don't have a problem with that anymore. There was a time when I used to want to know, why, why, why, why. Then I figured my life's going to be a heck of a lot easier if I stopped asking why-just accept it. So, I guess I compromised, somewhat. In the beginning, I took it very personally. It was like what's the matter with me. And then I just started to realize that that's the way it is. Let it go. Because something like that is just not worth getting excited over. And as soon I came to that realization, it was a lot easier.

**Category 12: Personal Characteristic of Spouse (9 Incidents-64% Participation Rate)**

Husbands and wives stated specific desirable characteristics of each other that attracted them to each other in the first place and then allowed the intermarriage to grow and flourish. Some of these characteristics include qualities that are universally admired and respected, such as being compassionate, caring, loving, fun, and a good family man. Other characteristics that seem especially key to the success of their intermarriage include the spouse being respectful and open-minded to their cultural differences among other things.

**Example 1**

Her honesty, her sensitivity. She really cares about other people. She's really compassionate. She has a real commitment to her family, and she's very idealistic. She's just a very loving person.

**Example 2**
It was his personality, he was extremely outgoing, but also very caring. And very independent, he didn’t care what anybody thought. When you have a very traditional culture, that the only thing everyone thinks about is what everybody else thinks. It really restricts you in who you are, and even though I wouldn’t consider myself a very outgoing person, it’s quite difficult for anyone, regardless of ethnicity if you’ve been raised in a Western culture to live in a culture where there are a lot of restrictions. So, he’s a confidant person. He’s someone I could talk to, someone I could laugh with, someone who I could be my self with, and someone who had very strong family values which I did. Someone with a sense of humor. There was a lot of stuff about him. Everyone loved him, he’s kind of that personality, very friendly and outgoing, and you know we were in love.

Example 3

They were able to say that he’s a really nice guy, we can see why you are interested in him, and it seems like a good relationship. So, I got a little bit of feedback from people in the family. So, I trusted people who knew him. I was getting the feedback that he’s a good person, which was what I was feeling. So, that just reinforced it.

Example 4

He respects people, he respects others, he is a pretty good person.

**Category 13: Supporting Each other (9 Incidents-36% Participation Rate)**

This category is distinct from the category of family support because the importance of spouse’s support was enhanced as a virtue of the fact that in some cases family support was absent. Nevertheless, the benefits that are stated to be derived from
family or other social network also apply here. More specifically, this category denotes the spouse’s willingness to be present for, be empathic towards, and supportive of, his or her partner in his or her personal struggles, career plans, education and other life goals. Some of the personal struggles included dealing with parents’ initial rejection of their interracial union, and or their partner.

This category also describes a process in which the spouse gradually became able to listen and be empathic without taking the spouse’s worries, concerns, etc., personally. Furthermore, there is an element of a conscious decision or commitment being made by the spouse to support his or her partner in his or her pursuit of career, education, and other life goals.

Example 1

Supporting each other, that has played a big part in the survival of our marriage. Supporting each other in our goals. She has supported me and pushed me in times when I just wanted to pack it in. And I have helped her along too in the sense that I took our daughter out of when she needed to study, you know things like that, and not just saying go, go, go. That is support, that is assisting her to obtain what she needs. And looking down the road and having a vision of the future for the three of us.

Example 2

And then I was able to support her in her struggle with her family. It was more harder for her than it was for me. Because I felt attacked personally, I couldn’t empathize for her pain, and understand what she was feeling, and then after when I gained my composure, I realized that it wasn’t about me personally. I mean it had nothing to do
with me personally, I had never met her dad, how could he be against me personally. And then it was easier at that point to be able to support her. I mean there wasn’t much I couldn’t do to help her, but I could try to make it easier for some of her family to talk, or try to talk. I think that was helpful for her.

Example 3

Right and again, I was so comfortable in my relationship. She and I had a life that was completely outside of all that. And that helped to create a cushion. If we had been having problems or didn’t accept or support each other fully, it would have made it harder.

**Category 14: Viewing Personal and Cultural Differences as an Opportunity to Learn a Different Way of Doing Things (7 Incidents-64% Participation Rate)**

Couples may unwittingly view and use their differences and similarities as a constraint or as a resource. Inherent in this category is the idea that because couples come from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, these unions naturally create an environment that provides ample opportunity to learn from each other. This category epitomizes a willingness to learn a different way of doing things, and generally a different approach to life. One participant mentions learning his spouse’s method and philosophy of saving money, which she, in turn, had acquired from her parents. Being able to use her approach has allowed him to pay back his student loans a lot sooner than if he had continued to practice his beliefs and strategies around finances. Moreover, underlying this view is the value that learning is growth producing and learning is a continuous process in the relationship. Another participant states that being able to draw on two different cultural backgrounds allows them different reference points for comparison, which aids in creating a balanced approach to child-rearing, for example.
This process is consistent with Falicov’s (1985) belief that the spouse’s main task during the cultural transition period of the marriage is to arrive at a balanced and flexible view of their cultural similarities and differences. As a result, the couples would be able to maintain some individuated values, to negotiate confusing and conflictual areas, and even to develop a joint cross-cultural identity that integrates parts of both cultural heritages.

Example 1

Finances is one area where I am a lot more easy going. I grew up in my family where if you had money, you spent it. Whereas in her family, she grew up where you saved and saved and saved every cent. When we first got together, her idea of being broke was having a couple of thousand dollars in the bank. For me, if I had a couple of thousand dollars, we would be on a spending spree. We’ve actually come full circle on that. I’m much more responsible. When I first met her, I was in a deep student loan, and she helped me with that. So, we paid it off a lot faster than if I was paying it off on my own. I’ve learned a lot from her in terms of saving money. I liked her way much better. So, that difference got resolved really well.

Example 2

In the mainstream society, when the couple are having problems, they say let them work it out themselves. The Indian society, they are right in there like a dirty shirt. And for us, in some ways, we taken both of the cultures, and decided to be in between the two extremes. Don’t make yourself scarce-make yourself be present, but don’t push, just be there. That’s more the right thing to do. If our children are in that situation, and
they're having problems in the marriage, I just want to be there to listen, and if they ask me for my opinion, I might give it to them.

Example 3

I actually feel closer to her family than I do with my own, because they provide me with a degree of mental stimulation because I can learn from them. I don’t feel that I can learn very much from my family. I feel like I am more in the teaching capacity with them. They learn from me. I feel that there’s a great deal still that I can learn form her parents. I still can’t make roti to save my life, and that’s something that I would like to learn. I just can’t do it. I feel that her parents still have things to teach me, so there’s that aspect of it in respect to them in helping me in the relationship.

**Category 15: Acculturation To the Partner’s (Caucasian-Mainstream) Culture, Balanced by the Desire and the Ability to Maintain Some Aspects of Their Own (Indian) Culture (8 Incidents-55% Participation Rate)**

It is suggested that couples are likely to have more difficulty if one spouse is an immigrant and the other a fourth generation American (McGoldrick & Preto, 1984). In this study, however, all Caucasian partners had been in Canada for three or more generations, while the Indo-Canadian partner’s had either arrived in Canada before the age of five or had been in Canada for two or more generations. More importantly, some Indo-Canadian partners describe a process in which they, as children and through their adolescents, rejected their own cultural traditions in order to assimilate into the mainstream culture. Also, some participants naturally adapted to the mainstream culture as a result of living in predominately, “White” or Caucasian neighbourhoods or towns.

However, as young adults, various experiences led them to make a transition to valuing and accepting their Indian culture, and feeling more comfortable in it. Some
individuals also state that their own partner's interest in and acceptance of their culture also played a role in appreciating and re-integrating parts of their own culture into their life. The themes inherent in this category are twofold. One of the themes speaks to the fact that being immersed in the mainstream culture—being familiar with it, and drawn to it, made the Indo-Canadian partners not only more open to marrying, but also to being more compatible with a Caucasian partner. Cottrell (1990) concludes that while intermarriage does not necessarily lead to assimilation, assimilation can lead to intermarriage, and can also make the adjustment in the marriage easier.

Secondly, the combination of missing their "Indian" family environment (the food, social gatherings, etc.), and their partner's interest in the culture, allowed them to re-evaluate what role they would like their culture to play in their lives. They considered the parts of the culture that they would like to maintain and integrate into their own families and pass on to the children, and the parts that they would like to avoid. McGoldrick and Preto (1984) suggest that working out one's sense of cultural identity in this way is part of differentiating from one's family of origin, which enables a person to form a mature marital relationship. In the differentiation process, the spouses can also be seen as carving out a joint cross-cultural identity that integrates parts of both cultural heritages.

Example 1

Well, from the time that I was young, I always went to the Pentecostal Church. We lived in Lake Cowichan, which is a really small town, and you know, when you go to the Sikh temple, they speak in a very formal language, you don't understand what they
are saying. So, I remember going to the temple, sitting there, and not hearing a word they were saying. My dad decided-there were these people who lived across the street who when to Church, and they asked us to come along, and my dad decided that it’s better that we have some religion-something that we can understand, and have a basis of knowing about God. There was a lot of East Indian families that did that. So, we went to church and then we would go to the Sikh temple on special occasions.

Example 2

I think openness, honesty, and respecting each other’s differences as well as similarities. I think those are the main things that have been important in maintaining harmony in our relationship. I say the big part is his being so interested. He’s bringing me to realize that there aren’t so many bad things about my culture as I thought. He’s great about that, because if I had somebody that had a different kind of mind set, in terms of respecting the culture, I probably would have followed. Not that I’m a follower, I’m quite assertive. At the same time, he made me realize that it’s important to maintain aspects of my culture.

Example 3

That was probably the biggest surprise when I was still living at home, I didn’t want to eat roti, didn’t want anything, I hated it. I was like oh, I can’t wait to move out. I’m never going to eat this stuff again. I tell you, you’re a week away from home and you are missing it big time. We were trying to go to restaurants and stuff, then we got to the point, where we said, we’re just going to have learn how to make this stuff on our own. Because I was never... I wasn’t the traditional daughter. My dad tried his hardest
to make me learn how to make roti, but I stood my guard. But now, I’m trying we’re both trying to maintain certain aspects of my culture, it’s important.

**Category 16: Familiarity with Partner’s Cultural Context Prior to Marriage**

* (7 Incidents-55% Participation Rate)

One can assume that it will be a lot easier for spouses and their families to accept each other if they already know people from that cultural group than if this is their first contact. This category refers to the spouses’, and their families’ previous experience, exposure and familiarity with each other’s culture. This allowed them to be more open-minded and more comfortable with each other’s race and cultural values and beliefs.

**Example 1**

Being able to understand and see her dad’s perspective, and why he wasn’t accepting me, has really helped. Oh absolutely, I mean I grew up in a town where there was quite a few East Indians, although on the most part, we didn’t really associate with them, and they didn’t associate with us. My father did all the hiring at the sawmill. So, at Christmas time, he would be invited to dinners, I guess because he would be doing the hiring of the new that might have recently come from India, so he would be invited to dinners, and they would give him gifts for me and my sisters and brother. I guess the culture wasn’t really, really, new to me, so this has helped for me to understand.

**Example 2**

My dad is a third generation Canadian, so he’s been here a long time. So, it was quite easy with him. He had dated a Canadian girl, and he wanted to marry her, but his mom wouldn’t let him. So, he had an understanding.

**Example 3**
I don’t think adjusting to my culture was too hard for him. Because he had some East Indian friends growing up, so he knew a little bit about the culture.

**Category 17: Ongoing Recognition and Awareness Throughout the Marriage of Initial Hardships in Getting Together as a Couple (7 Incidents-36% Participation Rate)**

Since for many of the couples the marriage often developed in a rather hostile environment, it tested the couple’s determination and willingness to make the relationship work. Having been able to unite to face and support each other through family opposition, it usually strengthened their commitment to make the marriage work. These individuals are now able to recall and rely on these memories of struggles successfully overcome to reassure themselves of their ability to overcome any struggle or challenge that might be faced in the relationship.

**Example 1**

Oh I think knowing the struggles have allowed us to be more committed. Because I was risking a lot, being disowned from the family could have been a permanent thing, and I knew that when I took the risk, so I mean I think I represented a person who really wanted to live by what she thought was true. And for him, to risk putting up with the stress of all that, that’s what he did. For me, to know that he’s willing to fight for what he thinks is important, even though it’s going to mean stress and a lot to get through.

**Example 2**

It took him a while to get it. I think it was a natural reaction for him to think that they are disliking me as a person. And I kept trying to explain to him, it’s not you. They don’t know you, how can they dislike you? It has nothing to do with who you are. It’s
just the fact that you are a different race. But once I kept telling him this over and over
again, he began to understand. But—we also know that if we could go through all that, we
could deal with pretty much anything.

Example 3

Part of it was having to struggle through some of the differences, and I know that
I think for the two of us, when we get to the point when get stuck and there's conflict, we
look back and think we went through horrendous things just to be together. It was so
difficult, and sort of having nothing and sort of working through stuff. We say we got
through all that. Even though things are hard right now, we've had it worse.

Category 18: Complementing and Balancing Roles (6 Incidents-46% Participation
Rate)

This category captures how the individuals view their roles as complementary,
and as balancing each other out in their marital relationships, and in some cases in their
extended families. The individuals have come to the realization that each partner has
unique skills and talents that are different from each other, but that are equally important.
They have also found a way to utilize these skills/resources in a way that complements
their own way of doing things and allows them to approach tasks as a team.

There is also an indication that these individuals are quite flexible in their roles,
and are able to accomplish certain shifts in male-female roles that many families have
been striving for in recent years. For example, although women may take a bigger part in
housekeeping, child-rearing activities, and the nurturing of their children, and men may
do more of the yard work, and deal with mechanical problems, they seem to be able to
ease into each other's roles when necessary.
Example 1

Compared to them, my wife and I share a lot of the household chores, and she will do more of the inside of the house work, and I'll do more of the outside of the house work, like cutting the grass. I think I do a lot of the housework to help her out, but I think she would have a different story! She'll look at a dust peck and say you missed a spot, so...! But there has been a natural progression of division of labour in our relationship. It works out pretty well.

Example 2

In some ways, I get off easy because they know that I was born and raised here, so they don't have the same expectations, so when we have these big social functions to celebrate things, they know, I mean I can cook Indian food, I can't cook it quite right. Not the way they do it. So, I get off easy. I have to host the party, it's at my house, I have to make all the arrangements. They let me do all the games and all the party stuff, and they bring all the food. They come to the house, I help cut things, and they will prepare the things. We've worked that out really nicely.

Example 3

He doesn't know how to discuss things with the kids. He just knows how to tell them stuff, so he's not really a good person to talk to for them. So, I'm the talker. He'll do more of the rough housing and playing with them.

Category 19: Being Able to Anticipate Challenges and Struggles Before Pursuing an Interracial Marriage Forced the Individuals to Examine Commitment (6 Incidents-36% Participation Rate)
Due to society’s attitudes, the individual contemplating intermarriage expected to encounter considerable opposition from close friends and relatives. The individual may have resented this, but it did initiate a more serious discussion about intermarriage. As a result of couples struggling to convince themselves and others about the suitability and the desirability of their intermarriage, they took the time to consider seriously the future of their relationship. Such serious discussions enabled the couples to think, feel and plan beyond their present romantic feelings.

Subsequently, there was an increased sense of commitment to the marriage. This category highlights the importance the individuals placed on analyzing the situation objectively in realizing potential struggles, risks, and challenges the couple might face in pursuing an interracial marriage. One partner describes the necessity to inform and explain to her partner her family’s potential opposition to the marriage. She states this was a necessary step in order for her to know that he was making an informed decision, and was committed if he was still willing to overcome these challenges with her. Naturally, this forethought given to the relationship eased the individual’s adjustment in the marriage.

Example 1

All the pressures really kind of forced us to be really honest with each other from early on. We couldn’t play games because there was too much at risk because of the circumstances. So that was good in a way, but also there was more of a pressure on the relationship too, I think. If we hadn’t been really attracted to each other, and had a lot of
shared values and beliefs, and interests we probably would have broken up before, but it kind of forced us to work things out pretty quickly.

Example 2

Well, I think I anticipated that there could be problems with the parents. Right from the beginning, I knew I was dealing with a different culture that didn’t always agree with interracial weddings. But if I was to date an Italian girl, I might have the same reaction. Because I’m not Italian or Catholic or whatever, and there might be an objection there. I mean I realize that I wasn’t naive to think that I would be welcomed with open arms. That’s not the way it is. My family is different because my parents are open to interracial marriages.

Example 3

So, I said to him, I have to explain something to you about my culture. We’re not even suppose to date even within our own culture-some families don’t even agree with that. And I thought that’s where my parents would be at that point. They probably wouldn’t want me dating you even if you were East Indian, let alone the fact that you’re White. So, I told him, he understood. So, I said it’s up to you. He took a few days, and he came back and said yes, I want to pursue this. I think we kind of came to that mutual understanding. It was important to start our relationship honestly.

Category 20: Resolution of Emotional Issues About the Intermarriage Reached by Both Families Prior to or Through the Wedding (6 Incidents-46% Participation Rate)

McGoldrick and Preto (1984) suggest that all things being equal, families who can hold a wedding at which both sides of the cultural heritage are reflected will probably have greater chance of success than families in which the children elope or in which one
side of the family refuses to attend, acknowledge or give their blessings at the ceremony. The consequence may be that the recognition or acceptance of the marriage is delayed, or never takes place. Falicov (1985) further states that a significant percentage of intermarried couples suffer from a covert or overt lack of permission to marry which results in serious implications for the couples’ adjustment in the marriage.

The individuals included in this category all speak about the necessity of, and feeling “right” about, incorporating some aspect of their cultural heritage at their wedding. They also revealed their sense of joy and relief in having the presence and support of key family members at their weddings. Some participants describe wanting not only to incorporate their own dreams and fantasies into their wedding plans, but also concurrently experiencing a strong desire to appease their parents through planning a wedding that their parents had envisioned for them. As a result of being able to incorporate everyone’s wishes (some of which weren’t mutually exclusive) successfully, the participants further describe feeling relief, and a sense of fulfillment for achieving their purpose.

Example 1

We had a Sikh wedding too, so to my mom that was important, even though she said later that I don’t want you to do that. But I knew she did, because that has always been her dream for me to wear a saree. So, I had two weddings. We started with the Indian wedding at the Sikh temple in the morning. I dreamt about having both Indian and “White” wedding. So, I got it. In the long run, my mom is very happy. Because I am the only one in the family, that got married outside the family so far. She got one Sikh
wedding out of that too, and this is her life (religion). She goes to the temple every Sunday, so I think, she might not ever admit it, but she got what she wanted.

Example 2

We had a mixed wedding. His background is Polish-Ukranian. We weren’t extravagant people. We got married by a commissioner. He had his family there, and I had mine. I did wear a saree (traditional Indian dress), I wanted to do that, and I didn’t really feel comfortable wearing a white dress. It just didn’t make sense. The saree was more important to me, and that surprised me. I didn’t think I was, but when it came to planning, I thought I really do want to wear it, I wanted to bring my culture into it. So, I wore that, and that was about the only cultural thing. Then we had a pot luck dinner, his family brought perogies, and cabbage roles, and mine cooked curry chicken, roti and samosas. We had a real mix of food. It was great.

Category 21: Recognizing, Acknowledging, and Appreciating Parents’ Willingness to Learn and Shift Some of Their Values and Beliefs (4 Incidents-36% Participation Rate)

Racial, religious, or ethnic differences can certainly increase the probability of parental disapproval, particularly in families where generational continuity is expected and endogamy is the rule. Although cultural differences may not be the only, or even the main, cause of parental disapproval, they certainly provide a reinforcing concretization for the family’s resistance to the marriage of the son or daughter.

This category represents the individual’s gratitude towards his or her parents for their willingness to change their deeply held beliefs and attitudes to accept and support them in their interracial marriages, albeit gradually. These individuals also recognize the incredible progress they have made in comparison to others of the same generation of
East Indians in shifting their long held traditional beliefs. One participant further states that it's her parents' open-mindedness and acceptance throughout her childhood, despite their appearance of being traditional, that allowed her to view people as equals despite their different races. This disposition, in turn, allowed her to be open to an interracial relationship. This category implicitly speaks to the importance placed on gaining the acceptance by the parents after, in some cases, being disowned for making the choice to have an intermarriage. Being able to acknowledge the parents' progress despite initial opposition allowed them to have a better connection with the parents.

Example 1

But I look at the Elderly East Indian people, and I realize my parents have actually have come a long way. They are a lot more Westernized than most people their age. I don't know if it's because they have had to deal with all this (intermarriages in the family) or what it is, but they are just totally different. Like, I just look, my mom, I remember my mom used to dress quite traditionally when she used to go out, but now she won't. So, they have adapted quite a bit. And they never forced religion on—ever—never had to go to church. They have actually been really understanding, their support, although it was slow coming has been really important.

Example 2

When we were younger, my parents were very traditional. And as we went through our teenage years, they started to turn around, and through interracial marriages, they turned around. They realized that we were their kids, and they needed to accept us
for who we were. They have come very far in adapting to their kid’s viewpoints. We’re lucky that way.

**Category 22: Sibling Marrying Out (3 Incidents - 27% Participation Rate)**

This category refers to how one or more sibling marrying out of the race previous to the individuals marrying set a precedence in the family. This experience had the effect of alleviating some of the stereotypes and ignorance around interracial marriages. Participants also described being able to use one’s own or their spouse’s interracially married sibling for support and understanding in dealing with their feelings of being rejected by their spouse’s family, and in dealing with other struggles around interracial marriage.

Example 1

I was extremely devastated when her father didn’t accept me. I took it as a personal insult about me. One of my wife’s sister was already married to someone who was White, and in my conversations with her husband, he actually told me that he had felt the same way. He said he finally realized that it had nothing to do with him. It didn’t matter who he was, it had to do with the situation—that he was White and that you have no control over that situations. And that made a lot of sense to me at the time, and I very quickly came to accept the situation.

Example 2

Definitely, the biggest help was my sister who is also married to a Caucasian. My other brother who is also married to a Caucasian was also very supportive. They went
out with my husband and I. They would come over. They helped him to have at least some sort of a connection with my family.

**Gender and Cultural Differences Between the Categories**

With the exception of four categories, all of the categories seemed to have an equal representation of gender and culture. The four categories that were not equally split by gender and/or culture include: supporting each other (4 males, 0 females and all of the individuals were Caucasian); resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to or through the wedding (1 male, 4 females and four of the individuals were Indo-Canadians and one was Caucasian); recognizing, acknowledging and appreciating parents' willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs (0 males, 4 females and four individuals were Indo-Canadians while none were Caucasian); familiarity with partner's culture prior to marriage (1 male, 5 females and four of the individuals were Indo-Canadians while 2 were Caucasians).

The gender and cultural differences in the “supporting each other” category may be due to the fact that initially it was the Caucasian male partners who were providing support to their Indo-Canadian wives who were experiencing disownment by their families. Also, it was mostly the Indo-Canadian female partners who had to resolve family issues prior to marriage due to lack of acceptance by their families. Furthermore, once parents were able to accept their daughter's choice of her marital partner, the Indo-Canadian partner's were able to “acknowledge, appreciate parent’s willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs”. The Indo-Canadian female partners also recognized that their adjustment in their marriage was made easier by their own and their
families familiarity with the partner’s (mainstream) culture. Two Caucasian partners also stated that having a familiarity with his or her partner’s cultural values, beliefs and customs prior to marriage allowed them to have a better understanding of the dynamics in his or her partner’s families.

Validation of the Categories

As mentioned earlier, in order to ensure validity of categories, it is necessary to ascertain whether other people can also use the developed categories with confidence. Thus, the validity of categories lies in them being sound and trustworthy. It may be difficult to establish the soundness and trustworthiness of the category scheme, however, it is necessary to ensure that the category scheme is reasonably stable if it is to be used in practice. In order to offset the chances that the categories might be incomplete, impractical or inaccurate, the researcher incorporated several tests to assess to ensure an acceptable level of trustworthiness and soundness.

Reliability of Categorizing Incidents

One way to assess reliability is to examine the extent of agreement of independent judges using the category scheme (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). More specifically, can two different people use the categories in a consistent manner? It has been suggested that a category scheme should surpass a 75 percent agreement. In the current study two independent judges were asked to categorize a sample of 45 incidents drawn from a total of 248 incidents. A sample of 45 was used because this size accommodates at least 2 incidents from each category. One of the judges was a Master’s student in Counselling Psychology. The other judge was an officer of the court. Both of the judges were provided with a brief description of the categories, as well as a prototypical event for
each category. The judges were shown specific examples of certain incidents and how
the researcher categorized them. The 45 incidents that were given to each judge were
typed onto 45 separate cards. The judges were instructed to place the incidents into the
category thought to be most appropriate. Both judges took approximately two hours to
place all 45 incidents into the categories. Table 2 represents the percentage of agreement
between the researcher’s and the judges’ placements of incidents in the category scheme.

The high percentage of agreement between the judges may be telling of the ease
with which other people can also use the categories in a consistent manner. The
agreement for the first judge was 89%, while the agreement for the second judge was
94%. However, after discussions and in depth understanding of the incidents, it was
decided that the incidents could be appropriately placed in the pre-formed categories. In
the process of the discussions, it became apparent that at times, the raters were
overemphasizing the key words that described the incidents, or paid too much attention to
individual words rather than examining the meaning of the entire incident. Thus some of
the incident could be attributed to haste and did not require the modification of
categories.

Table 2. Reliability of Category Schemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges</th>
<th>Percentage of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judge # 1</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge # 2</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average agreement</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comprehensiveness of Categories**
One approach to assessing the completeness of categories is by ascertaining whether the category scheme is reasonably complete (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964). One such method of assessing comprehensiveness, used in this study, involves withholding approximately 10% of the incidents or 25 incidents in this study, until the categories had been formed. Upon completion of category formation, these incidents were analyzed and classified. This process allows one to surmise whether the incidents can be easily placed in the existing category system. If incidents cannot be placed in the categories, then new categories need to be formed. If the incidents can be placed in the existing categories, this suggests that the category system is comprehensive. In the current study, all 25 incidents could be sorted into the category scheme. If difficulty had arisen in placing the incidents within the existing category description, it would have been necessary to form new categories and possibly conduct additional interviews.

**Participation Rate for Categories**

Analyzing the level of agreement of participants reporting similar incidents was another method used in this study to determine if the categories were well-founded. In order to form a category, the researcher must identify a significant similarity in a group of incidents as they are reported by different people. A category might be dismissed if only a few people report an event, for example. However, the possibility of distortion is considerably reduced if many independent people report the same kind of event.

Hence agreement among independent individuals reporting the event is one criterion for the objectivity of the event. Agreement is assessed by the participation rates in each category, which is the number of participants reporting a category of event.
divided by the total number of participants (See Table 1). Thus the categories which have the highest level of agreement are the categories which have the highest level of participation. Participation rates in this study ranged from 27% (sibling marrying out) to 100% (interest in, appreciation of, acceptance of, respect for, and partaking in the spouse's culture). Some of the other categories with a participation rate of 50% or more include: making efforts to resolve differences, having fun together, shared vision for the future, viewing differences as opportunities for learning, flexibility and openness in raising kids, and willingness to compromise and accept differences.

Support of Related Literature

Another approach to checking the soundness of categories is by verifying their agreement with previous research. A category can be considered questionable if it is found to disagree with previous research in the area. As a result, in the event of a disagreement, the category would be subjected to careful scrutiny. However, if the category agrees with previous research, then there is good reason to be more confident in the soundness of the category.

Furthermore, if a category is a new finding, which has been neither confirmed nor disconfirmed by previous research, it would exist as a possibility, independent of previous research. It would be open to verification or disputation by future research. In the present study, to the extent possible, categories were compared with previous research. Due to the lack of research on positive aspects of intermarriage, there was very little research on what facilitates couple's adjustment in intermarriages. No major marital adjustment study reported by 1974 included data on interracial marriage. Although most
researchers who have written about such relationships suggest they are hazardous and unstable, little empirical evidence supports or refutes this viewpoint (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1990).

In summary, for the most part the psychological literature has dealt with motivation constructs regarding exogamous marriage (Cerroni-Long, 1984). These factors have been conceived within an analytical clinical framework of pathology. No reference in the psychological literature explores assets, strengths or positive dimensions of intermarriages.

Nevertheless, although no systematic research has been conducted on what facilitates couple’s adjustment in intermarriage, some researchers have discussed various dimensions of what may be considered to facilitate or effect couple’s adjustment in intermarriage (Falicov, 1985; Ho, 1990). Majority of these facilitating elements have been discussed as advantages of intermarriage. With the exception of one category, namely the category of recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating parent’s willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs, all of these advantages as well as the factors that influence couples’ adjustment in intermarriage seem to, to some extent, parallel incidents that were found in this study to facilitate an individual’s adjustment in intermarriage. However, it must be emphasized that before the current study, there has been no research that specifically addresses what facilitates and hinders an individual’s adjustment in any type of intermarriage much less Indo-Canadian and Caucasian.

Ho (1990) suggests that individual’s who pursue intermarriage have achieved more thorough preparation for marriage. Due to society’s attitudes, the individuals
contemplating intermarriage can be expected to encounter considerable unsolicited advice and opposition from close friends and family. Although individuals may resent this, it also allows them to seriously consider the potential of the relationship. Such projections and serious discussions enable the couple to think, feel, and plan beyond their present romantic feelings. As a result they also deepen their commitment and increase the likelihood of their marriage succeeding. Moreover, couples of the same ethnic or racial background, who have encountered relatively mild or no opposition from parents or friends, may not be as committed as an intermarried couple who has had to struggle every step to make the marriage a reality. Having faced initial opposition, such couples are usually strengthened in their commitment to make their marriage succeed.

In this study, the categories that are consistent with these advantages of intermarriage include, “ongoing recognition and awareness throughout the relationship of initial hardships in getting together as a couple”; “being able to anticipate challenges and struggles before pursuing an interracial marriage forced the individual to examine commitment” and “shared future goals, love, commitment to and trust in the relationship”. These categories reflect elements of realizing the potential risks and losses posed by intermarriage, using the initial hardships to avoid taking the relationship for granted, and ensuring an ongoing commitment to the relationship.

Moreover, Ho (1990) suggests that most individuals may take their values and beliefs for granted, and their familiarity may provide comfort and complacency. However, when an individual’s partner is of a different race or ethnicity, this difference forces the individual to be more aware of their values and beliefs and to check how they relate to and interact with the values of the partner. Also, it’s only through respecting and
accepting one's own values, beliefs and identity can an individual genuinely respect and
accept his or her partner's values, beliefs and identity. McGoldrick and Preto (1984) also
state that the greater the difference between the spouses, the less common the pairing and
the greater difficulty they will have adjusting. The individuals in this idea emphasized
the importance of knowing their values and beliefs and standing behind them in face of
challenges. They also emphasized the importance of ensuring that as a couple, they could
accept and respect each other's values, and that they could also agree on the most
significant values and beliefs. These ideas are reflected in the categories of "personal
values and beliefs" as well as "common values and beliefs".

An intermarried couple who is highly of aware of, respects, and accepts their
cultural differences feels little threat to their sense of individuality when one partner is
confronted by the other who thinks, feels, and behaves differently (Ho, 1990). As the
couple accepts and respects each other's cultural and personal differences, they have no
need to be critical or feel defensive. Their mutual acceptance as well as from the family,
in this study, frees them to be truly themselves. The individuals in this study went
beyond just accepting and respecting each other's cultural differences, they also enjoyed
partaking in each other's cultural milieus. The individuals reported experiencing clear
benefits of approaching their differences in this way. This is apparent in the category of
"interest in, appreciation of, respect for, and partaking in spouse's culture".

Ho (1990) also suggests that a couple of different racial and ethnic background
has ample opportunity to learn from each other. A partner from a different background
provides an environment that is conducive to learning and presenting challenging stimuli.
The individuals in this study presented their awareness of this benefit in their own
marriage. This is comprised in “viewing personal and cultural differences as an opportunity to learn a different way of doing things” category.

The diversity in an intermarriage often ensures that there is not a lack of activity or excitement in the family. With a variety of interests, pursuits, and observances of and participation in different ethnic festivities, life is rarely boring. There are abundant opportunities for family members to express their affections for each other, and have fun together. Overall there is a greater vitality in family living. Family members may also have a greater sense of belonging, and stability which may be essential to their social, psychological, emotional and spiritual development. In this study, this description overlaps with the categories of “having fun together through shared interests, and a sense of humor” and “view of cultural differences as enhancing the relationship.”

By observing, accepting and respecting their own differences, parents may be more flexible and be open to the fact that there is a wider range of opportunities and approaches to raising their children. With this awareness the parents and, as a result, the children are likely to have a heightened awareness, a harmonious integration of themselves and their environment, and satisfying relationships (Ho, 1990). In the present, this awareness of more choices and being flexible in their approach to child rearing is most consistent with “flexibility and openness towards raising their children” category.

A committed couple gives top priority to resolving difficulties and problems that come up in their marriage (Ho, 1990). Upon making the decision to intermarry, the individual realizes that he or she can no longer depend upon the sympathetic supporters to make the marriage work. Whether the intermarriage succeeds or not will be contingent
mainly upon the couple's determination and willingness to make it work. Many individuals, in this study, discussed at length the importance they placed on ensuring that efforts were made to resolve any issues or conflicts—culturally related or otherwise—that arose in the course of their marriage. This is evidenced in the category of "commitment to resolving differences and conflicts".

It has been suggested that individual's personality traits or characteristics can be a major contributing factor to an individual being attracted to another individual who happens to be from a different race or culture, which in turn can contribute to the couple's adjustment in the marriage. Ahren, Cole, Johnson, and Wong (1981) indicated that intermarried individuals were similar in their personalities, despite dissimilar backgrounds. Their study also revealed that intermarried women were more assertive than their intermarried counterpart. Although this finding is limited by the fact that there is no one way to define intermarried couples, this finding is consistent with the categories of "honouring personal convictions" and "personal characteristics of spouse" in the present study. Individuals in this study reported being attracted to what can be considered universally admired and respected qualities in their spouse. Many of the individuals, all of them being women, reported that it was their personal strength, and assertiveness that allowed them to pursue intermarriage and to attain what they desired in the marriage.

McGoldrick and Preto (1984) also suggest that differences in the degree of acculturation of each spouse can also determine how well the couples adjust in the intermarriage. They will have more difficulty if one spouse is an immigrant and the other a fourth generation American. On the other hand, according to Adler (1975), individuals
have reached a bicultural identity when they have reached the fourth stage of cultural identity, whereby the individuals grow to value as well as accept cultural differences. In this study, these observations, in some ways, is born out through the category of “acculturation to the partner’s (Caucasian-Mainstream) culture, balanced by the desire and the ability to maintain some aspects of their own (Indian) culture”. McGoldrick and Preto (1984) also suggest that cultural characteristics can intensify certain sex roles. However, in this study, couples stated being able to overcome culturally stated rules around roles, and being flexible and being able to share tasks and roles. This is encapsulated in the category of “complementing and balancing roles”.

“Familiarity with each other’s cultural context prior to marriage” is also another category which McGoldrick and Preto (1984) mention as being a factor that influences intermarriage adjustment. Presumably it will be easier for both families and spouses to accept one another if they already know people from that cultural group than if this is their first contact. Families that have lived in heterogeneous neighbourhoods are probably more prepared for their children to intermarry than those living in a homogeneous neighbourhoods.

The category of “degree of resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to or through the wedding” is also mentioned as a factor that impacts the couple’s and their families’ adjustment to the intermarriage. Families that can hold a wedding at which both sides of the cultural heritage are reflected will probably have a greater chance of success than families in which the children elope or in which one side of the family refuses to attend the ceremony. The consequence may be that the recognition of acceptance of the marriage is delayed, or never takes place. In this
study, some individuals mentioned that being able to incorporate aspects of both cultures in their wedding, and having their parent's blessings contributed immensely to their and their family's adjustment in the intermarriage.

Demographic distributions clearly influence accessibility and contact opportunities and thus intermarriage. Multi-group affiliations promote intergroup marriages and friendships because intersecting social differences promote intergroup relations. The category of "sibling marrying out" captures the importance of having contact with and support of someone who is also exposed to intermarriage. Thus, the individuals viewed having multi-group affiliations as promoting their adjustment in intermarriage as well as improving relationship with siblings, in this case.

Research emphasizes the importance of social support as being a stress mediator (Brown & Harris, 1978). Social support systems are generally defined as having access to a social network (e.g., friends, neighbours), or intimate relations (e.g., family, relatives). Hedgeman (1987) goes further to say that spousal support, in particular, has been identified as a significant stress mediator. Although this finding may be applied to individuals across cultures, however, due to the lack of acceptance of intermarriage, the importance of this resource becomes magnified in intermarriage. In the present study, the importance of support is captured by the categories of "support from spouse" and "support and acceptance from key people in the immediate and extended family for self and spouse".

Falicov (1984) proposes that the spouse's main developmental task during the cultural transition period of the marriage is to arrive at a balanced and flexible view of their cultural similarities and differences. This would make it possible to maintain some
individuated values, to negotiate confusing and conflictual areas, and to develop a cross-cultural identity that integrates parts of both cultural heritages. This process was evidenced in this study to some extent by the category of "willingness to compromise on, ability to accommodate, adjust, and accept their differences."

**Summary of Results**

Through interviewing 11 participants, 248 incidents were elicited in response to what facilitates individual’s adjustment in their intermarriage. The 248 incidents were sorted into 22 categories which were found to be reasonably reliable. These categories were thoroughly described and illustrated through individual quotes of incidents. These categories were also validated through various methods. In the next chapter, these results will be discussed, and implications for counselling and further research will also be explored.
Chapter V: 

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results of this study will be discussed in terms of the limitations of the present study, theoretical implications as well as the implications for counselling and further research.

Limitations

There are a number of factors that may limit the findings of the present study. The fact that only individuals who were in an Indo-Canadian and Caucasian intermarriage were interviewed may limit the generalizability of the results to other types of intermarriage. However, it was established from the beginning that the intent of this study was exploratory. The present study does not offer a definitive description of what facilitates individual’s adjustment in intermarriage. Further studies are necessary to assess the generalizability of the categories to other types of intermarriages, and to further develop theory and practice.

One other limitation of this study is that some of the incidents that participants were asked to recall had taken place in the past. As a result, their recollections may not be a completely accurate representation of the actual experience. Another limitation that is related is that the critical incidents were self-reported rather than being obtained through observation. Hence these events are limited to those events which the participants are able to remember during the interview. Some important incidents could not be reported because they might have been forgotten by the participants. However, the
follow-up interview did provide an opportunity for participants to add any incidents that they might have recalled since the initial interview.

A final limitation that must be acknowledged is the possible influence of the researcher bias. Although every attempt was made to maintain objectivity throughout this study, there is the possibility that the researcher's subjective assumptions may have had some influence.

**Implications for Theory**

The purpose of the present study was to explore what facilitates an individual's adjustment in an Indo-Canadian and Caucasian intermarriage. The results of this study both confirm and extend research relating to what facilitates an individual's adjustment in intermarriage. The most significant implication of this study is that it provides empirical evidence for what has generally been informed opinion by researchers as well as cultural experts. With the exception of an afterthought kind of discussion around some of the advantages of intermarriage and factors that influence couples' adjustment in intermarriage, there has been a dearth of research conducted in this area.

The advantages that were empirically supported by the current research include: more thorough preparation for marriage, greater degree of commitment to relationship, and commitment to resolving differences in marriage, greater degree of self-other differentiation-greater degree of awareness of one's values and philosophies and how they interact with one's spouse, greater degree of acceptance and respect of each other's differences, broader opportunities for learning and growth, greater opportunities and perspectives for children, greater vitality in family living.
Some of the other factors that have been stated to influence couples' adjustment in intermarriage and that have been supported by the current research include: the extent of similarities and differences in values between couples, differences in the degree of acculturation of each spouse, familiarity with each other's cultural context prior to marriage, the degree of resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to the wedding, sibling marrying out, social support-support from family and spouse, adjusting to and accommodating each other's differences to achieve a balance in the marriage, being flexible and open minded in their (gender) roles, and the spouse's personalities.

One category that did not seem to fit any of the existing advantages of intermarriage or factors that influence couple's adjustment in intermarriage includes recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating parent's willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs. All of the 22 categories represent ways to facilitate individual's adjustment in intermarriage.

As stated earlier, most researchers who have studied intermarriage have suggested that they are hazardous and unstable. These studies target a few clinical case histories of troubled interracial relationships. They have further been compromised by a lack of focus, and inadequate methodology (Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1990). Popular and professional theories on racially exogamous relationships focus on the idea that those who contract mixed marriages are somehow different (Brown, 1987; Cottrell, 1990). Subsequently different has been equated with pathology and interracial partnerships have been viewed with skepticism by the populace and professionals alike (Cottrell, 1990).
The neglect of adaptive cross-cultural interaction patterns within marriage is unfortunate both for out-group married couples as well as their in-group married counterparts. The present study addresses the neglect of adaptive interaction patterns in intermarriage by exploring what facilitates an individual's adjustment in intermarriage. The present study may, as well, provide a basis to refute unfounded racial biases and attributions of pathology which are detrimental to therapeutic interventions with individuals, couples and families. The results of the present study help create a basis for understanding couple's problems in intermarriage from a developmental perspective as opposed to a clinical perspective. Furthermore, along with beginning to provide a foundation for a more realistic theoretical construct of intermarriage, the results of this study provide resource material for therapists addressing the multidimensional aspects of intermarriage.

The findings of this study suggest that many of the factors that facilitate adjustment in an intermarriage can apply to an individual or couple in any type of marriage, interracial or otherwise. This implies that intermarriages, and as a result it's challenges and benefits, may only be different in degree rather than in kind from same group marriages. Similarly, as Ho (1990) states, intermarriages in themselves are neither good nor bad. How the individuals adjust in intermarriage, to some extent, depends on the individual's personality and his or her flexibility towards his or her partner's cultural differences. In counselling the interracially married, the therapists have often focussed on the interracial nature of the relationship to the exclusion of other considerations. Whether cultural differences are necessarily the most critical factors in adjustment to intermarriage is rarely investigated. As a result, although an individuals cultural background is a
significant and an important consideration in counselling the intermarried, one can not neglect other some of the factors, beyond culture, that can be considered to apply across cultures.

The results of this lend themselves to being conceptualized into an ecosystemic approach to therapy (Ho, 1990). The ecosystem maintains that there is a multidimensional aspect to adjustment in intermarriage. Imbalance and conflict in intermarriage may arise from any of the four factors affecting human development and interactions: individual, family, culture, and environment.

Although the couple or interpersonal relationship may be the primary concern in marital therapy, problem-solving and enhancement of the marital relationship cannot occur without clear analysis of the four ecological factors. Moreover, the degree of importance placed on these factors, in turn, depends on the specific nature and stage of the couple’s problem. Among the components included in the individual level of analysis are personality strengths, cognition, perceptions, problem-solving skills and emotional temperament. In this study, the categories that facilitated adjustment in intermarriage at the individual level include: spouse’s personality characteristics, honouring personal convictions, personal philosophies, attitudes, values and beliefs, viewing cultural differences as enhancing the relationship, viewing cultural differences as opportunities to learn a different way of doing things, commitment to resolving differences and conflicts, and willingness to compromise, adjust, accommodate and accept their differences.

Analysis at the family level focuses on the nature and quality of the spousal relationship and the depth of connectedness to children and extended family in the enhancement of a couple relationship. In this study, the categories that captured the
importance of remaining connected with the extended families, and approaching child rearing in a flexible and creative way include: support and acceptance from key people in the immediate and extended family for self and spouse, resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to or through the wedding, recognizing, acknowledging and appreciating parent's willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs and flexibility and openness towards raising their children.

At the culture level, the focus is on understanding and realizing the importance of culture in one's own and spouse's life, and understanding the belief systems, the societal norms of the host and original culture. The categories from the present study that overlap with this level of analysis include: interest, appreciation, acceptance, respect, and partaking in spouse's culture, common values and beliefs, and acculturation to the partner's culture, balanced by the desire and the ability to maintain some aspects of their own culture.

Finally, analysis at the environment level focuses on understanding society's social structure, and its influence on social interaction among different groups of people. The category from the present study that seems most consistent with this dimension includes familiarity with partner's cultural context prior to marriage.

In summary, the results of this study provide support for an ecological approach to marital therapy. An ecological approach allows a marital therapist to focus on adaptive (and maladaptive) transactions that might be necessary between the couple and all of levels mentioned above in order for couples to adjust successfully in their intermarriage.
Most importantly, this study has shown that, in large part, adjustment in intermarriage is facilitated by the individual’s ability to empathically understand, respect, and accept his or her spouse’s world view/value/beliefs, ways of thinking, and their corresponding expectations and to behave in ways that attempt to meet these expectations.

**Implications for Practice**

The present study offers insight into an area that most counsellors have very little knowledge of, yet it is an area that is becoming increasingly significant in our multicultural society. The present study provides a scheme of what facilitates an individual’s adjustment in intermarriage where the individuals are of the Indo-Canadian and Caucasian-Canadian background. This scheme of critical events for adjustment did not exist for any type of intermarried couple much less Indo-Canadian and Caucasian-Canadians. Consequently, the results of the present study offer a myriad of resources for practitioners to facilitate an individual’s or couple’s adjustment in an intermarriage. The results of this study have implications for counsellor training, counselling, program development, and community based initiatives.

On a general level, this study suggests that counsellors who approach an interracial or cross-cultural couple unaware of their own biases and/or the influence of culture on an individual’s perceptions and expectations perform a disservice to the couple. This study emphasizes the importance of cautioning the counsellors to be aware of his or her attitudes regarding intermarriage, as biased personal opinions may unduly influence one’s effectiveness with intermarried individuals and couples. It is
recommended that counsellors closely examine objective data of the subject matter, much of which does not empirically support popular stereotypical notions. Along with encouraging counsellors to survey other literature and critically analyze the contents of the various intermarriage hypothesis, the present study can also be used with counsellors to increase awareness and offer a different, a more positive, perspective of intermarriage. Training programs for counsellors who plan to help intermarried couples can incorporate these 22 categories of what helps and hinders an individual’s adjustment in intermarriage into their curriculum.

The findings of this research support the notion that intermarried couples’ methods of adjusting to their marriage, to a large extent, do cut across cultures, however, the differences in culture may exacerbate and compound some of the challenges that exist in any marriage. This finding suggests that counsellors can acknowledge that intermarried couples experience the same high and low stressors contained in intramarriages, as a way of normalizing their experience.

Findings from this research can also be used by counsellors to develop techniques that are both sensitive and relevant to the needs of an intermarried couple. The results of this study suggests couples might be better equipped to cope with potential stressors of intermarriage if they could anticipate or foresee these challenges. As a result couples may find it beneficial to go through premarital therapy. The 22 categories could be used to educate or increase awareness of potential challenges the couple might have to deal with in their marriage. The couple could explore the potential challenges they might see in their marriage. They could also be asked about their willingness or readiness to overcome these potential challenges. This would also force the couple to think about the
level of their commitment, and evaluate their motivation for marriage. If it is purely for
romantic reasons, the couple might be asked about their level of knowledge of the
partner's culture, and the desire to learn about, and participate in his or her culture.
Counsellors can also use the Potential Inventory (Ho, 1990) to allow the couple to
discover areas they had not thought about, and to acknowledge potential problems. This
process of anticipating challenges may allow the couple to be better prepared as they
pursue intermarriage.

Furthermore, in counselling the intermarried couples, it may be crucial to evaluate
the client's personal strengths as well as his or her compatibility as a couple. Since
intermarriages have additional benefits as well as additional sources of potential conflict,
it is safe to assume, and as was born out in this study, that individuals involved in
intermarriage will need exceptional ego and emotional strength and a high degree of
compatibility in order to make their marriage a success. The strength can be defined as
one's ability to make sound decisions and to handle stress. Compatibility refers to a
common understanding or being able to see eye to eye on a myriad of issues which will
be described further.

One of the most important category that facilitated an individual's adjustment in
their marriage was the individual's interest in, appreciation of, respect for and willingness
to partake in their spouse's culture. It is important that couples in therapy realize the
importance of having knowledge about their partner's culture, along with the genuine
interest and appreciation for it. Failure to acknowledge the partner's culture and a part of
their identity may lead to resentment, and cause the couple to grow apart.
Another area where couple's compatibility might be an issue is in their attitude towards each other's cultural differences. Along with having an interest in the culture, the couples also should have the belief or philosophy that their differences are assets and represent opportunities for learning and are something that enhance their marriage, as opposed to something that hinder their intimacy.

Having common fundamental values and beliefs is also crucial to the success in their marriage. It is not culture per se that creates extra challenges for couples who are in an intermarriage, but the differences in values and beliefs that different cultures might entail. The spouses may have different values and beliefs around the importance of extended family, child rearing, finances or intimacy. As a result, the counsellor should ensure that the couples have the opportunity to assess their values, beliefs and their general world views. This process should be interactive where the therapist involves the clients in understanding his or her world views, rather than the therapist making judgements about client's values and beliefs. This process of understanding and clarifying one's world view can also be used to educate the other partner about his or her values.

Another category that must be emphasized is the "acculturation to the partner's (Caucasian-mainstream) culture balanced by the desire to maintain aspects of their own (Indian) culture. For Indo-Canadians, being second or third generation Canadians allowed them to not only have knowledge about their partner's culture but also to respect and appreciate their cultural differences. In other words, the Indo-Canadian partners were well acculturated, and had reached the bicultural identity stage (Adler, 1975). Being highly acculturated allowed both partners to have common values and beliefs, and
allowed them to accept and appreciate their differences. Consequently, it is important to point out that acculturation and having common values and beliefs along with being able to accept each other’s cultural differences are important ingredients in achieving successful adjustment in intermarriage. Intermarried couples who come from vastly different cultures and who are at different levels of acculturation (i.e., one partner is a new immigrant) may have harder time adjusting in their intermarriage).

The clients can also be taught about one of the major dimension on which they might have cultural variation, namely the individualism-collectivism dimension. They need to be aware that if one of the partners comes from an individualistic culture (generally regions of Northern and Western Europe), they might place personal goals above the group’s or family goals. If the partner comes from a collectivistic culture (generally regions of Asia, Africa, and South America), on the other hand, individual’s goals might be subordinated to the goals of the collective. Hence individuals who come from collectivistic cultures may also experience greater parental involvement in their choice of a mate, and as a result may be disowned if they decide to pursue an interracial marriage against their parent’s will. However, as this study shows, gaining parental support and approval may remain important and an integral part of their lives as collectivistic cultures emphasize values that maintain contact and continuity between married the couples and the extended family. Hence, having a spouse that understands these cultural dynamics and supports his or partner in his or her pursuit of parental support and acceptance is extremely important. In essence, to some degree, the spouses need to share the value of family.
The therapist may also intervene by interviewing the family. This can be a separate interview with the extended family or an interview conjointly with the intermarried couple, depending on the situation and the cooperation of the extended family. The therapist needs to be aware that many parents may disapprove of intermarriage because of the prevalent and persistent fear that people who are visibly different or speak a different language may think and behave differently. Such perceived differences can cause uncertainty and anxiety. They may also not know how to interact with others who are different. Parent's may also see their children’s intermarriage as an act of disobedience or defiance against ethnic and racial teachings. Parents may suffer disappointment and extreme humiliation when this disobedience is displayed in public.

When parents are struggling with their own wounds, they are unable to listen to and be empathic toward their children’s needs. Thus it is important that the therapist be empathic to the parent’s hurt. Listening to the parents and giving them an opportunity to vent their anger may be a necessary step in the therapy process. Afterwards, parents may then be able to discuss the situation more objectively. Later, the therapist can also challenge the parents of the intermarried couple to fulfill their obligation and maintain the family unit, since family is greatly valued. The therapist can stress that each family member, including the parents, have an obligation to make the family a harmonious unit.

However, the partner from a collectivistic culture also needs to be understanding and supportive of his or her partner’s individualistic culture. This partner may value having some independence from the extended family. This separation and independence from extended family may be vital for the couple to grow, become intimate and to establish a foundation for their relationship. Thus having clear boundaries
between their marital relationship and the extended family may be necessary for the success of their relationship. In summary, in order to develop a workable partnership, an intermarried couple needs to understand and respect each other’s cultural backgrounds, values, and behavioural styles.

Other area in which the couples need to assess their compatibility is their future goals. The couples need to ask themselves if their visions and goals for the future are common or similar or if they are vastly different. Along with having common values and beliefs, the couples also need to think about what interests and activities they have in common. Being able to enjoy each other’s company and having fun together through shared activities may be key to building and sustaining intimacy and fun in the relationship. Furthermore, the couple also needs to be aware of the similarities and differences in their personality. They should be able to articulate what aspects of each other they were and are attracted to. Equally important is each individual’s level of flexibility. Are the couple able to compromise, accommodate and adjust to each other’s differences, or are they quite closed to a different way of thinking and being than their own. Couples have to realize that some differences, that may be cultural, may never get “resolved”, but may require both spouses to be accepting, accommodating and compromising. As a result, the most important disposition that may be necessary in both spouses is their open-mindedness, flexibility, and the commitment to resolving differences and to be able to solve problems as a team.

The present study also yielded important information, most importantly the 22 categories, that can be easily incorporated into groups for individuals in interracial relationships. The groups can have underlying objectives of training, prevention,
remedial, enhancement and support. Although these objectives are not mutually exclusive, the training group would be concerned with providing couples with the necessary information and skills that are required to develop a successful relationship. In the prevention groups, the presentation of the 22 categories may provide information and concepts, and generally increase awareness of potential, personally, culturally, family, and environment-related issues and areas that may prove to be helpful or hindering in their relationship. This type of group would also provide an opportunity for these couples to assess the present and future of the relationship, and to plan accordingly. A remedial group can offer an opportunity for cross-cultural couples to explore and improve their relationship. The 22 categories can also offer resources, knowledge, and provide new insights into relationships that might be stuck or experiencing difficulty.

The 22 categories can also be used in a group to enrich couples' relationship by allowing the couples to gain deeper insight and understanding of each other's personal/racial and cultural contexts. Finally, in a supportive type of group, the 22 categories can be used to help couples develop a positive outlook on their relationship, help couples create mutual communication of feelings of enthusiasm, and success between couples, to allow couples to vent their feelings, and to gain mutual support and encouragement.

The findings of this study can also have an impact on a larger community and societal scale. The results of this study can be used to combat and erode the negative stereotypes and the pessimistic outlook that is associated with intermarriages. Shedding a positive light on interracial relationships may help alleviate the ignorance around cross-cultural relationship, including non-romantic relationships, which in turn, may allow
people to be more open-minded and optimistic about all cross-cultural relationships. Multicultural organizations and agencies can also use this study to educate and inform people about the potential and nature of cross-cultural relationships. This study can also be used as ammunition against racist propaganda. Finally, this study can be used as background research on much needed documentary programs about interracial relationships.

**Implications for Further Research**

Since this study represents only the beginning to illuminating a positive perspective on intermarriage, a developmental as opposed to clinical model of intermarriage remains an appropriate goal. As this research was largely exploratory, conducting further research on these 22 categories to see if they need further refining or modifying might be beneficial. Then the categories can be used appropriately and effectively in counselling and other programs. The research could be replicated on a larger sample of individuals and couples in different types of intermarriages.

This process could be carried out by compiling the 22 categories into a questionnaire format, which could then be easily distributed to the various samples of intermarried couples. The result would be that the research literature would be informed about a much larger number of intermarried individuals or couples who are determining if these categories are helpful to their adjustment in their intermarriage. This research might also be able to examine how other factors such as age, gender, number of years married, geographic location, education, and level of acculturation impacts a couple’s adjustment in intermarriage. Research could also be done on intermarried couples who
have been divorced to see if these facilitating factors were present in their marriage or if there was a lack of other factors, which did not emerge in this study, that led to marriage breakdown. These findings could then be added to the current categories. Furthermore, research could be conducted to find out how therapists might use these categories with their intermarried clients and to see how useful they would be in their work with these clients.

Research could also be carried out on implementing and testing these categories in group programs. It would be important to determine if the usefulness of these categories vary depending on if the underlying objective of the group is preventative, remedial, enhancement, or supportive.

Since many of the categories can be seen to apply to couples who are not intermarried, this study can also provide a point of departure for comparison research in nonclinical samples of intermarried and intramarried subjects. This has the potential of solidifying and expanding the categories that contribute to the success of intermarriage, which could lead to more efficacious treatment approaches.

Moreover, since parent’s reaction and support emerged as important factors in facilitating an individual’s marriage, further research also needs to be conducted with the parents and the extended family of the intermarried couple. To gain an understanding of the parents’ and the extended family’s experience would allow us to obtain a clearer picture of the overall experience of conflict that occurs when their children pursue intermarriage. Research in this area could have important implications for counselling families who are involved in this experience.
Finally, although researchers have already begun to study the identity development of interracial children (Wehrly, 1996), future research can further begin to examine how their parent’s interpersonal dynamics and their level of adjustment in intermarriage impacts the children’s development of cultural, personal and familial identity.

Summary

The present study explored what facilitates an individual’s adjustment in an Indo-Canadian and Caucasian-Canadian marriage. The purpose of this research was to develop a reasonably comprehensive scheme of categories of what helps and what hinders an individual’s adjustment in his or her intermarriage.

The research method comprised of interviewing individuals who were of Indo-Canadian or Caucasian-Canadian background and were in an intermarriage with an individual of the other background. These individuals were able to describe what facilitated their adjustment in his or her intermarriage. The 248 incidents were elicited through a Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954) from 11 participants. As a result of analyzing reported incidents, 22 categories emerged.

The findings of this indicate that adjustment in an intermarriage can be facilitated in the following ways: interest in, appreciation of, acceptance of, respect for, and the willingness to partake in partner’s culture; support and acceptance from key people in the immediate and extended family for self and spouse; view of cultural differences as enhancing the relationship; commitment to resolving differences and conflicts; having fun together through common interests and a sense of humor; flexibility and openness
towards raising their children; common values and beliefs; shared future goals, love, commitment to and trust in the relationship; honouring personal convictions in the face of challenges; personal philosophies, attitudes; values and beliefs; willingness to compromise on, ability to accommodate, adjust, and to accept their differences; personal characteristics of spouse; acculturation to the partner’s (Caucasian-mainstream) culture, balanced by the desire and the ability to maintain some aspects of their own (Indian) culture; ongoing recognition and awareness of initial hardships in getting together as a couple; recognizing, acknowledging, and appreciating parent’s willingness to learn and shift some of their values and beliefs; supporting each other; being able to anticipate challenges and struggles before pursuing an interracial marriage forced the individuals to examine commitment; resolution of emotional issues about the intermarriage reached by both families prior to or through the wedding; sibling marrying out.

The findings of this contribute to the field of counselling psychology by providing a reasonably comprehensive scheme of categories that describe what facilitate an individual’s adjustment in an intermarriage. This study is unique in the sense that it departs from the literature that describes intermarriage as hazardous and pathological. It provides a positive perspective of intermarriages. It is also unique in the sense that no studies have been conducted on intermarried couples who come from an Indo-Canadian and Caucasian-Canadian background. This study suggests an optimistic potential for intermarried couples which has implications for both research and practice.
References


Marriage and the Family, 41, 813-823.


Appendix A

Interview Questions

A. Demographic data and General Information

1. Where were you born?
2. If not born in Canada, when did you immigrate to Canada?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. What is your present occupation?
5. How long have you been married?
6. How many children do you have?
7. What is your ethnicity?
8. What is your religious affiliation, if any?

B. Open Ended Questions

1a. What is it like for you as an Indo-Canadian man or woman to be married to a Canadian man or woman? What is it like for you as a Canadian man or woman to be married to an Indo-Canadian man or woman?

b. Are there any differences in values and beliefs between you and your spouse. How about in the following areas: food and drink, sexual compatibility, intimacy, male-female roles, finances, in-laws, social class, raising children, communication.

2. In thinking back to the time that you got married to the present, what situations and conditions, that seem to be culturally related or otherwise, have facilitated your adjustment in your marriage?

Please describe some situations in which you and your spouse, and possibly your families “resolved” some important differences that seem to be related to differing values or expectations.

a. What led up to the differences?

b. How were the differences “resolved” or settled? What were some of the key things that allowed you to deal those differences?

In what way, if any, did “resolving” these differences facilitate your adjustment in your intermarriage?

3. Please describe some situations or differences that continue to be problematic in your marriage, and possibly between your families that seem to be related to differing values and expectations.

a. What has led up to these differences?
b. In reflecting back on the differences that continue to present ongoing difficulties, what seems to be some of the key things that seem to be hindering your ability to "resolve" the issue?

c. In what way, if any, has these ongoing differences hindered your adjustment in your intermarriage?
Appendix B

Letter to Research Participant

Informed Consent

Poster
Letter of Consent

Department of Counselling Psychology
University of British Columbia

Project Title: Examining the Experience of Individuals in Intermarriages

Researchers
Marv Westwood, Phd. (phone: 822-6457)
Surinder Antal, M. A. candidate (phone: 437-1353)

The purpose of this research is to develop a scheme of what facilitates and hinders an individual’s adjustment in intermarriage. The knowledge gained by examining the process through which individuals adjust to a marriage that may be compounded by various cultural differences, might prove to be beneficial to both the cross-cultural and same culture couples and family counsellors.

Participants will be asked to first complete an objective instrument (The Dyadic Adjustment Scale). This instrument will aid in assessing participant’s suitability for the study. The participant must attain a score that represents being satisfied in their marriage.

Following the completion of the objective instrument, the participants will take part in two interviews of approximately 1 hour and thirty minutes in total. The interviews will be conducted at a location that is convenient and private for the participant. The interview will be audiotaped. The participants will be asked to respond to three main open-ended questions:

1. Can you think back to the time when you first got together. What attracted the two of you? How was the process of telling your parents about your partner. What was the wedding like?

2. In thinking back to the time that you got married to the present, what situations and conditions, that seem to be culturally related or otherwise, have facilitated your adjustment in your marriage.

Please describe some situations in which you and your spouse, and possibly your families “resolved” some important differences that seem to be related to differing values or expectations or otherwise.

   a. What led up to the differences?
   b. How were the differences “resolved” or settled? In reflecting back on the differences that were satisfactorily resolved, what were some of the key things that allowed you to deal with those differences?
   c. In what way, if any, did “resolving” these differences or situations facilitate your adjustment in your intermarriage?
3) Please describe some situations or differences that continue to be problematic in your marriage and possibly between your families that seem to be related to differing values and expectation or otherwise.
   a. What has led up to these differences?
   b. In reflecting back on the differences that continue to present ongoing difficulties, what seems to be some of the key things that seem to be hindering your ability to resolve the issue?
   c. In what way, if any, have these ongoing differences hindered your adjustment in your intermarriage?

The content of the interviews will remain confidential and the participant’s anonymity will be ensured in any presentation of the research results. Only members of the research team will have access to the audio-tapes. The tapes will be erased upon completion of the project.

To ensure that the participant has full understanding of what is expected of him or her, the researcher will answer any questions the participant will have during the course of the study regarding the procedure used in the study. Research results will be made available to participants when requested. A participant has the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

Having fully understood the information given above, I hereby consent to participate in this project. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form.

__________________________________________  __________________________
Signature                                      Date

Name: ______________________________________  Phone: ______________

Address: ____________________________________

Questions or problems regarding this study should be addressed to Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of the UBC Office of Research Services and Administration at 822-8598.
Are You in a Cross-Cultural Marriage?

Would you like to share your experience?

My name is Surinder Antal, and I an MA student in the Department of Counselling Psychology. I am conducting research on how couples in intermarriages negotiate unique challenges that may be rooted in the individual’s cultural backgrounds, and adjust in their intermarriages. More specifically, I would like to develop a scheme of what hinders and facilitates couple’s adjustment in their intermarriage.

If you fulfill the following criteria, I would be most interested in hearing from you.

1. One member of the couple identifies self as an Indo-Canadian (preferably is a second-generation Indo-Canadian, or should have arrived in Canada as a young child), while the other identifies self as “white” or Caucasian-Canadian.

2. This is your first marriage.

3. You have been married for five or more years.

4. You have at least one child.

5. You feel fairly satisfied in your marriage.

6. You have expressed some awareness that intermarriage may have some unique challenges and can articulate how you have been able to negotiate these challenges, and can express what has facilitated or hindered your adjustment in your intermarriage.

If you are interested in this study, please call Surinder Antal at 437-1353.