Experiences of Inter-"racial" Married Couples in a Multicultural Society

by

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Abstract

This thesis offers a window into the lives of married inter-racial couples in the Lower Mainland area. I argue that the processes of racialization, that is, the process of the social construction of race, is reflected in the experiences of inter-racial couples. In addition, I argue that inter-racial relationships represent a test of the acceptance attitudes of a multicultural society. In a multicultural society that promotes itself as accepting other cultures into a Canadian “mosaic”, an inter-racial marriage represents a model of inclusion. Two distinct cultures have joined and exist as one, thus reflecting the ideology of cultural pluralism. Compared with many other nation-states, Canada is widely distinguished for its “acceptance” of cultural differences and social equality as part of our collective vision (Fleras, 1989). Does this acceptance picture reflect reality for those individuals involved in an inter-racial marriage? I highlight two central issues in this thesis. The first issue explores the theoretical aspect of race as a social construction and the practices of this racialization process through the lives of inter-racial couples. The second issue examines the degree of acceptance, tolerance or intolerance toward inter-racial couples in a “multicultural” society.

Using Vancouver as a geographical setting, I examine these two issues by interviewing Chinese-Canadian/European-Canadian married couples. I investigate, through their eyes, the process of racialization through analysis of their experiences, and how these experiences demonstrate commitment (or lack of commitment) to multiculturalism as an ideology and social reality. I present data from interviews with couples to understand 1) What are the experiences of an inter-racial couple living in a multicultural society? 2) How is race socially constructed in Vancouver in 1995? 3) Are the experiences of married Chinese-Canadian/European-Canadian couples reflective of a culturally pluralistic society? I draw from relevant literature on “race” and Multiculturalism in Canada, and from previous sociological studies on inter-racial relationships.

I suggest that the experiences of inter-racial (Chinese/European) married couples will show the powerful impact of the processes of racialization and reflect the resistance and biases that result from a society which promotes acceptance and yet practices, at best, a form of tolerance. This suggests that surface appearances of cultural inclusion hide realities of non-acceptance and exclusionary practices. Although the subjects interviewed in this thesis do not represent all inter-racial couples, the thesis offers a Canadian perspective which complements existing literature in this area.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

It is my opinion that the inauguration of multiculturalism as official state policy in 1971 represents one of the most elevating and enlightened moments in Canadian history. Canadians should be proud that, while today much of the rest of the globe is caught up in ethnic and racial conflicts, we have nurtured and allowed to evolve over two decades a formal social policy that actively promotes intercultural harmony and ethnic/racial equality. The result is that, in the international community, Canada is looked to as a model nation of tolerance and respect for minority groups.

K. Mazurek, 1992: 17

Non-Canadians are often intrigued by two aspects of Canadian society. Many initially are amazed by our ability to cope with the challenges of living next door to one of the most powerful nations in the world. How, they ask, can Canada maintain its sovereignty, distinctiveness, and identity when confronted by a steady barrage of political, economic, and cultural Americana? Many are also surprised by our capacity to forge national unity out of a potpourri of racial and cultural differences. How can a vast country such as Canada reconcile its cultural, social, and regional diversity into a workable whole without jeopardizing social equality and individual rights? The answers to these questions appear to lie in a uniquely Canadian way of coping with the challenges of diversity and accommodation.

The introduction of multiculturalism as official doctrine is widely credited with the harmonious management of Canada’s race and ethnic relations (Gould, 1992; Debicki, 1992). There is much to commend in this assertion. Compared with many other nations, Canada is perceived to be a country committed to the acceptance of cultural differences and social equality as part of our collective vision. The entrenchment of multiculturalism as a national symbol has given Canadians a yardstick
to assess and justify the treatment of diversity, through a variety of programmes and practices for positive inter-group cultural relations.

A special issue of The Economist (June 19, 1991) provides one view of how Canadians are perceived by the outside world. Editorial comments lavishly praised Canada as a "rich," "peaceful," and "enviably successful" country. Canada is portrayed as a "humane," "civilized," and "accepting" society with a generous welfare state, a welcome-mat policy for immigrants and refugees, a dislike for inequality, and a benign, somewhat "Scandinavian" outlook on the world. Racial problems exist, to be sure, but on a much smaller scale than one might expect in a country historically dependent on immigration. In short, Canada acts as a model for all immigration-based societies whose borders were created by conquest and imposition. Similar assertions have been made by others (Berry, Kalin, and Taylor, 1977; Optima Consultants, 1988) in regard to the perception of Canada as accepting of ethnic groups, also noting that incidences of extreme prejudice are rare.

This "accepting" nature of Canada is also internalized by many Canadians. Mary¹, a student interviewed by journalist Margaret Cannon in her book The Invisible Empire: Racism in Canada (1995), stated:

When I went travelling in Asia, I made a point of wearing a Canadian flag on my bag. I had heard from other people who went travelling to Europe that people treated Canadians better than say Americans when they had the maple leaf. I found the same thing. Places I went, some of the locals would come up to us and say, "Canadian!" in a really nice voice. I think it definitely made it easier travelling because of the fact that we were Canadians. People had certain images of what they thought Canada was like, such as being really cold, that we live out in the boonies, but overall, people generally perceived Canadians to be really friendly and nice - that it was a peaceful, and accepting place (238).

¹ Names of subjects interviewed are referred to by pseudonyms in the thesis.
It appears that Canadians see themselves in much the same way as non-
Canadians; they have internalized the image (and perhaps the reality) of this country and
its people as accepting. Canadians are proud of their record in accepting refugees from
poor and war-torn countries, in their country’s active participation in the peace-keeping
duties of the United Nations, and in regard to the general absence of large-scale racial
conflict witnessed in other nations.

It must be argued, however, that this picture is not all positive when we examine
the issues from a more critical perspective. A great deal of evidence, particularly in mass
media accounts and in academic research, suggests that racial intolerance and ethnic
conflicts are definitely not absent from Canadian life. Almost everyday, the Canadian
public is bombarded with headlines on familiar topics: “Influx of Asian Immigrants drain
on B.C.- [according to] Reformer” (Times Colonist, Sept. 28, 1994; “Gamble on Asians a
fair bet” (Times Colonist, Sept. 29, 1994); “The Racial Divide” (The Vancouver Sun,
1, 1994). Examination of these captions suggests that ethnic conflict, discrimination and
racism remain salient aspects of social relations. At the same time that Canada is
assessed by others as an accepting nation, Canadians are being told by their politicians
and media that if something is not done, and done soon, it is likely that a “race-relations”
problem will emerge (Svenson, 1978). City councils across the country are forming
“race-relations” committees to try to prevent a “problem” from emerging. In addition,
sociologists of “race-relations” tell us that Canada already has “race” problems, and that
we will probably soon have our own versions of problems such as those experienced in
Britain and the United States (Reitz, 1988: 141).
The view that Canada has, or is going to have, a “racial” problem is, in part, based on Canada’s historical development. Canada has a long history of racial tension and the current state of affairs, while arguably not as dramatic as some periods in the past, lends credence to the idea that racial and ethnic minorities have a different perspective on Canada’s “accepting” nature. The oppression of racial groups is historically rooted in the social, political and economic development of Canadian society. For example, in the case of Chinese people, the first nine decades were characterised by legal discrimination and institutional exclusion. Prior to 1947, the Chinese in Canada were legally denied many of the entitlements taken-for-granted by European Canadians, including the right to vote, the right to travel freely in and out of the country, and the right of entry into certain professions and occupations. For almost a century, the Chinese worked and lived as second-class citizens in Canada. To fully understand the reasoning for these practices and to set the theoretical background for this thesis, the historical development of “race” and the racialization process must first be addressed.

**Historical Development of “Race”**

*“Race” as a Biological Construct*

“Race” is a category that has been misunderstood in many ways. That is, “race” continues to be widely debated and used in many different contexts. Although “race” has been used in the public sphere as a biological construct or one with scientific value, there is evidence to suggest that this conception has dubious scientific validity (Miles, 1989; Goldberg, 1990; Outlaw, 1990).
Belief in this “natural” existence of “race” was shared with the nineteenth-century British, American, and western European biologists who assumed that “the world’s races were for all intents and purposes immutable and that each had unique biological and cultural characteristics” (Anderson, 1991: 11). According to Banton and Harwood, the career of the concept of “race”...

begins in obscurity, for experts dispute whether the word derives from an Arabic, or Latin, or a German source. The first recorded use in English of the word “race” was in a poem by William Dunbar in 1508...During the next three centuries the word was used with growing frequency in a literary sense as denoting simply a class of persons or even things...In the nineteenth, and increasingly in the twentieth century, this loose usage began to give way and the word came to signify groups that were distinguished biologically (Banton and Harwood, 1975: 13).

This nineteenth-century development was preceded by earlier practises, which generated a more compelling need for racial classification in the social world. Colonialism generated conflicts between Europeans and other groups defined as so-called “savages” or “barbarians” - whether defined culturally, or more narrowly, religiously² (ibid). The momentous European voyages to America and Africa, the religious crusades, and the development of the slave trade created situations whereby the colonialists were faced with the problem of how to account for peoples completely foreign to their own experiences (ibid: 14). The reality of domination by force required new conceptual tools with which understanding could be easily facilitated. A more basic impetus, intensified by these tensions, came from the need to account for human origins in general, and for human diversity in particular.

² It should be noted that within European thought, and elsewhere, the colour black was associated with evil and death, with “sin” in the Christian context. The valorizing power inherent in this was readily associated
The function of “race” as an ongoing classification device gained new authority in the eighteenth century when “evidence from geology, zoology, anatomy and other fields of scientific inquiry was assembled to support a claim that racial classification would help explain many human differences” (ibid: 13). The concept provided a form of typological thinking; a mode of conceptualization that was at the centre of emerging scientific praxis at that time and which served well in the classification of human groups.

S. G. Morton’s publication of a volume on the skulls of American Indians (1839) and one on Egyptian skulls (1845) further contributed to the developing science of “race”. Taking a so-called “scientific” approach, Morton argued that these specimens were smaller and thus inferior to those of the European species. His work was extended and made popular by J. C. Nott and G. R. Gliddon in their Types of Mankind (1854). Nott concluded that because of the skull shapes and sizes, each “race” represented a separately created species and that all “dark-skinned races” were inferior to Europeans (Miller, 1969: 156). The debate was intensively carried on by other scholars of the day. Charles Hamilton Smith states, according to Banton and Harwood, “The Negro’s lowly place in the human order was a consequence of the small volume of his brain” (ibid: 28).

Two significant points need to be highlighted from this work. First, drawing on the rising authority of “science” the legitimation of “race” as an explanatory concept for morphological features was used to distinguish varieties of Homo Sapiens supposedly related to one another through the logic of a natural hierarchy of groups. Second, the view that the behaviour of a racial group was determined by their place in this hierarchy with Europe’s encounter with Africa. The Europeans power of defining or conceptualizing the Other as inferior resulted in negative perceptions of Natives as “savages”, “barbaric”, or uncivilized.
was employed to legitimate oppression of these groups. "Homo Sapiens' was presented as a species divided into a number of races of different capacity and temperament. Human affairs could be understood only if individuals were seen as representations of races, for it was there that the driving forces of human history resided" (ibid: 30). Thus, science authorized and legitimated notions about "race". When combined with social projects involving the demarcation and ultimately, the control of "racially different" persons, this scientific rationalization took root and grew to become part of a common cultural belief. "Race" now became "obvious," or "naturalized". As Omi and Winant point out, arguments for the biological inferiority of minority groups represented the dominant discourse (or in their terms, paradigm) for thinking about "race" (1994). Within this discourse, "race" was constructed as a biological category, and the assertion of white biological superiority was used to justify economic and political inequities ranging from settler colonialism to slavery.

The influential work by Charles Darwin had a dramatic impact on the conception of "race". Darwin’s principles regarding heredity and natural selection were applied to human groups to provide firmer grounding for the science of "race" (Goldberg, 1992). Such trends were particularly useful for justifying the dominance of certain groups over others, such as British over Chinese, and further reinforced the view that history was a progression from barbarism to a specific notion of civilization. Darwin’s impact was such that he is still heralded today as the father of evolution theory. This theory was often used as the basis for claims that races were stratified based on natural, scientific principles.
The evolutionary theorist Herbert Spencer adopted the view that although primitive peoples were intrinsically capable of evolving into civilizations, in practice they would require an infinite time to do so - perhaps as long as the geological time scale itself. For all contemporary practical purposes, the races were immutable. In British Columbia Commissioner Dr. Joseph Chapleau certainly concurred, stating after the 1885 Royal Commission on the “Chinese question” in British Columbia that “Races change slowly,” he said, “but the stationariness [sic] of the Chinese ‘race’ seems phenomenal” (Anderson, 1991:43).

The two main ideas of the nineteenth century, that every human being belonged to a “race” whose physical expression was an index of innate biological and cultural organization and that the types were ranked by nature in a struggle for survival, were axioms of late nineteenth-century science and cultural studies. The result “was to give a mental abstraction an independent reality, to make real or reify the idea of racial type when in fact the type was a social construct” (Stepan, 1982: 18). In contrast, however:

The short-range differences that exist, and by which society and academics have identified a difference of “race,” have been formed and maintained not by biological factors but by geographic and other factors obstructing “intermarriage,” such as cultural and legal barriers. There are no natural or intrinsic isolating mechanisms between people, and, given humanity’s record of continent-hopping, it is doubtful that there ever were “pure” human “races” (Anderson, 1991: 13).

The reification of racial “Otherness”, or a dehumanization of the Other into set racial categories, was, and is legitimated and justified by experts or by science. As long

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3 A recent example of the reification of racial “Otherness” supported and legitimated by science is the book The Bell Curve by Herrnstein and Murray, 1994.
as this categorization persists, people who are considered “different” based on the colour of their skin, their accent, or some biological aspect will continue to be held at a distance.

Rose, Lewontin and Kamin conclude: “Any use of “racial” categories must take its justification from some other source than biology” (Rose, et al., 1984: 127).

“Race” as a Social Construct
Where does the concept of “race” lead us? Despite historical assertions to the contrary, I think we may safely argue that “race” is not determined by biology, although it is a biological fact that the human population differs in the distribution of genes. There is a complete interplay with environmental, cultural, and social factors providing certain boundary conditions and possibilities that affect the process of “racialization” and the development of “geographical races”. In addition, the definition of “race” is political. Racial categories are fundamentally social in nature. The biological aspects of “race” are conscripted into cultural, political, and social projects such that “race” is socially constructed.

John Rex, a proponent of this view, has suggested that rather than looking at the biological basis of “race”, it is more meaningful to inquire “how it is [sic] men come to be classified as racially different” (1983: 5). Bolaria and Li (1985) also consider “race” as a social construct, however they suggest that it is produced and maintained by differential power between dominant and subordinate groups. Such contact must therefore be viewed within a framework which examines historical and political processes (ibid).

Other scholars use the term “social races” rather than “races” to emphasize that they are not genotypes (van den Berghe, 1984: 216-228). In fact, some suggest that the
term "race" be abandoned altogether, since the concept itself seems to carry biological connotations (Miles, 1989). For this reason, due to the subtleties and difficulties associated with the term, some sociologists, such as Miles, advocate using the term "racialization" to draw attention to the social process whereby groups are singled out for unequal treatment on the basis of real or imagined phenotypical characteristics. Miles highlights the use of "racialization" as follows:

I...employ the concept of racialization to refer to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities. The characteristics signified vary historically and, although they have usually been visible somatic features, other non-visible (alleged and real) biological features have also been signified. The concept therefore refers to a process of categorization, a representational process of defining an Other (usually, but not exclusively) somatically...Racialization is a dialectical process of signification (Miles, 1989: 75).

Thus, Miles uses the term "racialization" to refer to more critical academic study of the process by which attributes such as skin colour, language, birthplace and cultural practices are given social significance as markers of distinction. Miles concludes that racialization should be used to refer to a "representational process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological (usually phenotypical) human features, on the basis of which those people possessing those characteristics are designated as racial collectivity" (1989: 74). The idea of "race" is intertwined with people's assumptions about essential differences articulated with political, economic (class) and gender relations. Of course, these assumptions are not static. Racialization is a dynamic process that must be understood as one which is constantly in motion. To fully understand the

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4 Miles refers to this process as Signification to identify the representational process by which the "Other" is
racialization process then, one must look at it within a relatively broad historical framework.

Miles, has, however, come under criticism from some writers (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992) for his notion of racism which is embedded in the processes of racialization. His notion of “race” as a social construct is at the heart of the racialization process, which is then converted to racism when it is imbued with negative valuation (1989: 84). “Miles therefore restricts the use of the term ‘racism’ to those ideologies (not practices, institutions, structures, or effects) which work on supposed racial hierarchies” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 11). In other words, Miles restricts his notion of racism to mere ideology.

It is necessary to note that it is the action, or practice of negative beliefs or statements that constitute experienced racist behaviour. Racism must be expressed in some form to be documented as such. Mere ideologies, while important, constitute only one element of racism. Racism is the process of imposing these negative beliefs, or “world-views as hegemonic, and as a basis for a denial of rights or equality. Racism is thus embedded in power relations of different types” (ibid: 16).

It is most useful therefore to view “race” as a socially constructed rather inherently innate category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time (Miles, 1989; Frankenberg, 1993). “Race…is ‘real’ in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals’ sense of self, experiences, and life chances” (Frankenberg, 1993: 11). In asserting that “race” and racial difference is socially defined.
constructed, their social and political reality is not minimized, but instead, it is argued that their reality is social and political rather than inherent, or static (ibid.).

Historical research underscores the instability of racial categorization. Omi and Winant point out, for example, that:

[in the U.S. census] Japanese Americans have moved from categories such as “non-white,” “Oriental” or simply “Other,” to recent inclusion as a specific ethnic group under the broader category of “Asian and Pacific Islanders.” The variation both reflects and in turn shapes racial understanding and dynamics (1986: 162).

Racial categories thus are not static. If we look at the study of inter-racial couples, we can see the dynamic construct of “race” in society. I suggest that the inter-racial couple presents the social scientist with the opportunity to examine how “race” is socially constructed, as represented in society’s level of tolerance and acceptance of inter-racial couples. Since the eighteenth century, as stated above, certain racial groups have been sorted and determined by their supposedly inherent characteristics. Moreover, even if the idea of a hierarchy of “races” is no longer perceived to be legitimate, it is still widely assumed that “races” exist as distinct, biologically defined, collectivities. The idea of “race” continues to be widely employed as a universal descriptive category in order to designate collectivities to which both Self and Other belong. The concept of racialization refers to the historical emergence of the idea of “race” and to its subsequent reproduction and application. The racialization process, that is, the concept of “race” as a social construction of power relations, can be seen through inter-racial marriages.

The racialization of human beings entails the racialization of the processes in which they participate and the structures and institutions that result. Where human beings are identified as collectivities by reference to physical features, the interrelations between
those collectivities will be affected in part by means of extant political institutions and processes. This is evident where "races" are defined in law as discrete collectivities and where the law actively structures the relations between those collectivities (as in the historical case of the miscegenation law against inter-racial couples), but it also occurs where somatic signification is effected and negotiated through less formal mechanisms. Consequently, issues such as who occupies positions of leadership and the topics that are placed on the political agenda may come to be shaped by the meanings attributed to phenotypical variation. Thus, demands may be made that "Chinese" people be represented within decision-making processes. In such circumstances, the political process is racialized in the sense that it takes on a particular representational content by representing "race" as the determinant and object of political relations.

The process of racialization, that is the general process of categorizing and defining the "Other" somatically is a complex procedure. Some insight may be gained in this area, however, by examining this process through the experiences of inter-racial couples. The inter-racial couple is not suggested here as a group that experiences more or less racist or exclusionist behaviour than any other. I do argue, however, that the inter-racial couple does represent a unique test of the "accepting" ideology. If in fact "race" is socially constructed, then we should expect that the unique experiences of inter-racial couples change over time as their circumstances change. For example, we may suggest that Chinese-European couples in Vancouver deal with racist behaviours which may be less overt than in the nineteenth century when more explicit anti inter-racial attitudes were stated in political speeches. As Ng (1993) argues, racist behaviour toward minorities today may be more subtle, complex and correspondingly, more entrenched.
The actions of categorizing individuals and groups based on non-alterable characteristics such as skin colour or phenotypical characteristics effectually marginalizes and excludes. Racism is the term generally used in popular discourse to define this process of exclusion. As Goldberg (1992) points out though, racism is a dynamic concept which is experienced in many different ways. Beyond the concept of racism lies an entire range of potential ways of perceiving racial categorizations. In other words, “racism” appears to imply an either/or dichotomy suggesting that a racial categorization is either “racist” or not. This conceptualization is limited in that it does not recognize the range of possible reactions. The suggestion that a behaviour was “a little bit racist” is awkward and narrow, yet racism exists along a continuum of ideas and behaviour.

I suggest that the complexity of this issue necessitates a more dynamic method for indicating reactions and perceptions from the point of view of those most affected by racism in its many forms. Rather than a simple bi-polar categorization of “racist” versus “non-racist”, I suggest a continuum which allows subjects to evaluate their experiences along a descriptive range from “acceptance” at one end of the scale to “intolerance” at the other.

Acceptance  |  Intolerance  
Tolerance

In this way, we can take account of the intensity of perceptions, and investigate the issue in a more complex way, and at the same time, avoid categorizations which reflect a simple and confining positive/negative dichotomy.
Before this can be attempted, the concepts of acceptance, tolerance and intolerance must first be defined. Acceptance may be defined as “to regard favourably; treat as welcome; a willingness to receive” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1994: 6). In other words, an inter-racial marriage is embraced positively without resistance.

Tolerance, on the other hand, is defined as “to put up with” or “forbearance” (ibid.: 1283). Tolerant behaviour on the part of parents for example, is that which is not fully accepting of an inter-racial marriage. Allowing one’s non-Chinese daughter to date a Chinese man, but not condoning it, is still a form of resistance. Tolerance is not altogether positive, but at the same time, it is not a complete rejection of the relationship.

Intolerance, on the other hand, is simple non-compliance or refusal to accept. Intolerance is not subtle, nor does it suggest any form of deference to “the other”. It may be the case that close family members, for example, refuse to accept the inter-racial marriage on any terms.

As stated above, racism constructs (real or imagined) difference as “natural” not only in order to exclude, but also to marginalize a social collectivity within a particular constellation of relations of domination. The outcome and often the intention of racist discourse is to deny to a racialized collectivity certain (or sometimes all) rights and resources, which others within the same social formation possess. Racism is also a discourse of marginalization which is integral to a process of domination, and those who perpetuate racism always situate themselves within relations of domination. The overall effect of racism is that it can be used to deny full participation in economic, social,

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5 Historically, the word tolerance was used in more positive terms. Yet when we use the term today, there are underlying negative connotations assigned to the word.
political, and cultural life. Certainly, the racism that is experienced from the inter-racial couple’s perspective is an indication of behaviour that is, at the very least, less than accepting.

Inter-racial couples may encounter forms of resistance from many elements of society, such as within their family, friends, the community, or acquaintances. Alternatively, they may encounter little or no resistance at all; however, the indication from the literature on these couples suggests a broad range of pressures.

In some instances, the risk of familial censure is so great, that inter-racial couples avoid the consequences by keeping their relationship a secret from their families. Examples of resistance from family and community are highlighted in Mathbane and Mathbane’s, Love in Black and White (1992). Here it is highlighted that some inter-racial couples, in both subtle and/or blatant forms, will experience forms of resistance. The authors give examples of racist behaviour experienced by these couples in employment situations, while enjoying a meal in a restaurant, grocery shopping, or simply being out in any public venue. Public reactions of these kinds, particularly those elicited from strangers or acquaintances, are manifestations of non-acceptance or intolerance toward inter-racial relationships. At the family level, inter-racial couples in similar research have encountered opposition ranging from disapproval to denial of consent or refusal to associate with the couple, to complete ostracism (Johl, 1994).

These forms of resistance experienced by inter-racial couples may lead one to question the ideology of Canada’s Multicultural Policy. When enacted in 1971, the Policy had the intention of facilitating cultural acceptance, yet even with this official
policy, there are many concerns about the prospect that intolerance has merely been pushed “underground” (Fleras and Elliott, 1992).

Racial tensions in schools, the workplace and other areas are constantly in the media. We might be then led to question whether we really accept, or just tolerate certain groups, or individuals. Analyzing this question from an inter-racial couple’s perspective should provide some insight into this troubling concern. I would like to stress, however, that the present study does not measure the amount of racism in Canadian society, but rather examines this issue from the perspective of inter-racial couples. It may be that racism is experienced by these couples, but the goal is not to measure racism per se.

Two key themes are addressed in this thesis. The first issue explores the theoretical issue of “race” as a social construction and the practices of the racialization process through the lives of inter-racial couples. The second theme examines the degree of acceptance, tolerance or intolerance toward inter-racial couples in a “multicultural” society. Specifically, my concerns can be articulated as follows: 1) What are the experiences of inter-racial couples living in a multicultural society? 2) How is “race” socially constructed in Vancouver today? 3) Are the experiences of married Chinese/European couples reflective of acceptance, tolerance, or rejection in a multicultural society? 4) Are their experiences reflective of the ideology of a culturally plural society?

The current study is organized to address these questions as follows. In the next chapter, I examine the way “race” was applied in the historical background of Chinese immigration to Canada. “Race” as a biological construct shaped Chinese communities in Canada, specifically Vancouver, from the nineteenth century to the current period.
the influx of Asian immigration to Vancouver, the overall ethnic make-up of this city has changed substantially within the last ten years. These changes have resulted in diverse racial and ethnic group members living and working together where the opportunity to interact and learn about cultures as well as the opportunity to date and intermarry is high (Richard, 1991). In chapter 3, the focus shifts to a discussion of multiculturalism and what it represents to Canada. The ideology of cultural pluralism ("the Canadian mosaic") underlying the federal policy is discussed in terms of its reputation and its promotion of acceptance. In the fourth chapter, a literature review on inter-racial couples is presented as well as the methodology used in this particular study. The limited Canadian and qualitative research is considered in light of the research agenda of the present study. A thorough description of the methodology with respect to how the research questions are addressed and how data were obtained are also addressed in this section of the thesis. The research data is analyzed in chapter five. Detailed quotes taken from interviews will be discussed and analyzed in reference to: 1) the theoretical issue of "race" as a social construction and the practices of this racialization process through the lives of inter-racial couples; 2) a focused analysis will examine whether the subjects' experiences demonstrate a societal commitment (or lack of commitment) to multiculturalism as ideology and the social reality of cultural pluralism. The section will be discussed within the framework of acceptance, tolerance and intolerance. In chapter six, the concluding chapter, the thesis is summarized and further sociological research in this area is suggested.

We now turn to the issue of how "race" was used during Chinese immigration to Canada, specifically British Columbia. During the nineteenth century, few inter-racial
marriages would likely have been found between Chinese and European people due to negative perceptions of the Chinese people and acts of repression used against them. There are very few documented accounts that would suggest many such marriages during this period. The existing historical accounts do suggest that marriage to a Chinese person was a disreputable practise (Anderson, 1991). As I will discuss later, however, changes in the last few decades, such as the introduction of multiculturalism, have changed these views.
Chapter 2 - Shaping of “Race” in the Historical Background of Chinese Immigration to Canada

Which is it to be, one wonders. That “our” kids are held back because “their” kids can’t speak adequate English? Or that “their” kids have an unfair advantage and steal university places from “our” kids? The fact is, it doesn’t matter. It’s just one more set of excuses to justify resentment of “them”. Nor is there anything new about the stereotypes that come cloaked in today’s politically correct clothing. The arguments of the 1890’s are merely recycled for the 1990’s... Prejudice and the pretense that it doesn’t exist are a grand tradition in British Columbia. They reach back to the razing of Chinese settlements just over a century ago. The legacy of this mostly unacknowledged intolerance fertilizes the garden where today’s racial prejudice takes root.

S. Hume, The Vancouver Sun, September 13, 1995: A19

It was in the mid-nineteenth century that Chinese communities were first established in western Canada. In the contemporary period, Chinese, especially those originating from Hong Kong, have been one of the largest components of the flow of international migrants to Canada (Department of Citizenship and Immigration, April 1995). Since the first Chinese communities were established on Canada’s Pacific frontier over 130 years ago, Canada has changed significantly. For much of the first one hundred years of Canadian history, Chinese people have suffered humiliation and rejection. The past three decades, though, have brought about many changes. Chinese-Canadians now assume new positions within Canadian society, in which incorporation into a multicultural framework contrasts with the exclusion and rejection of the earlier period.

Inclusion of the Chinese people into Canadian society can be divided into two time periods. In the first one-hundred years, Chinese-Canadian lifestyle practises were circumscribed by the discrimination practices of the Canadian state. In the past three
decades the barriers to Chinese immigration have been effectively broken down and the cultural expression of a Chinese identity within a (multicultural) Canadian context has been encouraged. In the contemporary period there has therefore emerged a different pattern of adaptation which contrasts sharply with that of an earlier period.

The “common-sense” biological assumption of “race” shaped the immigration process of the Chinese people in British Columbia beginning in the nineteenth century. The language of biological determinism was used historically to legitimate the stratification of one group over another to marginalize certain groups. In regard to the historical shaping of British Columbia, the power of the European-born state legislators manipulated the definitions of “race”, and thus controlled the status of all settlers to the colony. Their power to shape the discourse out of which different immigrants - including those from Britain and China - were perceived, suggests that government agents played a most critical role in constructing categories such as “Chinamen” and in enforcing their meaning. This “power of definition” was utilized by the Canadian state, specifically by politicians and bureaucrats, in defining “Chinese” as “undesirable”. “It has connoted ‘them’ as opposed to ‘us,’ ‘outsiders’ rather than ‘insiders’” (Anderson, 1991: 24). Recurring governments did not simply react to popular or economic pressures, but actively sponsored and reinforced the “us/them” distinctions within European culture. “Their moral and legal authority helped to give the ‘race’ concept its remarkable material force and effect, embedding it in structures that over time reciprocally reproduced it” (ibid.: 24). The language of science was used to justify and legitimate the inferior position of Chinese-Canadians. As Said points out:
a remark about what Orientals were and were not capable of was supported by biological “truths” such as those spelled out in P. Charles Michel’s “A Biological View of Our Foreign Policy” (1896), in Thomas Henry Huxley’s “The Struggle for Existence in Human Society (1888),... John B. Crozier’s “History of Intellectual Development on the Lines of Modern Evolution (1897-1901)... The point to be emphasized is that this truth about the distinctive differences between races, civilizations, and languages was (or pretended to be) radical and ineradicable. It went to the bottom of things, it asserted that there was no escape from origins and the types these origins enables; it set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins (Said, 1978: 233).

This racial ideology was adopted and promoted by European communities in Canada, whose members from all classes accepted it (often in contradictory ways) for the definition and privilege it afforded them. The “race” paradigm gave European groups the power of definition in cultural and ideological terms, as well as more instrumental power in the hands of politicians, bureaucrats, owners of capital, labour unions, judges, police and other influential members of the dominant society. The relationship between knowledge, specifically scientific knowledge, and power supports and maintains the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of marginalized groups. The fusion of “race theory” with science is used to support wide generalizations and stereotypes:

... the culturally sanctioned habit of deploying large generalizations by which reality is divided into various collectives: languages, races, types, colors, mentalities, each category being not so much a neutral designation as an evaluative interpretation. Underlying these categories is the rigidly binomial opposition of “ours” and “theirs,” with the former always encroaching upon the latter... This opposition was reinforced not only by anthropology, linguistics, and history but also... by the Darwinism theses on survival and natural selection (Said, 1978: 227).
Within British Columbia, a colonial bureaucracy officially specified the characteristics used to differentiate outsiders from those deemed to be legitimate citizens. In the ambition to build a dominate “Anglo” identity and community, the state sought to secure popular legitimacy by defining people of Chinese origin in opposition to all who could be classified as representing a “White” Canada. Thus, “race” was used in the process of nation building.

Arguments such as the impossibility of assimilation between the “two kinds of civilization, one modern and West and the other ancient and east,” plus the perception that the groups could never mix because of the presumed amoral lifestyle of the Chinese were typical during this time. In addition, the Chinese people’s idolatrous religious practices, their objectionable living quarters, their capacity to undercut White labour with their own “docile” labour, their disregard for truth, their predisposition for crime, their inhumanity, and so on were brought forth to highlight the distinction of “us” versus “them” (Anderson, 1991: 46). Anderson argues that, “race was an influential language with which to cement the collective sense of in-groups, in part because it enabled politicians to concentrate into a ‘counter-idea’ everything that was thought to be in conflict with the building of an ideal community” (ibid.: 46).

The Early Period - Pre-World War II

At a time when modern “race” theory was beginning to earn the respect of the scientific community of North America and Britain, early immigrants from China arrived in British Columbia. It was during the 1860’s that Chinese immigration began in a small trickle; the influx of immigrants increased in the 1880’s when 15,000 indentured Chinese labourers were recruited to build the British Columbia section of the Canadian Pacific
Railway. In 1884, with the end of the railway in sight, Prime Minister John A. MacDonald set up the Royal Commission into the Chinese Question “to obtain proof that the principle of restricting Chinese immigration is proper and in the interest of the Province and the Dominion” (Anderson: 56). One of the commissioners, Dr. Justice Gray of the British Columbia Supreme Court involved in this investigation argued along these lines, using Darwinist conceptions of “fit” and “unfit” races, which were gaining rapid acceptance during this period. Dr. Gray argued that “it is something strange to hear the strong, broad-shouldered superior ‘race’, superior physically and mentally, sprung from the highest types of the old, and new world, expressing a fear of competition with a small, inferior and comparatively speaking, feminine ‘race’” (ibid.: 56). He believed that society was a harmonious hierarchical structure, with each element set in its appointed place.

Applying this “race” logic, the commissioner recommended a policy whereby limited restraint on Chinese immigration was administered and a head tax was imposed on each entrant from China. This was the first of a series of head taxes imposed on Chinese immigrants by the Canadian government. These policies effectively ensured that women and children would not be able to join husbands and fathers, thus resulting in the development of a Chinese “bachelor” community, characterized by extreme poverty and isolation (Creese, 1990: 11). The constraints on family settlement imposed by Ottawa’s head tax system and other such controls were very real. As illustrated by a Chinese representative when addressing the Royal Commissioners of 1901, the loneliness of many Chinese men in Vancouver was a serious problem: “A large proportion of them would bring their families here,” he said, “were it not for the unfriendly reception...
which creates an unsettled feeling” (Bolaria and Li, 1988:114). Due to factors such as the expense of the head tax\(^7\) and the negative attitude toward the Chinese people, Chinese men outnumbered Chinese women almost 30:1 (ibid. 1988). An effect of the shortage of Chinese women is illustrated by the fact that in 1907 just ninety-eight Chinese children were enrolled at Vancouver’s schools (Anderson: 79).

In 1923, the then Minister of Immigration brought down a bill massively restricting Chinese immigration. It was in effect an exclusion act, but consistent with Canada’s history of veiled strategies on alien entry, it was not framed as such. It eliminated the troublesome head tax system and substituted a system whereby entry was granted only to specified classes, subject to the discretion of the Minister of Immigration, who was granted the final authority for admission. Under the new law, entry could be granted to merchants, university students for the period of their degree programme, Canadian-born returning from several years of education in China, and representatives of the Chinese government. However, the law was designed to prevent these categories from meeting the operational qualifications, which were left to discretion rather than to the statute (Anderson, 1991). Overall, the passage of the Chinese Immigration Law further restricted the development of the Chinese community in Canada.

Even though racist attitudes concerning the inferiority of the Chinese were part of the shaping of a “White” British Columbia, opposition to Chinese immigration came more directly out of competition in the labour market (Creese, 1990: 11). The Chinese population consisted almost entirely of males who were unskilled and formed a pool of

\(^7\) The first head tax was $50.00 in 1885, but in 1900 it was raised to $100.00. A few years following in 1903, it was raised to $500.00.
cheap wage labour in the province. "They also had a reputation for being more docile
and willing to act as strikebreakers on behalf of employers, largely as a result of their
more vulnerable position in the labour market" (ibid.: 14). Thus, European-Canadian
labour opposition to the Chinese was not only based on the relative cheapness of Asian
labour, but also on its obedience, a factor which allowed employers in British Columbia
to use Asian workers often and effectively to break strikes involving European-Canadian
workers.

These factors obviously benefited the White employers, for the Chinese workers
were routinely paid between two-thirds and three-quarters as much as unskilled White
(male) labour performing similar work. The Chinese men were a more exploitable form
of wage labour therefore presenting a threat to "White" male labour. In addition,
Chinese workers were perceived as "a potential threat to the standard of living of the rest
of the working class" (ibid.: 12). Obviously then, the most vocal expression of anti-Asian
sentiments, calls for quotas or bans on Chinese immigration, and restrictions on Chinese
labour came from the organized White labour movement. Trade unions and central
labour organizations like the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council organized boycotts
of businesses employing Chinese or other Asian workers, organized buy (White)
Canadian campaigns, and pressed for Federal exclusion of Chinese immigration.

Two main ingredients were at play here. First, for White workers, organization
against Chinese workers was a result of competition in the labour market (economic
motivation) since Asian workers received substantially less money. Secondly, due to the
"second-class”, “non-citizen” status accorded to them by the state, the Chinese men were perceived as “racially” inferior.

Due to the necessity of cheap, exploitable labour for economic growth, it was decided in the 1885 Royal Commission report that Chinese immigration should not be stopped, however, it should be “curtailed.” It became evident however, that legislative control of Chinese immigration was inevitable, for as soon as major projects of development were completed in British Columbia, Chinese labour became dispensable.

The twin ideas of a Chinese “race” and Chinese inferiority had grown in force and political utility, so that by 1903 most members of Parliament “were prepared to overcome whatever moral, economic and diplomatic reservations remained about legally imposed discrimination” (Anderson: 62). Even the Prime Minister stated that “the difference between the two races” bred an antagonism that even the state needed to respect. “It seems impossible to reconcile them [the two races], and the conclusion of all who have considered the matter seems to be the amalgamation of the two is neither possible, nor desirable” (W. Laurier, in Anderson: 62).

Still other forms of state discrimination were directed at the Chinese people during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition to defining the Chinese as legally inferior through speeches and practices that constructed and appropriated beliefs about their differences, other discriminatory methods included being “...denied the right to vote at all levels of government. Provincial laws regulated Asian employment in various sectors of the economy: exclusion from professions like
pharmacy and law, from employment on provincially or municipally funded contracts, and from underground work in the coal mines" (Creese, 1990: 12).

These legal limitations forced Chinese and other Asian immigrants to develop small typically-ethnic businesses in the mid 1920's. Thus, the occupational distribution and the class structure of the Asian communities were shifting. A significant number of Chinese workers continued to labour for wages, yet many moved out of the working class and into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. More Chinese became involved in truck-farming and in small restaurants, laundries, and grocery stores (Creese, 1988: 66).

The spread of Asian economic competition into sectors of the petit-bourgeoisie had a corresponding effect on the spread of anti-Asian agitation. As previously stated, before the first World War, labour organizations were in the forefront of anti-Asian sentiments. With the occupational shift, racist rhetoric now came predominately from farmers and retail merchants. Patricia Roy notes, "...by the 1920's and 1930's, farmers and retail merchants were often the most prominent objectors to the presence of Asians, their lower standard of living, and willingness to work long and harder for lower returns than White men" (Roy, 1980: 168). In response to the political agitation of European-Canadian workers and merchants within British Columbia, the Chinese Immigration Act was passed in 1923, which in essence excluded all Chinese from entering the country. The same act also required all Chinese in Canada, irrespective of citizenship, to register with the government and obtain a certificate (Bolaria and Li, 1988: 107). It should also be noted here that while the Chinese people did fight and die for Canada during the
second World War, they came home to hear calls for even tighter restrictions on Chinese Immigration and general sentiments of marginalization.

**The 1970's**

“Compared to the treatment of the Chinese before the war, their situation in Canada in the post-war years was a great improvement. Many of the discriminatory laws against them were rescinded, and their rights were gradually recognized” (Bolaria and Li, 1988: 116-117). “In 1947 Chinese-Canadians finally achieved political suffrage and in the same year the Chinese Immigration Act was repealed” (Creese, 1990: 14). Yet change did not come easily and many political actions were cosmetic rather than substantive. According to Anderson:

...the new legislation, which parliament passed on 14 May, 1947 merely allowed the reunion of wives and unmarried children [under 18 years of age] of the few Chinese who were naturalized. It also eliminated the obligation of Chinese to register. Effectively the policy achieved nothing more than removing Chinese from ‘special’ discrimination and bringing them under the general rule of discrimination against Orientals in the matter of immigration...only 5% of the Chinese population of Canada were naturalized and 19.3% were Canadians by birth in 1941 (Anderson, 1991: 175).

Thus, even though Chinese immigration was more open, it was still more restricted than European immigration. Many close relatives of Chinese-Canadian men were still inadmissible.

Although the structure of special legislation for specifically Chinese Immigration ended in 1947, the category “Asiatic,” or “Asian,” into which “Chinese” became subsumed in immigration policy, guaranteed that the history of separate treatment would continue. “Asia” had always been defined in opposition to Europe, and to Canada’s
Liberal government in 1947, Asia meant "almost everything in the Eastern hemisphere outside Europe" (Hawkins, 1972: 84). During the first decade after the Chinese Immigration Act was repealed, the only Chinese immigrants who were allowed to enter Canada were certain categories of the kin of those sponsors who were Canadian citizens. Asian immigrants were specifically excepted from provisions that allowed others (from Europe) to enter as the relatives of both citizens and legal residents.

The sponsorship system thereby ensured that a major bias continued in favour of the nationalities already dominant in Canada. The Chinese Benevolent Association (CBA) presented some forthright protests against the bias in 1950 and 1951, but the Immigration Act of 1952 continued to restrict the definition of 'relatives of Asians' to Canadian citizens' wives and their children under eighteen years old. A change was eventually made in 1956 to include elderly parents.

Finally, in 1967, twenty years after repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act and restoration of voting rights to Chinese, legislative authority "to discriminate on ethnic, or to put it bluntly, on racial grounds," as one member said, was finally removed (Anderson, 1991: 186). Requirements for independent entry were standardized through a point system, an immigration appeal board was established, and the sponsoring privileges of all citizens of Canada were finally equalized. Potential immigrants were now evaluated principally on the basis of skills, education, age and occupational demand.

With these changes, the number of Chinese immigrants sky-rocketed. "By the mid 1970's, between 12,000 and 16,000 Chinese immigrants were arriving each year"
Thus, by the 1980's, the Third World origins of a large segment of Canada's immigrant population were apparent, although immigration from the traditional sources of migrants, the United Kingdom and the United States, was still large. During the 1980's, despite the uneven performance of the Canadian economy, Canada continued to attract large numbers of immigrants from non-traditional sources, especially Asia, and proportionally fewer immigrants from Europe.

The 1980's to Present

The increasing flow of immigrants to Canada from Asian sources became more pronounced in the second half of the 1980's. Immigrants from Asia constituted over one half of the total numbers of international migrants. By the beginning of the 1990's in British Columbia (especially Vancouver) almost 70 per cent of the international migrants were from Asia. Among them, arrivals from Hong Kong were the largest fraction. Migrating during a different historical period and a different set of social circumstances, these post-war immigrants were very different from those who came in the early part of the century. They gradually changed the shape and structure of the Chinese community in Canada.

Many of these newcomers were urban dwellers from Hong Kong and Taiwan, in contrast to the earlier immigrants with their mainly rural background. The new Chinese immigrants were “urban, well-educated [and] English speaking” (ibid.: 16). The new immigrants also came with a more diversified occupational background, as compared to the earlier immigrants who were mostly labourers. The major source of immigrants to British Columbia and Canada have shifted from the United States and European
countries to Asian countries. As the British Columbia Statistics from Citizenship and Immigration show for example, a majority (78.6 per cent) of immigrants in 1994 came from Asia, followed by Europe (10.7 per cent) (British Columbia Statistics, 1994). The top 10 immigrant sources, of which seven are Asian countries, accounted for 80.2 per cent of all British Columbia landings. Immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan and India alone represented 54.5 per cent of all landings (see Table 1 below).

### Table 1 - Top 10 Source Country of Last Permanent Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Anomalies</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Investor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>2,543</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2,545</td>
<td>3,023</td>
<td>2,034</td>
<td>2,098</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>3,417</td>
<td>10,518</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5,204</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>395</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>158</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1,869</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1,896</td>
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<td>258</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 10 Total</td>
<td>14,043</td>
<td>2,467</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>14,306</td>
<td>4,924</td>
<td>6,128</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>6,796</td>
<td>20,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. Total</td>
<td>14,537</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14,733</td>
<td>5,936</td>
<td>8,355</td>
<td>8,109</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>10,912</td>
<td>33,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C. Share</td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>93.6%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Immigration Statistics Division, Dept. of Citizenship & Immigration, Govt. of Canada - April, 1995.

This wave of family migration tended to alter the sex and age structures of the Chinese community in Canada - (originally characterized by an adult male population.)

Between 1963 and 1967, 18,716 Chinese immigrants came to Canada, the majority of whom were female. Between 1968 and 1976, 91,490 Chinese immigrants were admitted, and the sex ratio was nearly balanced (Bolaria and Li, 1988). During 1994, British
Columbia attracted a total of 48,529 immigrants, up 7.8 per cent from 1993. Most immigrant landing occurred in Vancouver. The British Columbia share of total Canadian landings was 22.3 per cent, also up significantly from 17.9 per cent recorded during 1993 (see Tables 2 and 3 below).

**Table 2 - Immigrant Landings to B.C. and Canada -- 1993**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Vancouver Area</th>
<th>Victoria Area</th>
<th>Rest of Total B.C.</th>
<th>Total B.C.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>B.C. as % of Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3,851</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>5,511</td>
<td>45,741</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>1,086</td>
<td>16,727</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>29,412</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>4,210</td>
<td>34,177</td>
<td>145,165</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>1,275</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North &amp; Central America</td>
<td>1,258</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>2,302</td>
<td>15,615</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>16,382</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>9,521</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>1,720</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Areas</td>
<td>36,776</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>7,172</td>
<td>45,021</td>
<td>252,137</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Immigration Statistics Division, Dept. of Citizenship & Immigration, Govt. of Canada - April, 1995

**Table 3 - Immigrant Landings to B.C. and Canada -- 1994**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Vancouver Area</th>
<th>Victoria Area</th>
<th>Rest of Total B.C.</th>
<th>Total B.C.</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>B.C. as % of Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>3,724</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>5178</td>
<td>37,581</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,483</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1,821</td>
<td>13,198</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>33,609</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>3,807</td>
<td>38,132</td>
<td>138,297</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North &amp; Central America</td>
<td>1,034</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>1,807</td>
<td>9,281</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>9,584</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>7,584</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>1,173</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Areas</td>
<td>41,074</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>6,232</td>
<td>48,529</td>
<td>217,763</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Immigration Statistics Division, Dept. of Citizenship & Immigration, Govt. of Canada - April, 1995

Thus, if we look at the statistics, it would seem that most discriminatory barriers and attitudes toward Chinese-Canadians are gradually being broken down. However, when we read newspapers for instance, we still see portrayals of Chinese-Canadians as being "the foreigner", or "the Other" (for example Vancouver Sun, September 11, 1995:
While the portrayals no longer use blatantly racist language to objectify Chinese-Canadians as inferior, dirty or evil, there are still portrayals that stereotype Chinese-Canadians in other ways. Labels such as industrious, aggressive and shrewd may appear to be positive characteristics, but if they are applied to label a group they may be constrictive and demeaning as if they were intentional insults meant to offend. In other words, these “positive” representations are still stereotypes (Anderson, 1991). Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation as bell hooks states:

Like fiction, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a projection of the Other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound when there is distance. They are an intervention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken or are not allowed (hooks, 1992: 170).

During the late 1980’s there was a resurgence of anti-Chinese activity in British Columbia, and in particular in Vancouver. Though racism today is perhaps not as blatant as in the pre-war period, “Chinese immigrants are being blamed for domestic economic woes, including rising real estate prices in the city of Vancouver and are local scapegoats for the global economic restructuring that has brought Asian investment capital to Canada” (Creese, 1990: 15). The current resentment or anti-Asian sentiment is directed toward the wealthy immigrant, in contrast to the previous negative sentiments against the exploited, cheap labourer of the 1880’s.

During the 1970’s and 1980’s, Chinese-Canadians have experienced greater social mobility. One example is the movement into middle-class neighbourhoods which

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9 In this September 11, 1995 article (Vancouver Sun) Chinese-Canadian were asked to examine their own habits due to the increase of racist actions against the Chinese community. The article focused on how
have been traditionally occupied by European families. Much local media attention has
focused on the “monster” houses which have transformed the appearance of west side
neighbourhoods in Vancouver, the increase in real estate prices (supposedly) due to the
wealthy Hong Kong immigrant “buying up” real estate and other property in British
Columbia and other problems of “foreign investment” (Creese, 1990).

Like the pre-war period when the Canadian state wanted British Columbia to be
“White” (Anderson, 1991), the current issues can be conceptualized as similar in
ideology and in effect. There are still distinctions made between “real” Canadians, who
are European, whether immigrant or not, and “foreigners” who are non-Europeans,
whether landed immigrants, citizens, or even native-born. For example, Chinese-
Canadians and other visible minorities with roots in Canada extending back several
generations are still routinely asked “Where do you come from?”

There appears to be a more recent perpetuation of the “us” versus “them”
ideology. For example, in urban areas where there are large numbers of Asians,
typification of the “Other” is highlighted. When many people encounter those whom
they typify as non-Canadians (whether true or not), they assign them an assortment of
characteristics which tends to fit preconceived ideas and notions. Anti-Asian sentiment
and behaviour in Vancouver provides a modern example of this phenomena, for example,
the negative name of “Hongcouver” because of the large numbers of recent Asian
immigrants. This situation is often more acute in some regions, or communities, such as
the case with the University of British Columbia where many students who think of

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Chinese-Canadians are seen as “not assimilating to the mainstream community” and thus are seen as
“outsiders”.

themselves as “Canadians” perceive the large numbers of visible minority students (whether Canadian or not) as “foreigners”. This racialization belies the fact that many so-called (often White) Canadians are threatened by the “outsiders” taking away what they believe to be theirs. The victimization of the “Other” provides an easy target on which to place the blame for current problems. This is the crux of the signification of the “Other” and the basis of stereotypes in society.

Multicultural Policy was a key government change in an attempt by the Canadian government to try to incorporate cultural groups into a more inclusionary definition of Canadian citizenship, in other words, to make “them” into “us”. Since its inception as official government policy in 1971, multiculturalism has been praised as a tool for the harmonious management of race and ethnic relations in an increasingly diverse and changing society, and at the same time, criticized for masking racism through an emphasis on culture. Multiculturalism not only furnishes Canadians with a practical alternative to America’s melting pot mentality, it can be argued that it also empowers minorities to pursue the dual goals of ethnic expression and equality.

The next chapter focuses on Multiculturalism and investigates the international “accepting” reputation Canada has acquired. Many are amazed by our ability to forge a remarkably prosperous and stable society from the challenges of diversity. How has Canada managed to avoid the racial violence that periodically engulfs the United States, as in Los Angeles in May 1992? How do Canadians manage to keep a lid on inter-ethnic strife with its potential to divide multi-ethnic societies into warring factions? Admittedly, the forces for rendering Canada asunder are never far from the surface. Nowhere is this more evident than in balancing the competing demands of Aboriginal
peoples, French and English-speaking charter groups and varied immigrants and refugee minorities. Nevertheless, while other countries seem to be groping in the dark for solutions, Canada has managed to maintain its reputation for its spirit of friendship, cooperation and "accepting" different ethnic and cultural groups. The question is, Are these legitimate achievements or mere propaganda? The next chapter looks at these issues and examines the salience of the multicultural ideology as cultural pluralism.
Chapter 3 - Multiculturalism

We might start by acknowledging that, for all our self-congratulation about the caring, tolerant nature of our country, racism, bigotry and deliberate oppression are as much a part of Canadian society as the maple leaf and ice hockey.

S. Hume The Vancouver Sun, September 13, 1995

Visitors to this country are often intrigued and surprised by Canada’s capacity to forge national unity out of a hodge-podge of racial and cultural differences. How can a vast country such as Canada reconcile its cultural, social, and regional diversity into a workable whole without jeopardizing social equality and individual rights? The answer to this question appears to lie in the Canadian way of coping with the challenge of diversity and accommodation.

The introduction of multiculturalism as official policy is widely credited with Canada’s ability to meet this challenge (Satzewich, 1992). Compared with many other nation-states, Canada is widely distinguished for its “acceptance” of cultural differences and social equality as part of our collective vision (Fleras, 1989; Nelson and Fleras, 1995). The entrenchment of multiculturalism as an official policy and as a national symbol of identity was meant to encourage this acceptance of diversity through a variety of programmes and practices for positive inter-group relations. As stated earlier, with the dramatic changes in the immigration laws of the late 1960’s, the number of Chinese immigrants entering Canada in the mid 1970’s and of course the introduction of multiculturalism in 1971, Canada gave the appearance of “acceptance” and advocacy of cultural pluralism.
I should first clarify the concept “multiculturalism” as it is widely used in three Canadian contexts. It is used as the ideology of cultural pluralism, as government policy, and the social reality of ethnic diversity (Kallen, 1983; Fernando, 1991). This thesis focuses on the ideology of multiculturalism as cultural pluralism and acceptance as it is applicable to my study. Yet, a brief history of the introduction of Multicultural Policy should be addressed.

The History of Multiculturalism

Today, Multiculturalism is the first thing any new immigrant learns about Canada (Nelson and Fleras, 1995). It is what apparently makes Canada different from the assimilate-or-leave attitude of the United States. In Canada, so the policy suggests, many racial and ethnic groups can live together in harmony, maintaining their cultures and heritage. Such examples include the inclusion of diverse cultures as promoted in schools, Caribbean festivals in Toronto, Ukrainian fetes in Edmonton, and Dragon Boat races in Vancouver’s False Creek. From coast to coast, Canada celebrates its diversity.

The era preceding 1971 can best be interpreted as a time of gradual movement toward acceptance of ethnic diversity as legitimate and integral to Canadian society. It must be stated, however, that nation-building in the symbolic and cultural sense was oriented toward the replication of a British type of society in Canada (Breton, 1984). This commitment toward Anglo-conformity was reflected in the cultural dimension of Canada’s political, economic, and social institutions. All Canadians were defined as British subjects until the passage of the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947. Anglo-centricism was expressed through a variety of cultural symbols that legitimated the British underpinnings of English-speaking Canada. For the most part, central authorities
dismissed the value of cultural heterogeneity, preferring instead to ignore racial and ethnic differences as inimical to national interests and detrimental to our character and integrity. Preference was given to assimilation and anglo-conformist policies as building blocks of Canadian society. This monocultural commitment was evident in various ways, but especially in the treatment of racial minorities in the selection of immigrants on the basis of a perceived "assimilability" into the European ethnic mainstream.

Still, there was some consideration for diversity, which can be interpreted as establishing a precedent for later developments. The special status of aboriginal peoples was set out in the Proclamation Act of 1763 and confirmed by the Indian Act of 1876. The relationship between French and English as charter groups was enshrined in the British North American Act of 1867. Promises to protect immigrant language, culture, and religion were promulgated on occasion, although possibly as a ploy to entice Prairie settlement prior to the First World War. Differences were accepted, but deemed to be private and personal and well outside the public realm. Even occasional references to diversity were not taken seriously enough to constitute a genuine policy. Only the massive influx of post-Second World War immigrants from Europe prompted central authorities to rethink the role and status of the "other ethnics" within the evolving dynamic of Canadian society. With passage of the Citizenship Act in 1947, there emerged a belief that immigrants and native-born Canadians shared similar status and rights. Only then did Canadians take seriously the quest to define who they were as a people with a distinctive and independent identity.

Events and developments during the 1960's paved the way for the eventual demise of assimilation as government policy and the subsequent appearance of
multiculturalism. Pressures for change stemmed from the growing assertiveness of Canada’s aboriginal peoples, the force of Quebecois nationalism, and increased resentment among ethnic minorities restive about their place in society. The situation in Quebec was particularly critical. Drawn to their own collective identity, the Quebecois resented their exclusion from the central political institutions and symbolic order of Canadian society (Breton, 1984). To defuse these threats to Canadian unity and identity, the government appointed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. The Royal Commission was assembled to “inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada (Royal Commission of Canada, 1963)”.

This was the first recognition by the royal commission of the dramatic change in Canadian society created by post-Second World War immigration. From a small Franco-British colony, Canada had evolved into a multiracial, multilingual, multiethnic melange. When language was an issue, ethnic groups whose first languages were neither French nor English wanted to be recognized and they did not want their contributions to the building of Canada ignored.

To the initial disappointment of ethnic leaders, the Report’s conclusions reaffirmed the priority status of Canada’s bilingual and bicultural framework. Ethnic leaders had argued that earlier policies had ignored the contributions of non-French and

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10 Race as used here is referred to English and French, a popular usage.
non-British traditions to Canadian prosperity and nation building. In response to the concerns of the "third force", the report did not entirely rule out "the contributions made by other cultures" to Canada's cultural enrichment. The report recommended the "integration" (not assimilation) of non-charter ethnic groups into Canadian society with full citizenship rights and equal participation in Canada's institutional structure (Goyder, 1990). The recommendations of the commission proved helpful in hastening the introduction of an innovative ethnocultural policy. Political considerations also came into play. These included the need to neutralize the impact of the Official Languages Act, to shore up Liberal electoral strength in the West (where bilingualism did not meet the widespread approval), and to capture the ethnic vote in urban Ontario. They also included the need to defuse mounting Quebecois pressure on federalism, to blunt the threat of unwanted American influences on Canadian cultural space, and to replenish the void in Canadian cultural identity with the demise of anglo-conformity as a central ideological construct (Weinfeld, 1985; Burnet and Palmer, 1988; Cummins and Danesi, 1990). Pressure from ethnic organizations and lobby groups, along with wider political developments, created a situation where government action was necessary if only to avert a further decline in public confidence and to dampen the emergent crisis in Canadian race and ethnic relations. It is in this climate of political pressure, turmoil and unrest that a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was unveiled by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of the Liberal government in Parliament in October 8, 1971.

Trudeau's multiculturalism advocated the full involvement and equal participation of ethnic minorities in mainstream institutions, without denying them the right to identify with chosen elements of their cultural past if they so choose. It also
promoted diversity, but within a framework of sharing these differences in pursuit of a common goal. In rejecting the notion of a cultural monolith and American melting pot as part of Canada's national identity, Trudeau reaffirmed his commitment to a just, equal, and plural society, where each citizen could make a personal choice to live and be fulfilled by the culture of preference while respecting the right of others, and working in one of two official languages (Axworthy and Trudeau, 1990). In brief, the Multicultural Policy's objectives were as follows: a) to encourage peaceful "race" relations and inter-cultural exchanges; b) to eliminate discrimination and promote national unity; c) to reduce the social and economic disadvantages of ethnic minorities; d) to assist ethnic groups in the preservation of their identities; and e) to educate the public regarding the merits of cultural pluralism (Elliott and Fleras, 1990: 63).

The principles underlying the management of diversity have since been incorporated into the very fabric of Canadian society. Multiculturalism has established an ideological framework that legitimates and justifies a variety of government initiatives on minority issues, ranging from admitting increased numbers of "Third-World" immigrants to the passage of employment equity laws and programmes. Recent events - including legislative approval for a federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship - have further elevated multiculturalism to its position as a major force in addressing Canadian diversity.

The content, scope, and focus of Canada's multicultural policies have also undergone change. Multiculturalism once concentrated on cultural preservation and inter-cultural sharing through promotion of ethnic presses and festivals (Labelle, 1989). Initially, federal multiculturalism was oriented to European immigrants and their needs,
thus focusing on cultural preservation and sharing as reflected in festivals, organizations and heritage language schools - "celebrating diversity". Rethinking was in order after the first major increase in the flow of visible minority immigrants (Richmond, 1991). New concerns included employment, housing, education, and discrimination - not just language and culture. "Awareness of such concerns led to the adoption of multicultural policies intended to balance the cultural programme with a programme of equality, through the removal of racially discriminatory barriers" (Elliott and Fleras, 1992: 74).

Current emphasis is then firmly located on race relations and the attainment of social and economic integration through removal of discriminatory barriers, institutional change, and affirmative action to equalize opportunity. Even our collective self-identity has undergone something of a change in response to a policy that is widely regarded as quintessentially Canadian. Our commitment to multicultural policies is viewed by many at home and abroad as a dimension of our national identity that purportedly sets us apart from the United States. Rightly or wrongly, we have internalized a set of images about ourselves as an accepting and open people, and look askance at the American melting pot as less enlightened than the Canadian mosaic (Cummins and Danesi, 1990).

The Rhetoric of Multiculturalism: Ideology of Cultural Pluralism

Surprisingly, the concept of cultural pluralism is not an uniquely Canadian phenomenon, nor does it clearly serve to differentiate Canadian from American "thinking" about models of ethnic integration. According to Kallen (1983), cultural pluralism was first introduced by the American philosopher Horace Kallen. Kallen was writing in the year 1915 when there was the wave of European immigration; thus, he
pictured the ideal “American civilization ... as a multiplicity in a unity...an orchestration of mankind” (22). He saw this as based on “the cooperation harmonies of European civilization— with the elements of poverty and persecution eliminated” (ibid.). This approach of ethnic integration was much too radical for that time period. As the United States approached the twentieth century, the “melting pot” ideology was the most favoured image.

The Canadian view of cultural pluralism represents a fairly recent outgrowth of the historical ideal of “cultural dualism”, which was “the original myth legitimating the constitutional separation and guarantees underlying English Protestant hegemony outside Quebec and French Catholic hegemony within the province of Quebec” (ibid.).

Coinciding with the influx of non-English and non-French immigrants from all parts of Europe, the myth of cultural pluralism began to lose public popularity, and, by the third and fourth decades of this century, the “mosaic” myth was increasingly lauded in political speeches (Kallen, 1983; Burnet, 1981). While the myths of the mosaic and melting pot flourished in the rhetoric of popular discourse, public policy in both Canada and the United States continued to be governed by the concept of “Anglo-conformity.” In Canada, the assumption of the dominant English ethnic collectivity was that immigrants would assimilate to the British institutional and cultural model which included the English language and the Protestant religion. It was not until the early decades following the World War II, with heightened concern about human rights and the resurgence of ethnicity throughout much of the globe, that the mosaic rhetoric took on serious “multicultural” policy implications (ibid.).
The mosaic myth only became full-blown with the negative reaction from the “other (immigrant) ethnic groups” to the reports of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism made public in the late 1960’s. As Burnet and Kallen point out, it was the introduction of the official Multicultural policy in 1971 that the myth of the mosaic gained both clarity and national legitimation (ibid.).

As a “model for reality”, the mosaic ideology is predicted on a national goal of one nation/many peoples/many cultures. Unlike the view of multiculturalism as a “fact” that describes social reality, the ideology of multiculturalism prescribes a preferred course of thought or action commensurate with the principle of cultural pluralism and modelled on the principles of freedom, tolerance, and respect for individual differences. As an official ideology, multiculturalism embraces a set of ideas and ideals about the nature and characteristics of Canadian unity and identity. There are several assumptions upon which the mosaic ideal rests.

First, as set of ideals, multiculturalism assumes the existence of ethnically diverse sectors whose members see themselves as different and who collectively wish to remain different for instrumental or expressive purposes. Minority enthusiasm for diversity in no way detracts from an equally strong commitment to participate as social and economic equals. Multiculturalism endorses the legitimacy of these cultural expressions as living and lived-in realities that impart meaning and security to members of the group during periods of social change and instability. Cultural diversity is embraced as an integral component of a national “mosaic,” a reflection of the Canadian ideal, and a source of enrichment and strength. Multiculturalism is thus inseparable from the ideology of
celebrating diversity and is legitimized through appeals to Canada’s cultural mosaic. As Kallen explains:

The mosaic ideal is rooted in the assumption that members of all ethnocultural collectivities are both able and willing to maintain their ethnocultural distinctiveness; this implies that all ethnic collectivities are characterized by high levels of ethnocentrism, but that they also are willing to adopt a “laissez-faire” (live and let live) stance towards ethnocultural collectivities whose values and lifeways differ markedly from their own (1983: 23).

A commitment to multiculturalism is consistent with the assumptions underlying the ideal of unity within diversity. Multiculturalism does not criticize the presence of cultural traditions as incompatible with the goals of national unity or cohesion. All ethnocultural groups are held equal. Each individual possesses the right to identify or affiliate with the culture of his or her choice and yet retain full access to economic and social equality. No cultural entity is viewed as taking precedence over another; rather, all are valued and encouraged for the contribution they make to society. Diversity is recognized as a key resource for the construction of national identity and unity, rather than peripheral or counterproductive to national interests. Ethnoracial minorities are considered a legitimate and integral component of society with a corresponding right to compete for power, wealth, and resources in the public realm. In other words, the mosaic ideal “assumes that levels of prejudice and discrimination between ethnic collectivities are low enough to allow mutual tolerance... [and that]... a rough equivalence in the distribution of power among the various ethnic collectivities, so that no one population can assume dominance and control over others” (ibid.).

Equally significant is the need to incorporate these differences into the prevailing social structure. Such an accommodation may well include a pluralistic restructuring of
(a) national institutions, (b) public attitudes, and (c) organizational services. Moreover, it is believed these differences can be forged into a workable national framework if individuals are permitted, without fear of sanctions, to affiliate voluntarily with the cultural tradition of their choice. Ethnic minorities thus possess the option of secondary identification with a preferred cultural tradition so long as this does not interfere with core institutional values, the laws of the land, or the rights of individuals. No inconsistency is envisioned by this dual identity, although problems of where to draw the line are common.

In other words, these assumptions suggest that inter-ethnic relations within the “mosaic” society would take the form of ethnic segmentation (Breton, 1978, Kallen, 1983). Ethnocultural distinctiveness (cultural pluralism) would be maintained through separate ethnic institutions (structural pluralism). Thus, as an “outcome” of cultural and structural pluralism, every citizen’s identity would become hyphenated, i.e., ethnic-national, with equal weights on both sides of the hyphen. Society would recognize both the individual human rights of all its citizens and the collective cultural rights of all its ethnic collectivities. Ethnicity would not provide a criterion for differential personal evaluation or for positional attainment in public life. Ethnicity would, however, provide the recognized basis for collective rights, in that all ethnic collectivities within the society would be guaranteed the freedom to collectively express their religious, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness.

As an ideal, multiculturalism rests on the conviction that cultural and linguistic minorities can find a satisfactory level of accommodation and mutual understanding if pluralistic principles are applied to all sectors. A commitment to multiculturalism
reflects the premise that those secure in their cultural background will concede a similar
duty to others (Berry et al., 1977). Conversely, those who feel threatened are unlikely to
act magnanimously toward others (Berry, 1991). Hence, “multiculturalism promotes
intergroup tolerance on the assumption that the more someone experiences his [her] own
way of life as ... fulfilling, the more likely he [/she] is to welcome attainments by others”

In this model, the most important factors are the relative weight placed upon the
notions of “unity” and “diversity”. As Kallen states:

The importance of ethnic diversity is reflected in the sphere (or spheres) in which
collective (ethnocultural group) rights may be guaranteed. Should the mosaic
take the form of pluralism in the public sector, then ethnocultural rights could be
in specified area(s), recognition of linguistic rights, and (in its most extreme
form) territorial (regional/local) autonomy (Kallen, 1983: 24).

It should be pointed out though, the myth of the mosaic was originally
conceptualized for the charter groups (English and French), and not in pluralistic terms.
In regard to collective (ethnocultural group) rights, the public sector was envisaged as an
Anglo or Franco cultural monolith.

To accommodate changes in Canada, on July 21, 1988, a new Multicultural
Policy came into effect when Canada became the first country in the world to pass a
national multiculturalism law. As Fleras and Elliott state:

The new law acknowledges multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of
Canadian society with an integral role in the decision-making process of the
federal government. Directed toward the ‘preservation and enhancement of
multiculturalism in Canada,’ the Multiculturalism Act sought to assist with
cultural and language preservation, to reduce discrimination, to enhance
intercultural awareness and understanding, and to promote culturally sensitive
institutional change at federal levels (Elliott and Fleras, 1992: 75).
In effect, the act sought to preserve, enhance, and incorporate cultural differences into the functioning of Canadian society, while ensuring equal access and full participation for all Canadians in the social, political and economic spheres. It also focused on the “eradication of racism and removal of discriminatory barriers as incompatible with Canada’s commitment to human rights” (ibid: 76). The Official Multicultural Act still had the same ideals as stated above, but would now more forcefully promote “acceptance” of cultural differences as being part of Canadian society. As Nelson and Fleras state:

...the goals of multiculturalism are [now] firmly fixed in the building of a united society through actions that depoliticize ethnicity as a social force. In place of collective rights and self-sufficient ethnic communities, multiculturalism emphasizes the right of individuals to identify and affiliate with the ethnocultural tradition of their choice - provided this does not violate the laws of the land, interfere with the rights of others, or discredit fundamental political and economic institutions. Put bluntly, multiculturalism is not about ethnic separatism or divided loyalties. It is about the promotion of secular acceptance for minorities as a basis for Canadian nationalism and society-building (1995: 261).

**Challenging the “Accepting” Ideology - The Problems of Multiculturalism**

The Multicultural Act has been criticized for not achieving its stated goals (Bibby, 1990). Probing beneath the surface reveals a Canada in which claims to accept diversity may be more apparent than real (Satzewich, 1992; Bolaria and Li, 1988). Canadians may be tolerant of and receptive to cultural diversity in principle, but many in practice are insensitive to minority rights at individual or group levels, suggesting an underlying adherence to European conformity as the preferred culture in Canada. Multiculturalism often is linked with negatively charged issues concerning excessive immigration, refugee claimants, and programmes of preferential hiring or mandatory
quotas. Bibby (1990) argues that Canada's commitment to pluralism can lead to the risk of degenerating into a state of a "visionless coexistence". In other words, "too much of a good thing, can usher in a situation where we stand to lose what holds us together in the frenzied rush to defend what keeps us apart" (Fleras and Elliott, 1992: 275).

A backlash toward official Multiculturalism has been gathering momentum in both the private and political sphere, as the struggle intensifies over the legitimacy and limits of diversity in Canada. The reasons for this divergence of opinion are varied, but, according to Andrew Cardoze, the outgoing Executive Director of the Canadian Ethnocultural Council, the answer may lie in a yearning for simple and reassuring responses to complex and bewildering changes (Toronto Star, Goar, 31. August 1991). For example, the platform of the Reform Party which has an essentially conservative agenda, has capitalized on growing national anxieties by speaking out against a variety of "sacred cows" in Canada. The party has questioned the viability of official bilingualism as a tool for national unity. Preston Manning and the Reform Party see multiculturalism as the great equalizer, the way to make Quebec just another province and French just one language among many. It has also taken a stand against immigration policies at odds with the existing social, cultural, demographic and symbolic order.

Granted, the virtues of tolerance and diversity continue to be endorsed by the Reform Party as part of our progressive self-image, but only if privately funded ("Be ethnic, but not at our expense"). These proposals for a "New" Canada bear a striking resemblance to the virtues of "old" anglo-conformity which have proven to be a selling point for Canadians disgruntled with massive social upheaval. Government policy is criticized for embracing a philosophy in which, according to an editorial in The Toronto
Star on July 9, 1991, "some Canadians are more equal than others". It has also been taken to task for encouraging a "ghettoization of society," populated by ethnically "hyphenated" subgroups to the detriment of Canada's social fabric. Reckless promotion of this diversity has been reflected in arguments elsewhere (Bibby, 1990; Thorsell, 1991a).

There are those who see multiculturalism as too weak and those who think it is an expensive frill that we can no longer afford. It has been seen as a platform for ethnic minorities to seize political power and as a cynical attempt to divide and conquer Canadian minority groups. Not surprisingly, some of multiculturalism's most vocal critics are members of the groups who might be viewed as the policy's main recipients.

Is multiculturalism the forum to combat racism in Canada? Marlene Nourbese Philip says it is not. In the essay "Why Multiculturalism Can't End Racism," in her book Frontiers (1992), Philip states the conflict inherent in the concept of multiculturalism:

"The configuration of power appears to be designed to equalize power among the individual satellite cultures, and between the collectivity of those cultures and the two central cultures, the French and English. The mechanism of multiculturalism is, therefore, based on a presumption of equality, a presumption which is not necessarily borne out in reality" (Philip, 1992).

Philip goes on: "Because it pretends to be what it is not - a mechanism to equalize all cultures within Canada - it ought not to surprise us that multiculturalism would be silent about issues of race and colour" (ibid.).

The flaw in the mechanism, for Philip and other members of visible minorities, is Canadian systemic racism, the fruits of European racism that travelled with Europeans wherever they settled:
“He [sic] took with him this particular gospel - that the Native and indigenous peoples he [sic] encountered, who were also not white, were to be brutalized, enslaved, maimed, or killed and, where, necessary, used to enrich him [sic] personally and/or his [sic] particular European country. Wherever you find the European outside Europe, there you will find this particular pattern and method of settlement. The settlement of Canada was no exception to this rule” (ibid.).

Philip calls racism the “glue that holds the edifice of white supremacy together”.

It permeates our society, creating prejudices between multicultural groups “because racism is not restricted only to relations between white and Black people” (bid.).

She further states:

When you are a black-skinned, it often matters little if the person refusing to rent to you is Polish, Anglo- or Italian-Canadian. The result is the same. And multiculturalism, as we presently know it, has no answers to these or other problems such as the confrontation between the police forces in urban areas like Toronto and Montreal and the African Canadian communities that live there...In short, multiculturalism, as we know it, has no answers for the problems of racism...unless it is combined with a clearly articulated policy of antiracism, directed at rooting out the effects of racist and white supremacist thinking...But despite its many critics, multiculturalism will not disappear. Too many people benefit from it, and it is far too fancy a piece of window-dressing for a government to get rid of (ibid).

Another criticism of multiculturalism is that it keeps the ethnic communities divided and prevents the creation of a Canadian identity by allowing new Canadians or hyphenated Canadians to become simply “Canadians”. The writer Neil Bissoondath, who was born in Trinidad and is of East Indian origin, is an outspoken critic of multiculturalism, for he believes it fosters the kind of tribalism that separates groups and races. “I don’t think we should expect the great society to adjust to our ways; I think that’s calling for a kind of anarchy because there are simply so many groups. There has to be an across-the-board standard of what it is to be Canadian. And that’s where
immigrants have to make certain adjustment, just as society has to make an adjustment too. But sometimes I think we ask the society to go too far” (Bissoondath, 1994).

Bissoondath is “wary” of the assertion of ethnic identity, an identity that, he points out, can be misconstrued. In reference to a hyphenated Canadian, his opinion is: “To be called a Trinidadian Canadian to me conjures a picture of someone who, in March or April, whenever they have the carnival in Toronto, dresses up in a costume to jump and dance in the streets, while drinking illegally. That has nothing to do with me” (ibid.).

Bissoondath’s view runs alongside a key criticism of the mosaic ideology. The mosaic ideology assumes that, through “tolerant” inter-ethnic relations and the full and equal participation in public life of members of all ethnic communities, a common, national culture and identity would be created. Further, the common national consciousness so created (it is assumed) would be equal in strength to the particular ethnic consciousness of each of the country’s citizens. However, the mosaic ideology fails to indicate the specific nature of the common, national culture which “emerges” in the society. Whose cultural norms, legal and ethical standards, institutional forms and language(s) would govern the conduct of public life?

Even though the mosaic ideology has been criticized, the multicultural ideology still seems to be firmly entrenched when people discuss Canada’s identity. Having an official Multicultural Policy enables Canada to promote itself as an “accepting” nation. Intolerance toward others, coupled with bigotry and discrimination, are roundly condemned as “un-Canadian” and unworthy of Canada’s multicultural reputation. As Fleras and Elliott argue:
...multiculturalism is the quintessential Canadian value. It constitutes a
distinctive feature of our celebration...as a people and distinguishes our society
from the melting pot of the United States. As the cornerstone of Canada’s
nation-building process, multiculturalism shapes our identity, unites us in a
distinct society with a national vision, and invigorates us as a people with a

Many Canadians are supportive of multiculturalism in principle, and believe the
“accepting” nature of our society; however support declines when personal and social
costs are taken into consideration. This view was supported by a national study
conducted by Berry, Kalin and Taylor in 1977 on Canadian attitudes toward
multiculturalism and outgroups, with a sample of just under 3,000 households. They
found that Canadians saw Canada as an “accepting” society (1977). The study set out to
evaluate the distribution of attitudes toward ethnic groups, immigration, and
multiculturalism. The general conclusion was that most respondents were tolerant of
other ethnic groups, and evidence of extreme prejudice was rare. In addition, they found
that Canadians strongly supported the multicultural notion of promoting and sharing
Canada’s cultural diversity, if there was not a personal sacrifice on the part of the
respondent (1977).

Support toward multiculturalism was also found in a study conducted in 1985 by
MII/Marketing Initiatives International Incorporated. The study found a high level of
acceptance for values that endorsed Canadian identity, as well as individual freedom and
equality of opportunity. Overall, this study found that 81 per cent of Canadians know
that Canada is a multicultural society, and 76 per cent regard this as a good thing (1985).

Another survey of public attitudes toward multiculturalism was conducted by
Optima Consultants (1988) involving telephone interviews with a sample of 2000
Canadian adults. Overall, public attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity were open, and tolerant. They found a high level of support (86 percent) for the principle of institutional sensitivity to the needs and concerns of ethnoracial minorities. Another 70 percent agreed that Canadians display acceptance of diversity and sensitivity to ethnoracial diversity. As well, many respondents concurred with the benefits of multiculturalism in Canada: 76 percent believed that multiculturalism made Canada a better place to live; 81 percent felt it improved Canada’s relations with other counties.

The above studies show that most Canadians feel that Canada is an accepting place to live and that Canadian multiculturalism is supported. In addition, the studies show that most Canadians think Canada is sensitive to racial and ethnic needs. Yet even though Canadians have this international reputation for being an accepting people with a propensity to compromise in situations of potential conflict or confrontation, this reputation has been called into question in recent years with the armed hostilities involving aboriginal peoples at Akwesasne, the recent events at British Columbia’s Gustafson Lake, the turmoil over the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord, and of course the famous “turban incident” concerning the official ceremonial uniform of the R.C.M.P. 11

Incidents such as these indicate that multiculturalism has not overcome problems of racism. Yet Canadians still like to believe that we are more accepting than other nations. In this context, the current study can suggest something about the degree to

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11 Gustafson Lake was a stand-off between R.C.M.P. officers and armed Native rebels over right to sacred land in British Columbia (1995). The Meech Lake Accord (1982) involved negotiations between Federal, Provincial and ethnic political groups to amend the Canadian constitution. Distant and derisive positions were taken producing bitter opposition along geographical, political and racial lines. The “turban incident”
which the ideology and practice of acceptance has really developed. The social realities of the acceptance (or non-acceptance) of cultural pluralism indicate that this research has something to contribute, particularly in providing a forum to hear the voices of those who may speak directly to this issue. The following chapter outlines previous literature on inter-racial marriages and the methods used in the design of my research. It shows how this particular study examines the processes of racialization and tests the ideology of cultural pluralism by looking at this issue through the eyes of inter-racial couples' experiences.

(1990) involved a federal government ruling on the right of Sikh males to wear a turban as part of the official R.C.M.P. uniform, rather than a stetson as required by regulation.
Chapter 4 - Literature Review and Methodology

Literature Review on Inter-racial Marriages

When the movie Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner, a film in which a White female invites a Black male to meet her parents as a prelude to marriage, was released in 1967, it generated considerable discussion among various segments of the population regarding the acceptability of inter-racial marriage. However, when this movie was shown on network television in the 1980’s, it hardly caused a stir as inter-racial marriages had become more frequent and it seemed that society was more tolerant. A 1992 New York Times estimate placed the number of inter-racial couples in the United States at one million, and the United States Census Bureau report indicates an increase in Black and White marriages from 65,000 in 1970 to 218,000 in 1991 which means that four out of every thousand marriages in the United States involve a Black and White partner (Newsweek, 06/10/91: 44). Additionally, an August 1993 newsletter published by Multi-Racial Americans of Southern California indicates that there are currently sixty support groups in the United States and Canada catering specifically to inter-racial couples and their problems (Multiracial Newsletter, August, 1993 in Johl, 1994)

The Supreme Court’s ruling on the unconstitutionality of anti-miscegenation laws in California in 1948 and in the United States in 1967, may have been instrumental in increasing the number of inter-racial marriages. By relying on statistics that have been published by particular states and on data available through early marriage records, Thomas Monahan has attempted to compile data through a series of studies (1973; 1976; 1977) to indicate the pervasiveness of inter-racial marriages in different regions
throughout the United States, the personal and social profiles of those engaging in inter-racial marriages, and the changes in the nature and extent of inter-racial marriage that have occurred over time.

With respect to the last variable, Monahan's research indicates that repeal of anti-miscegenation laws did have a considerable, albeit relatively small, impact on the extent of inter-racial marriage. His data reveals that there has been a steady increase in the number of marriages occurring across racial lines, most significantly in the South Atlantic regions of the United States. The highest proportion of inter-racial marriages were significant in Northern and Pacific States. The implications of Monahan's research are significant in that it demonstrates that removal of the legal restrictions throughout the United States allowed individuals, at the very least, the legal opportunity to exercise greater freedom in mate selection, and this manifested itself in recorded data on inter-racial marriages within the Southern states where opposition was strongest to intermarriage. When the legal system was forced to acknowledge the inherent racism entrenched in its laws, it also had to confront the social implications those laws had on race relations.

What is also of note in Monahan's studies is that, as a result of striking anti-miscegenation laws from the books, combined with the impact of the burgeoning civil rights movements of the 1960's, racial identifiers were removed from marriage records within a number of states, which made the process of recording the level of inter-racial marriage actually occurring exceedingly difficult. For instance, Colorado removed this data in 1959, California and New Jersey in 1961, New York in 1965, Michigan in 1966, Maryland in 1970, Massachusetts in 1971, and the district of Columbia in 1975.
A 1990 study published by Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan also suggests that accuracy of inter-racial marriage rates is difficult to generate given the inaccuracies in record keeping and the elimination of racial identifiers on marriage applications. Recent studies have depended upon data available through census reports (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990) or by examining marriage records and determining the racial composition of the marriage partners on the basis of surnames (Kitano, Yeung, Chai and Hatanaka, 1984). These methods, however, present difficulties since individuals may choose not to racially identify themselves in census reports, and there is a degree of error involved in the latter procedure.

It has been asserted through both journalistic and academic reports on inter-racial marriage that merely lifting the legal prohibition against inter-racial marriage does not necessarily eliminate the social taboo that is associated with such unions. Hernton, in his study of “Sex and Racism in America”, has suggested that while more than a quarter of a century has passed since the statutes were overturned, “the unwritten taboo against racial ‘intermingling’ has not changed one iota” (1988: xi). A somewhat dated, yet still relevant study in 1973 by Kikimura and Kitano also concedes that there is an overwhelming preference toward endogamy and that this has been “...couched sometimes in mild terms such as ‘like should marry like’ and often stronger terms such as ‘don’t mix oil and water’...” (1973: 67), which has reinforced the social taboo against such unions.

One also may find in media accounts involving racism, prejudice and/or inter-racial marriage (Ebony 09/91; Elle 09/92; Newsweek 06/91), the view that society is still against inter-racial relationships. This fact is shown even in research which demonstrates positive overall results in regard to improving acceptance levels. In a March 1992 article
in the *Vancouver Sun*, Marlene Habib noted that on-going research at the University of Chicago reveals that attitudes toward inter-racial marriages have changed since the 1960’s\textsuperscript{12} (03/12/92: D2). Smith’s 1991 study indicated that one in five Americans sampled (out of the 1500) believed that inter-racial marriage should be illegal, whereas a 1972 survey by the same researcher, asking the same question, yielded two believers out of every five. The implication of Smith’s work is that individual and social attitudes have in fact changed to a significant degree. Yet, even though these statistics may show an increase in acceptance toward inter-racial marriages, there is still the underlying presence of intolerance and racist behaviour directed at these mixed relationships despite the tendency to express opposition less blatantly than in the past.

Though it is less certain that attitudes, tolerance, and acceptance of these unions have kept pace with legal changes, it is noted that inter-racial couples have been subjected to negative, and at times, violent acts. For example, in 1983 in the United States, a former Black director of the National Urban League was shot because of, and while in the company of, a White female (Hernton, 1988: xi). In 1989, a young Black teen, Yusif Hawkins, whose story subsequently inspired Spike Lee’s film on inter-racial love - “Jungle Fever”, was brutally beaten to death by a group of White youths in Brooklyn’s Bensonhurst for allegedly having a White girlfriend (*Newsweek*, 06/10/91: 45). It is also interesting to note the recent developments in the sensationalized O.J. Simpson trial, where it is speculated that a White detective planted evidence because of his racist attitudes and alleged distaste for inter-racial couples.

\textsuperscript{12} The research was conducted by Tom Smith of the National Opinion Research Center, based at the University.
These incidents of non-acceptance, unlike most, made news headlines. Hernton suggests that “the abusive insults and violent acts committed against inter-racial couples in our daily lives are seldom brought to public attention. One learns of such happenings by word of mouth, from friends and acquaintances or by chance, from being on the scene when they are perpetuated” (1988: xi). In an attempt to substantiate his claim, Hernton recounts three tales involving harassment and inter-racial couples and goes on to state that “repulsive feelings and acts of violence against inter-racial couples in public are not ‘isolated incidents.’ Such feelings and acts of hatred stem from a larger cancer in our lives. The cancer of which I speak is racism” (ibid.: xii).

Recent studies on the resurgence of radical racism within Canada seem to contradict the notion that people are reluctant to express their disapproval of inter-racial marriage. Stanley Barrett’s 1989 book along with that of Julian Sher’s (1983) on the Right Wing and Ku Klux Klan in Canada clearly indicate that Canadians are demonstrating an increased tendency to express antipathy toward race mixing. Their work also suggests that the increased hostility of members within these groups toward inter-racial marriage can be linked to higher immigration rates and the implied threat to racial homogeneity that those figures represent.

In contrast, most Canadians would suggest that we are an accepting nation and are more racially accepting than the United States. As previously mentioned, Berry, Kalin, and Taylor’s 1977 national survey found that Canadians saw Canada as an “accepting” country (Berry, Kalin and Taylor, 1977). The study set out to evaluate the distribution of attitudes toward ethnic groups, immigration, and multiculturalism. The general conclusion was that most respondents were tolerant of other ethnic groups, and
evidence of extreme prejudice was rare. However, as the next study shows, forms of discrimination and intolerance are still prevalent in North American society.

In a recent episode of 20/20, a popular American television news programme, attitudes toward inter-racial couples were measured. Inter-racial couples (Black/White and Asian/White) were sent to an advertised apartment for rent. The couples initially made an appointment by phone. When they went to view the apartment, the White partner went in first and told the manager that he/she was waiting for his/her spouse to arrive shortly. During this time, the manager seemed positive and willing to rent out the apartment while talking to the White individual. However, when the Black partner arrived shortly after, the manager seemed to change his mind and made many excuses not to rent the apartment to them (a hidden camera was placed on the couple). The same test was done using an Asian/White couple where the Asian wife initially received positive feedback until the White husband was introduced. Yet, when a White couple, with the same credentials went to view the apartment following the same procedure, the manager was extremely eager to rent to this particular couple. When questioned, the manager did explain that the owner of the apartment did not want inter-racial couples to rent the place.

20/20 followed up on this study by asking the manager to grant them an interview. When the interviewer suggested that the manager was using racist and discriminatory practices, and in addition, illegal rental procedures, the manager was quick to state that it was not up to him in terms of the final decision, but up to the owner, who was specific in the rental requirements.
The point of this particular study is that intolerance is practised in contemporary times and is still a problematic issue. Non-accepting behaviour toward inter-racial couples is an important issue and studies such as these will contribute to our understanding of why intolerance remains part of the social fabric of society.

It should be noted that with the exception of a 1991 study done by Madeline Richard on *Ethnic Groups and Marital Choices*, little research has been done in Canada on the subject of inter-racial marriage. Richard's research is in fact the first detailed Canadian study analyzing marriage across ethnic and religious, though not racial, lines. The dearth of relevant Canadian studies is conceivably understood as a result of two factors. First, Canada did not impose the legal restrictions of the kind that were erased from American law in 1967, and second, as Habib (1992) reveals, polling firms such as Gallup and Decima Research have not tracked Canadian attitudes toward inter-racial marriage in Canada as they have in the United States, and Statistics Canada does not carry figures which document the instances of inter-racial marriage in the country. The first factor is significant because the repeal of anti-miscegenation laws triggered renewed interest in the United States in tracking, explaining, and understanding inter-racial marriage in the academic arena. Researchers were interested in determining if significant changes would occur as a result of legal changes. Canada cannot refer to a parallel turning point in its history which may have reduced the interest in doing historical comparative analysis on the subject. With respect to the second factor, one can only speculate that rates of intermarriage were so significantly low that they did not merit

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13 Unlike the United States, Canada have not even documented "race" in the Census, though this will change in 1996.
tracking, and that Canada’s historical tendency toward preserving ethnic homogeneity limited the necessity of gauging attitudes toward intermarriage (Ward, 1990). It would seem, based upon recent trends in racism and immigration that there is just cause to re-evaluate the necessity of determining Canadian’s attitudes on these issues.

Accounts such as those appearing in the Vancouver Sun and Toronto’s The Sunday Sun reinforce this perception. Habib in the Vancouver Sun (Dec. 2, 1992: D2) and Dhooma in The Sunday Sun (May 21, 1995:60-61) reported that the greater influx of immigrants from different racial backgrounds has resulted in a greater propensity to marry across racial lines within Canada, and that the visible differences between couples has forced them to confront the prejudices that many individuals maintain toward these unions. With reference to Vancouver, a metropolitan city with a large and growing population of Chinese Canadians, there has been a large influx of Asian immigration during the last decade. “People born in Asian and the Middle East made up almost one-half (48%) of immigrants who came to Canada between 1981 and 1991, but only 3% of those who came before 1961” (Canada’s Changing Immigrant Population Focus on Canada, 1994). Hong Kong and Taiwan are two of the top ten source countries of recent immigrants. Thus, the largest proportion of immigrants to British Columbia are of Chinese ethnicity (Immigration Statistics Division, Dept. of Citizenship and Immigration, Government of Canada, 1995). The increased opportunity to meet and marry outside of one’s own culture (whether it is Chinese or European) is more pronounced.

Even though the numbers of current Chinese/European married couples within Vancouver are not available, other studies from other locations point to this increase
(Lee and Yamanaka, 1990; Sung, 1990; Wong, 1989; Kitano, Yeung, Chai, and
Hatanaka, 1984).

As Wong states in the American context:

...interrmarriage among the Chinese - that is, marriages between Chinese and non-
Chinese - and especially marriages between Chinese and whites, once considered
taboo, is on the rise. Currently 31.5% of all Chinese marriages involve non-
Chinese. Moreover, 22% of all Chinese marriages involve white partners (1989: 87).

During the nineteenth century, it would have been difficult to find many
Chinese/European marriages. A key factor is that which Kitano, Yeung, Chai and
Hatanaka (1984) refer to as “conservative pluralism” wherein barriers are erected by
groups to discourage ethnic interaction. The barriers may be informal or formal.
Conservative pluralists recognize and strive to maintain their own ethnic group through
informal means such as family sanctions and group pressure, or through more formal
means such as legislative lobbying.

The important factor in conservative pluralism is group power: the more powerful
a group the more effective it will be in maintaining its own autonomy. In the case of
discouraging Chinese/European intermarriages during the nineteenth century, the
discouragement of intermarriages was aimed at “conserving the purity of the white race”
(1984: 180)\textsuperscript{14}. Speeches such as the one by the provincial Attorney-General Alex
Manson to the legislature in 1922, blatantly stated the unacceptability of Chinese blood
mixing with White blood:

I have no real objection to the Oriental, but the real objection to him and the one
that is permanent and incurable is that there is an ethnological difference which

\textsuperscript{14} Conservative pluralism also has also been advocated by many of the ethnic minorities themselves.
cannot be overcome. The two races cannot mix and I believe our first duty is to our own people... It is a matter of our own domestic affairs that we should endeavour to protect the white race from the necessity of intermingling with Oriental blood, and I think we have every warrant for fighting to prevent a situation that will inevitably result in race deterioration (Manson in Anderson, 1991: 113).

In other words, inter-racial marriage, specifically between Chinese and White, were during that particular time period, intolerable and might “bring down” the White “race”.

As I have stated earlier, the late 1980’s has shown a resurgence of anti-Chinese activity in British Columbia, and particularly in Vancouver, as reported in the media. In the midst of much public expression of anti-Chinese feeling, some political groups have emerged to press for stricter immigration control. As Creese states, “Traditional immigration is a euphemism for a return for a white European-only immigration system” (Creese, 1990: 16). The argument is much like that of a century ago, some groups do not mix well into Canadian culture and society, and these “foreigners”, or outsiders threaten the continued existence of society. In order to perpetuate a “White” Canada, one would assume then, that inter-racial marriages would not be condoned.

The current study extends beyond the current literature on inter-racial marriages. Much of the research on inter-racial relationships takes a quantitative approach. Recent studies have depended upon data available through census reports (Toyota, 1991; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990; Lee and Yamanaka, 1990; Sung, 1990; Wong, 1989) or by examining marriage records and determining the racial composition of the marriage partners on the basis of surnames (Kitano, Yeung, Chai and Hatanaka, 1984). These studies look at the patterns of Chinese intermarriage and the factors involved in the prevalence of intermarriage. These methods present difficulties, however, since
individuals may choose not to racially identify themselves in census reports, and there is a degree of error involved in the latter procedure. In addition, these studies took little or no account of qualitative data, thus focusing only on one method of examining inter-racial marriages.

While there has not been a great deal written on inter-racial marriages using a qualitative approach, one such study was conducted by Johl in 1994. This M.A. thesis, entitled Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner Now? used interview methods combined with an analysis of media representations of inter-racial couples. This methodology allowed for a clearer understanding of what variables are involved in the creation and maintenance of inter-racial relationships and the many obstacles which inter-racial couples encounter in society. Johl looked at a broad cross section of inter-racial couples, from various ethnic groups, both married and non-married.

Another study which used a qualitative approach was a study conducted by Ruth Frankenberg. In her book titled The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters (1993), she argues that “race” shapes White women's lives. In one chapter, she discusses White women’s experience of race in terms of inter-racial relationships. Using an interviewing methodology, she analyzes the experiences of these women involved in heterosexual and homosexual inter-racial relationships.

While the previous studies mentioned above are valuable in their own right there has been a methodological neglect in examining how inter-racial couples themselves perceive their treatment in Canadian society. As stated, most studies have looked at attitudes and perceptions toward inter-racial couples (Johl, 1994; Sung, 1990; Wong, 1989) and the patterns of intermarriage, yet research focusing on the couple’s
experiences has been scarce. This particular study will fill this gap in order to further research toward understanding inter-racial relationships, the racialization process and the extent of acceptance, tolerance or intolerance in Canada. The following section looks into the methods used in the design of my research.

**Methodology / Collecting the Data**

As stated above, empirical research on inter-racial relationships has often taken a quantitative approach, highlighting statistical marriage patterns between ethnic groups. What seems to be excluded from these analyses are the voices of the subjects themselves. If we are to look beyond the statistical data, what are the perceptions which inter-racial couples have? What are the experiences of inter-racial couples? My aim is to explore the processes of racialization as experienced by these couples. How has the social construction of “race” been internalized and experienced by inter-racial couples? How multicultural is society in its practices of acceptance, tolerance, or intolerance? How do inter-racial couples experience cultural pluralism?

To examine these complex questions, I outline the methodological strategies used in this thesis. This section discusses in detail how I conducted my work and the tensions, challenges and rewards I faced during the research process. The choices and decisions I made throughout the procedure will be discussed in detail. As there is no one best way to conduct research, the decisions I made and the reasoning or justification for doing so will be highlighted in this section.
Purposes of Research

The purpose of my research is exploratory. Babbie offers three purposes of exploratory research. The first is “to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding”; the second is “to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study”, and thirdly, “to develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study” (1992: 90). This research project addresses all three issues. When I set out to study inter-racial couples, I wanted to study an aspect about inter-racial couples that was not done previously. This was not difficult to do as research on inter-racial relationships is limited and mostly quantitative. To offer a different perspective, I chose to use the interview method. Interviews would allow me to delve deep into the lives of inter-racial couples. Any other method would be limited in scope. Because there hasn’t been much qualitative research done in this area, this particular study can offer further suggestions for research on this topic.

This chapter focuses on the methodological concerns I encountered in this thesis. The practical, theoretical, and ethical concerns are highlighted. I begin my discussion with rational arguments as to why interviewing is an appropriate method for investigating this particular research problem. Other variables mentioned here are the types of questions asked, the language used, strategies to gain acceptance and the recording and analysis of the data. Ethical concerns are also discussed in the conclusion.

Rational for Interviewing

Researching a topic such as inter-racial couples required a methodology that would allow me to ask in-depth questions. Intensive interviewing offered me a way to discuss in detail the experiences of the subjects. Through interviews, I was able to get
detailed accounts of the couples’ lives and systematically analyze and categorize acts or expressions. Interviews were a way for couples to reveal their day-to-day experiences and express their life stories.

Using interviewing rather than another method proved to be advantageous in this case. Since I was asking for personal information from couples, it was essential that the subjects understood what I was asking. Interviewing allowed me to clarify or restate questions that the respondents did not at first understand. In addition, through interviewing, I was able to help respondents clarify their answers by using probes, such as “I’m not sure exactly what you mean,” or, “Can you tell me more about that?” Face-to-face interviewing permitted unobtrusive observations that further helped the study. For example, the interactions between the members of the couple are conveyed best through face-to-face interviews (Gorden, 1980). This was crucial in this particular study as gender and racial dynamics were taken into account throughout the interview process.

The methods used in pursuing this work also takes inspiration from what Dorothy Smith refers to as “doing research from the standpoint of experience” (in Reinharz Feminist Methods in Social Research, 1992: 259). She states:

In learning to speak our experiences and situation, we insist the right to begin where we are, to stand as subjects of our sentences, and to hear one another as the authoritative speakers of our experience (D. Smith, 1975: 2).

Dorothy Smith was not directly referring to inter-racial couples when she wrote the above, but this could be directly applied to inter-racial couples’ experiences. To truly learn and understand inter-racial couples’ experiences, we must allow them a voice to express these experiences. Previous research has not allowed these couples to speak for themselves; this thesis offers this opportunity to them. By using an interviewing
methodology, I offer inter-racial couples a means to express their voices and give
detailed accounts of their life experiences. As Raymond Gorden states, “the interview
provides more opportunity to motivate the respondent to supply accurate and complete
information immediately” (Gorden, 1980: 61).

Sampling and Recruiting

Recruiting subjects for this research project was not as easy as I had anticipated,
or hoped. When discussing my topic to people in general there was much interest and
common responses such as “If you need to interview a couple, I know so-and-so who has
a Chinese [or White] partner”. Even though this was the case, I was looking for couples
who fit a specific criteria. In most instances where people knew of potential subjects, it
was often the case that the couple in question did not fit my criteria so I could not use
them in my study. In order to adequately address the theoretical issues in this research
area and to explore this topic in a manageable manner for this thesis, I needed to be able
to work with structured criteria. If I did not set a strict criteria, the scope of this thesis
would have been too large and complex. The criteria for the subjects were:

- one partner Chinese-Canadian and one partner European-Canadian
- married in or after 1971
- currently living in the Lower Mainland

Between June and September 1995, I interviewed thirty married Chinese-
Canadian/European-Canadian couples. All the couples were living in the Lower
Mainland at the time of the interviews. I acquired my participants through a series of
methods. First, I acquired participants through acquaintances. A snowball technique was
utilized and I was able to accumulate nine couples through this method. Even though I
had a few friends who were inter-racially married, I did not use them as my subjects
because of potential bias. Interviewing people about whom I knew virtually nothing about put me in a better position to maintain research objectivity.

The second method involved putting up various posters at many establishments including the University of British Columbia campus, businesses and community centres in Chinatown (e.g. S.U.C.C.E.S.S., Chinese Benevolent Association) and community centres throughout Vancouver. Five responses were elicited by this method.

The third method proved to be the most useful and I managed to find most of my participants through this technique. An advertisement was placed in the Courier newspaper (Sunday edition, July 30, 1995 #61 Vol. 86: 21). The advertisement brought a total of twelve couples. Some of the couples who responded to the advertisement then referred me to other inter-racial couples. Through this final technique, I acquired the remaining four couples which completed the target goal of thirty couples.

The advertisement and posters gave a brief description of the nature and purposes of the research, the criteria (one Chinese-Canadian partner, one European-Canadian partner, married in or after 1971, currently living in the Lower Mainland) and my name, fax and home phone number (see Appendix A). After contacting me, I then sent the prospective subjects a letter on official University of British Columbia letterhead explaining the purpose of the study, the particulars of the research, and the parameters of their involvement. I also stated in the letter that I would contact them the following week to determine if they wished to participate in the study. When (or if) the couple confirmed that they wished to participate, an agreed upon time was arranged. The day before the interview, I contacted the couple again in order to re-confirm the interview appointment, and obtain directions to their place of residence.
Asking Questions

Interviewing also allowed me flexibility when asking questions. Because the thesis was mainly exploratory, I chose an unstructured method. "An unstructured interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words in a particular order" (Babbie: 270). The more exploratory the purpose, the greater the need for flexibility in determining the wording of the question, the sequence of the questions, and the direction and amount of probing used. From the interview experience, I found that I tended to begin the interview in much the same way but veered off to different directions as I responded to the stories being shared with me. In other words, I was "free to adapt the interview to capitalize on the special knowledge, experience, or insights of respondents" (Singleton et al: 235). The questions are in Appendix B; while I can report that I asked all the questions in my plan, I did not necessarily ask them in a prescriptive order. I was interested in the gender and racial dynamics which occurred, the manner in which responses were given, and the way the comments were phrased. All of this was accomplished with the unstructured format used in interviewing. Using this format helped the subjects feel at ease with the interview thus suggesting a "conversational" atmosphere to the interview.

Recording Material

In 27 of the 30 interview settings, I used a tape-recorder to record the interviews. The three exceptions were a result of subject's concern about privacy. In these three instances, I took some notes concerning the key points during the interview, but waited until after the session was over to write them out in more detail and to double-check my
quotes. I avoided intense note-taking since this might have distracted the subjects and made them feel that I was neglecting them. Even though I was not granted permission to use a tape-recorder in these three interviews, the subjects were open to the suggestion that I could phone them if I had any clarifications. In two of the three cases I did call the subjects following the interview since key points needed to be clarified and reaffirmed. These three were the only exceptions to the way that I recorded material. In all other cases, I recorded, with their permission, my conversation with the couples, and immediately following the interview, transcribed the tape.

I used the tape-recorder for two main reasons. First, I wanted to give the couples my undivided attention when I was interviewing them. I wanted to make sure that I understood what they were trying to say rather than focusing on the exact word or phrase that was used. Using the tape-recorder allowed me to concentrate on what they were saying rather than trying to write everything down and be as detailed as possible. The use of the tape-recorder reassured me that I would be able to pull out exact quotes without losing the flow of the interview. At the same time, the use of the tape-recorder allowed me to take note of facial expressions, gestures and non-verbal interactions between husband and wife. If I was not using the tape-recorder and instead focusing on note-taking, these non-verbal expressions may be lost and unrecognized during the interview. The tape-recorder also offered me a way go back during the analysis stage and highlight key themes that were stated in the interview that would have been more difficult without the use of the recorder. The possible negatives for using a tape-recorder during the interviews, such as inhibiting the interviewee or distracting from the conversation, did not appear to be an issue.
The Physical Setting

All interviews were conducted at the subject's place of residence at the subject's request. Conducting the interview at the couple's home was beneficial in two respects. First, I believed that rapport would be established more easily if we spoke in an environment in which the pair was already comfortable. Second, since I was asking the couples to volunteer to participate in my study, I wanted to have the interview in the most convenient place for the subjects.

Since I wanted to interview both husband and wife, setting up a convenient time for both of them was at times frustrating. One partner may work in the evening, and so it was difficult to set up a time that both of them would not be working. In addition, some couples had small children so the interview had to be scheduled around this factor. Thus, some interviews were conducted late in the evening after dinner. In six cases, the interviews started after 9:00 in the evening when the couples settled the children in bed and had time for the interview.

I purposely did not offer my own apartment as a site for the interview. One reason is that I understood the constraints on the couples who had children and thus did not want to impede more on their time. Obviously, I felt I was the one with the most to gain and felt it fair to inconvenience them as little as I possibly can. As well, I thought that interviewing them in my apartment is not an ideal situation because of the implied power relation. If I had them over as guests, I did not want them to feel coerced in any way. I did not want them to respond to my questions simply to please me, although this of course, is a possibility with any interview. I wanted them to feel as comfortable as
possible and thus knew that having a setting that was unfamiliar to them would not be conducive to the interview.

As part of a strategy to make my interviewees more at ease, I also opened myself to any questions they might have had. Some asked questions about my personal life, the most common being “Are you Chinese”, and “Are you in an inter-racial relationship?” I allowed some time for their questions as part of a strategy to establish trust, but also to get to know their concerns and their interests. Either before, or after the interview, all of the interviewees expressed interest in what I was doing and welcomed it, saying that it was nice to see someone researching the topic on inter-racial marriages and that they would be interested to know if other people went through similar experiences as they did.

**Gender, Racial and Language Dynamics**

Before starting my interviews, I recognized the fact that women and men experience things differently. Even though the couples are married, the husband and wife may not necessarily have a “shared” experience. The wife’s interpretation of a certain event may be quite different than her husband’s recollection of the same situation.

As Creese and Strong-Boag state:

Different roles and assumptions, together with varying degrees of power and authority, are attached to daughters, wives, mothers, grandmothers, the single, the young, and the elderly. Gender also interacts with class, race, and ethnicity in complex ways... Women and girls from different ethnic backgrounds will find different sets of expectations for behaviour, both from within our own communities and from the society at large. Women of colour who face racial discrimination often experience systematic mistreatment much worse than the disadvantages all women encounter... assessments of women, like those of men, must take considerable care to avoid the temptation to overgeneralize (1992: 2).
I did take into account that if there was an imbalance of dialogue between the husband and wife, I would direct some of my questions to the person who was recessive. I tried to encourage both husband and wife to speak as often as they wanted without having one person control or dominate the interview. Language did play a role in a few interviews in that one partner did not speak English fluently. One particular woman apologized for her verbal English skills when I arrived at their home. I reassured her that I would speak slower and would repeat anything she did not understand. At the start of the interview, she was nervous and let her husband speak mostly, but I recognized this fact and addressed specific questions directly to her. After a while, she felt more comfortable, and started to speak as often as her husband.

During the interview, I also noted the exhibited racial dynamics between the couple. Prior to the commencement of the interviewing process, I hypothesized that a Chinese husband and European wife would have different dynamics in their relationship than a European husband and Chinese wife. I can now state that there were dynamics among each couple, but that none could be successfully isolated. As the above quote from Creese and Strong-Boag illustrate, “gender interacts with class, race and ethnicity in complex ways” (ibid.). If one partner spoke more than the other partner, or if a partner responded for the other partner, I would ask direct questions to the quiet partner. In addition, if one partner said something and the other partner was nodding or perhaps giving me the impression that he or she was in disagreement, I would ask that person for a direct confirmation of this. This method seemed to work well in all the interviews.

In addition to the above dynamics, other considerations had to be taken into account. As a researcher and a Chinese-Canadian woman, my relationship with the
couples I interviewed were shaped by these two factors. First, the power relations or
dynamics, were already set in place before the interview process. As Ruth Frankenberg
states, “there is in general a power imbalance between a researcher and the subjects of
research in the sense that the researchers sets the agenda and edits the material, analyzes
it, publishes it, and thereby takes both credit and blame for the overall result” (1993: 29).
Thus, it should be recognized that the interpreter is an active participant in distinctive
ways with the shaping of a story. This personality and biases of the researcher clearly
enter into the process to affect the outcome. Is it the couple’s understanding of their own
experiences that is sought, or is the researcher structuring the interview so that the
subjects tell a story that conforms to the researcher’s orientation?

The subjects who participated in my research did so voluntarily and they
understood at the onset of the interview that if they felt uncomfortable about answering
any questions they could refuse to answer, turn off the tape recorder temporarily if they
felt threatened, and/or discontinue the interview altogether. In fact, the first option, that
of refusing to answer certain questions did arise in one particular incident. A husband
said that he would prefer not to discuss the issue concerning his mother’s resistance
against his marriage since this would cause problems or tensions between his wife and
him. Another couple asked me to turn the tape recorder off when they named particular
individuals; this was the case even when I assured them of anonymity and confidentiality.

The second set of power relations is in the concept of “race” itself. Before
starting on the project, I was aware that my being Chinese-Canadian may have an effect
on the subjects. At the time, I was unsure of how this fact may directly affect the study,
but many of the Chinese-Canadian women interviewed stated that they felt they could
express themselves more openly because they felt I could truly commiserate with their situation. One particular issue that arose surrounding my background was a response to the advertisement I placed in a local Vancouver newspaper. The wife, who was European-Canadian responded to the advertisement stating her interest and said that she would discuss it with her husband after I explained what the study was about, and what the interview process involved. We agreed that she would call me back to confirm her interest and to then set up a convenient interview time. She did return my call to state that her husband did not want to participate since he would prefer not having a Chinese-Canadian interviewer. She offered no further explanation, and I did not request one. In this particular incident, my racial background was the deciding factor for this particular couple’s refusal to participate.

Whose Voice? Whose Reality Is This?

A question that is particularly important in a study of people who may be the object of racism is, Whose reality is this? Is this a thesis about the experiences and thoughts of the people being interviewed or is it about a researcher’s reality? Whose voice is speaking? The complex issue of power, privilege and authority involved in the production and ultimate use of interviews must be addressed when analyzing data. There is an emphasis on the collaboration between the two parties involved - the original “subject” who tells his/her story and the “researcher” who records or analyzes various dimensions of the relationship between the subject and researcher.

Researchers have attempted to assume an objective stance in their work, claiming that it was possible and desirable to be impartial observers and recorders of their subject’s lives (Gorden, 1980). However, when conducting interviews where you are
asking the subjects to express intimate details of their lives to you, it is difficult to maintain such an objective stance. The perspective of the researcher - in terms of gender, class, culture, disciplinary orientation - must be taken into account and acknowledged. Thus, it should be recognized that the interpreter is an active participant involved in distinctive ways with the shaping of the story. When the creation of story is perceived as an exchange - a dialogue between a subject and a researcher/interpreter - this dynamic extends to the actual production of the text itself.

The critical questions for interviewers are whose story are the subjects asked to tell, who interprets it, and in what context? The subjects' stories (the data) are the result of an interaction between two parties. The personality and biases of the researcher clearly enter into the process to affect the outcome. Is it the subjects’ understanding of their own experiences that is sought, or is the researcher structuring the interview so that the subject tells a story that conforms to the researcher’s orientation? Swindells and others (K. Goodman, 1989; M. Shostak, 1983) highlight this point in which many researchers are sceptical about the “authenticity” of voices which they believe could be a voice of imitation, or multiple voices (Swindells, 1986). If the goal of the interview is to encourage the subjects to tell their own stories, to speak in their own terms, then how one asks questions and with what words, becomes critical to the outcome of the interview.

Before going out and interviewing, I had carefully gone over each question to make sure that they were not leading, threatening, or biased in any way. In addition, because I was interviewing two people, I noted the interaction between them in order to allow each person to speak equally.
For example, in six interviews, one partner spoke English as a second language. In these cases, I noticed that their spouses would speak most of the time and would speak for them. Even though the partners who did not speak English as a first language would be nodding as if in agreement, I would address this question afterward directly to them in order to give them a chance to speak for themselves.

**Experience/Memory/Truths**

When talking about their lives, people sometimes lie, forget, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet they *are* revealing truths. These truths may not reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the manipulated versions of the subject’s experiences. Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of oral experiences are not always open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the world views that inform them. Sometimes the truths we see in the subjects’ stories jar us from our complacent security as interpreters “outside” the story and make us aware that our own place in the world plays a part in our interpretation and shapes the meanings we derive from them.

The truths of stories are the truths revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experience in social relationships, in the context of passionate beliefs and partisan stands. By probing the meaning of the words subjects use to describe themselves and their experience, the researcher can employ an analysis of the social forces that affect their consciousness. In my study, these were used to help the interviewees overcome memory barriers and to facilitate further information beyond the answer given. There
were various probes that I used throughout the interview process. For example, I would give non-verbal forms of probes, including expressions such as: "uh huh," "really," "I see", a nod of the head, or an expectant facial expression. Another type of probe that I used was the clarification probe. This not only asks for more information on the topic under discussion, but it also specifies the kind of additional information that is needed. A request for clarification may take many specific forms. First, I might request that the respondent give a more detailed sequence of events, beginning at a certain point in the action described in the immediately preceding response. For example: "What happened right after you married John?" "What happened that night after you got home from your date with John?" Second, I might probe for more detailed information on some specific aspect, rather than some particular period of time. This would include such probes as: "When did that happen?" "How did you find out about that?" "How did you feel when your parents told you they did not like John?" "Why do you suppose they did that?"

**Ethics**

Before starting the interview process, I went through the University of British Columbia's ethics procedure. After gaining approval, I started to advertise for subjects. Obviously a sensitive part of my study or any study which involves human subjects is the question of ethics. My study entailed asking personal questions pertaining to subjects' experiences; thus I was aware of the crucial aspect of what, and how the questions were going to be asked.

A pre-test was administered before interviewing the 30 couples. I interviewed 5 Chinese/European married couples for purposes of pre-testing the questions and the general format of the meeting. The characteristics of the pre-test subjects closely
matched those of the larger sample. The response of the pre-test were examined for such problems as a low response rate to sensitive questions, obvious or redundant responses, confusion as to the meaning of the questions, or complaints about the length of the interview. The information gained by pre-testing gave further revision efforts. The only significant modification of the process was the actual length of the interview. The pre-test interviews were lengthy, lasting approximately two hours. The reason for this is that in the pre-test, I asked the questions in sequential order as I had written them out and thus many of the responses overlapped making the interview lengthy and repetitive to some extent. In the actual test, I was able to alter this structure, streamline the interview process, and avoid overlapping questions.

Conducting the interviews for this thesis was, in different ways, terrifying, frustrating, challenging, and rewarding (not necessarily in that order). The terror came mostly from the fact that interviewing required of me a confrontation with my own personality and cultural training. Interviewing requires one to go out and ask personal questions of strangers and, even before that, to approach unknown people either in person or by telephone and ask them for an enormous favour - to give time, and to share personal history. I was asking the subjects to trust that their time and, more importantly, their words would be treated with respect. The frustration and the challenge came from the special difficulties involved in interviewing inter-racial couples on what for many people is still a "taboo" topic. The reward came from talking and listening to the couple’s stories or unique experiences. In the context of the interviews themselves, I worked to comprehend the logic of their lives and the words with which they described them.
During the interview the first thing that I did was to reiterate information that I had given them over the phone when arranging the interview (or in the letter I had sent previously), such as my personal background, the nature or purpose of my study, the purposes for which the information would be used, and assurances of confidentiality. I also collected the signed consent forms for my own records, and again confirmed whether they would allow the interview to be tape-recorded. As I stated in the beginning of this chapter, three interviews were not tape-recorded. Sixteen couples consisted of Chinese-Canadian males and European-Canadian females. The other fourteen couples consisted of Chinese-Canadian females and European-Canadian males. Of the Chinese-Canadian partners, eight were born outside of Canada (please refer to Appendix C). The age range for husbands in my study was 27 to 71; the age range for wives in my study was 25 to 68.

As each couple is unique, all the interviews were slightly different. At the start of the interview, I asked each subject background information such as place of birth, age, occupation, educational attainment, where they met each other before marrying, and what expectation (if any) did each have for his/her partner. These personal background questions enabled me to formulate a general profile of each couple (please refer to Appendix D).

The next phase of my interview questions revolved around how the couple met, and reactions toward them from family, friends, acquaintances, or the community in terms of acceptance, tolerance, or intolerance. As previously stated, the research questions were not in any strict order, for the direction of the interview was largely subject driven. If the subject briefly referred to an experience that was relevant to my
research question, I employed interrogative probes to direct the subject to discuss this issue in more detail.

Before concluding the interviews and thanking the couple for their participation, I asked them if they knew of any other people who might be willing to participate in the research. While a few stated that they could not think of anyone off-hand, most were willing to provide me with names and contact numbers of prospective candidates, and also offered to preface my call with one of their own. A few couples had even taken the initiative and referred some names and numbers of couples. In the final result, four couples came through this process of referral.

At the conclusion of the interview, most of the couples expressed great satisfaction about participating in the study, stating that it was personally gratifying that someone was interested in this topic and that they were interested how other inter-racial couples experiences compared in respect to their own.

After completing each interview, I made a point of returning home immediately to systematically go through the notes written during the interview and to play back the tape. I also immediately transcribed the tape into hard copy which took about 2 hours. Although time consuming, I was immediately able to isolate themes or recurrent experiences revealed by different couples. In preparation for writing up the analysis, I highlighted several quotes that I found to be particularly illustrative, interesting, and potentially useful to include in the write-up. To assure anonymity, I assigned each subject an alias during the transcription so that I could easily refer to them in the analysis stage.
A thank-you letter was also sent to each couple following the interview. In it, I thanked each couple for their time and informed them that the thesis will be made available at the University of British Columbia Main Library. I also plan to send a one page summary of findings to all of the subjects.
Chapter 5 - Data Analysis

[In Vancouver in the 1970's] when I was dating Adam, my parents, especially my dad had strong reservations about me dating a Chinese man... [however] when we decided to marry, that was when I realized how racist my father really was... My dad treated Adam well enough when we were dating, but this was because my mom was always smoothing things over... in fact I thought he was beginning to welcome Adam into the family... [but] the total opposite occurred... My dad did not like it that his only daughter was marrying a “Chinaman,” or some other derogatory name he used to say... even when he knew he was dying, he never let down his guard when Adam and I would visit him.

Alice (age 56)

[In Vancouver in the 1990’s] when I introduced Brett to my parents, I was so terrified that they would turn me, and him away... My parents have always made it clear they wanted me to marry someone Chinese and that they would never accept otherwise... They did not like Brett at all, just because of his colour and would never say anything to him when we would go over to their place together... They called him “gui lo” [derogatory name for white person] in front of him and me knowing that I didn’t like the word and knowing that he knew what it meant... They still haven’t accepted Brett into the family, nor have they forgiven me for marrying him... When they have relatives from out of town visiting, they would phone me to come for dinner, but would not invite Brett... That makes me so frustrated, so I just don’t go.

Amber (age 34)

Inter-racial relationships have been, and remain, controversial terrain in Canada. This chapter focuses on inter-racial relationships as reflective of one aspect of a multicultural society. Examining the discourse on inter-racial relationships, especially the dominant themes that were present among the couples interviewed, brings into sharp focus a range of issues which are key to comprehending the degree to which our multicultural society is accepting, tolerating or intolerant. Similar experiences expressed in the interviews will be highlighted as themes presented in this chapter.

15 All names of participants in my research have been replaced by pseudonyms.
I will analyze the words of inter-racial couples concerning how "race" plays a role in their marriage and relationship with others, and how specifically it has affected their lives. Their stories or experiences provide a different perspective on the discourse on inter-racial relationships since it offers the viewpoint which is less visible from the "outsider's" perspective. The first part of this chapter deals with the process of racialization, that is, the process of the social construction of "race" as seen in the empirical data presented on the experiences of inter-racial couples. The second part of this chapter addresses the experiences of the subjects in the framework of multiculturalism. This suggests how others' resistance to their relationship demonstrates commitment (or lack of commitment) to multiculturalism as an ideology and social reality of cultural pluralism. While the discourse about inter-racial marriages is part of the context for these couple's experiences, their experiences also further a critique of the discourse itself. I should point out, however, that their stories and experiences are important in that they offer a window into the lives of inter-racial couples -- an opportunity that has rarely presented itself in previous research. This does not mean that the data presented here is representative of all inter-racial couples; rather I offer a snapshot into the lives of a small group of Canadian Chinese/European couples living in Vancouver.

**Representations of "the Other" - The Process of Racialization**

Frankenberg refers to "racialized masculinities" in respect to how beliefs about visible minority men are constructed by "race" in stereotypical ways that emulate historical beliefs (1993). These constructions range from the simplistic and blatantly
racist to others that are more positive. The underlying theme though, is one of "representations of the Other", be that negative or positive which consists of assigning or labelling certain characteristics to fit an individual or group stereotypes.

In my interviews, images of Chinese men were perceived by respondents to be blatantly racist, echoing older stereotypes. For example, Frank (Chinese-Canadian male) stated that when he was dating Frances he would pick her up at her house when her father was there. Describing his experience of how her father would refer to him, he said:

Frank: I would come by Frances' house to pick her up and her father would be there. He would work odd hours so it seemed that he was always there when I'd arrive, unfortunately. I don't know if he was trying to be friendly, or what, but one time he asked me how the restaurant was and I said fine. But then he asked if there's still the gambling rooms in the back where all the opium was smoked. He would also say that in the back rooms my employees killed cats and served them to my customers. That would make me so furious, for that wasn't true.

Frances: I think he sometimes tries to come across as knowing everything, but he's quite the bigot! Anyhow, I told him afterward that he shouldn't say stuff like that for it's not true.

Interviewer: What did he say to that?

Frank: Knowing her dad, he would laugh it off, but the next time I'd show up, he'd make another stereotypical reference. One time he said that he was glad that I at least was one of the cleaner Chinese men he sees for he wouldn't know what he'd do if his daughter was dating a "dirty" Chinaman.

Interviewer: Why do you think he said that?

Frank: Well, it was obvious that he still thought of Chinese people, or men as being dirty. However, I knew he was trying to make me "blow up" in front of Frances. I don't know if he really believed all that, or he was just pushing me. I just try to avoid him for I don't want to cause any more conflict between Frances and her dad.

Frances: My dad though doesn't just make reference to Chinese people, he also has his views on other groups, like East Indians. I just ignore him whenever he talks like that, for he's just ignorant.
Interviewer: Where do you think he got these views from?

Frances: I don’t know. My mom used to say that his father, my grandfather was also the same way. I mean, when we were growing up he’d make comments that would be really embarrassing but we never questioned him on them for it would make him angry. Also, my mom would never say anything for she knew you couldn’t argue with him. I think he says stuff like this because he feels threatened by other groups.

Despite her father’s negative stereotypes of Frank, Frances did not internalize his views, for she married Frank against her father’s wishes. As she stated in other parts of the interview, it was all too easy to draw on stereotypic constructions of Chinese people, especially men, as she would hear many references from neighbours, and of course from her father when she was living at home. She resisted the racist viewpoint, however, due to competing ideologies.

This was not the only stereotypical perception which drew from historical accounts of Chinese men. Other stereotypes perceived Asian men as less masculine. A brief dialogue from one interview will clarify this point:

Darla: When I told my mom that I was dating a Chinese guy, she didn’t mind at all, not that it would matter... But, it was kinda funny though because she was hesitant in asking me what David looked like.

Interviewer: Why was that?

Darla: Well, ... because the few Chinese guys she’s met, they were really wimpy looking and geeky! I guess she wanted to know if David was like a neighbour of ours, a Chinese family. Their son was so feminine! He used to walk on his toes and he had quite a high voice, which sounded like a girl. I just laughed when she told me, and said “You’ll see him tonight”.

David: [laughs] Well, she had a pretty narrow view of what Chinese guys should be like. I think she was a bit surprised and relieved when she saw me! I mean, I’m short, but I’m definitely not wimpy.
Darla’s mother assumed that David was “effeminate”, which fits into much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century constructions of Asian masculinity. As Frankenberg explains though, this stereotype was not always the case:

It is striking that in the context of the nativist movements against Asians, racist constructions of Asian men as lascivious and predatory also emerged. In short, given male dominance within white culture, the “protection” or “salvation” of white women and their supposedly civilized sexuality from men of color and their “primitive” sexuality has been the alibi for a range of atrocities from genocide and lynching to segregation and immigration control. Ironically, the success of anti-Asian immigration laws in excluding Asian women… which created “bachelor” communities of Asian and especially Chinese men for much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to an inversion of the construction of Asian masculinity from “hypersexual” to “undersexed” or “effeminate” (1993: 76).

These two couples were aware that these stereotypes were misconceptions, and were able to gain critical distance, but others continued to think within racial parameters. For instance, Terry, a husband of a Chinese-Canadian woman, claimed that he married a Chinese woman because he wanted someone who was passive and at the same time exotic. He didn’t want a “White” woman, as he felt that they were too aggressive and always wanted to dominate men! In this particular instance, the stereotype is twofold: first, Terry internalized views surrounding the centuries-old element of racist memory. That is, he associated passivity, demureness and being mysterious as typical Chinese characteristics one would find in a Chinese woman. Second, he associated the complete opposite characteristics with “White” females as being aggressive, and domineering. A brief excerpt from the interview:

_Terry:_ Did I have a racial criteria when dating? Yeah, I guess I did. I tried to go out with Chinese women. I went out with a few White women before meeting Nola and even when we broke up a few times, but I always found Chinese women exotic, you know what I mean? My friends and I used to talk about what it would
be like dating an Oriental woman since there were none where we lived. So, when I started to date Nola, it was like a novelty! However, I soon found out that she’s not so quiet after all! I guess I got one of the rare ones.

Nola: [laughs] I only dated White guys when I was growing up. I did not like Chinese guys, even though my parents wanted me to marry one. I mean, I didn’t want all the hassles you have like marrying into a Chinese guy’s family. That would drive me crazy!

Evident here is the “naturalizing” process that serves to conceal the constructedness of all effective ideological systems. The image of Chinese women as “exotic” seemed to Terry to be an idea that was indicative of all Chinese women - that certain stereotypical characteristics such as “mysteriousness” and “demureness” were generally applicable to this particular racial group. Even when he stated that Nola was “not so quiet after all”, he still believed that Chinese women were quiet, yet he happened to marry one that wasn’t. This is an excellent example of the resilience of the racial stereotype, particularly in the face of contradictory information!

At the same time though, there is the stereotyped perception of White men. The stereotypic image of White men as “living pay-check by pay-check” and consuming too much alcohol seemed to be a “common” belief among some Chinese parents. This point was expressed in a few interviews. For instance:

Amber: I would get into some awful arguments with my parents, especially my dad... I brought Brett over to my parents place one night for dinner and my dad usually has liqueur to serve. He kept offering Brett refills and Brett accepted because he didn’t want to seem impolite... After Brett went home,... and he only drank a bit, but more than my dad, my parents said he drinks too much, he’s like all White men, that they [white men] like to drink and that if we marry, he’ll spend all the money on alcohol and we’ll never be able to afford anything... I mean, my parents were grasping at straws so that I wouldn’t stay with Brett...

Interviewer: Why do you think they have this image of White men?
Amber: I think my parents have always had a certain image they associated with White men. To even think of one of their daughters marrying someone not Chinese is just that, unthinkable! Their image of White men... not saving their money... not thinking of the future, living pay-check to pay-check, ... they get a lot of these ideas from Chinese shows... I remember going to see Chinese shows when I was just a kid and seeing White men being played as idiots. It was really embarrassing! I know that there are some men like this, but not all of them are White like my parents want to believe. If anything were to happen that Brett and I would separate, or divorce, my parents would blame it on his Whiteness... I hear their friends talk, and relatives about people they know who inter-racially married and then divorced and I hear this often, “It wouldn’t have happened if she, or he married a Chinese person!”

In this particular incident, Amber assumes that her parents internalized stereotypic views of White men due to the portrayals in Chinese media. It is not just Amber’s parents, however, who have this stereotyped perception. Amber states that she hears her parents’ friends having similar beliefs. Even though Amber excuses her parents’ beliefs as such because they are “grasping at straws” so she would break up with Brett, the issue is one of racist beliefs. Her parents and their friends held stereotyped perceptions of White men that they used as generalizable of all White men.

There is also the “natural” ranking of “race” that was brought up by many couples. Some couples stated that they were told that “it is better to marry White than it is to marry Black, or Native”. This issue was brought forth in one particular interview.

Marci (Chinese-Canadian) and Michael mentioned this factor during their interview:

Marci: Of course there was lots of problems when I married Michael... My dad, that is, my stepfather just didn’t want me to marry anyone not Chinese... To this day he hasn’t spoken to me, nor has he been introduced to Michael! My mom’s happy for me especially that I married Michael. My previous boyfriend was Black-American. We were together for about 2 years, but it didn’t work out for it was long-distance.

Interviewer: Did your mom like John (previous boyfriend’s name)?
Marci: No, not at all. It wasn’t because John wasn’t nice, but because he was Black.

Interviewer: Did your mom approve of Michael?

Marci: Not exactly, but now she does. Michael’s not Chinese obviously so there was some problems... But, marrying White is better than Black.

Interviewer: Is that what you think, or your mom thinks that?

Marci: My mom. She said it was better marrying someone White than Black. Of course, the ultimate would be to marry Chinese, but ... Of course I don’t agree for I went out with John for 2 years. Colour to me doesn’t matter, but to my parents it definitely does.

Marci’s mother alluded to the view that White is the lesser evil of Black. Black appears to connote inferiority and suggests that they are unfit to marry Chinese. There is a scale of ranking according to Marci’s mother. White is superior to Black, but Chinese is the highest.

While Marci described her mother as being more accepting of White-Chinese relationships, this might be an after-the-event rationalization for the fact that Marci is married to a White man. A key point arose from an interview which Frankenberg conducted concerning Black/White or Chinese/White inter-racial relationships:

\[\text{It’s funny that the stigma always seems to be with Blacks and... to a certain extent the Chicanos, the Mexicans. Those seem to be the two, because people will accept a mixed marriage between an Oriental and a Caucasian much more readily... I guess because the skin tones are more similar... and maybe - it’s a known fact - Orientals are bright people, the brightest in the world, if you want to categorize them intellectually (1993: 99).}\]

Degrees of similarity and difference are in the eyes of the beholder, constructed by a history of ideas about “race”. Tested against a more accepted reality, the idea that all Asians are intelligent (a stereotype, though not a derogatory one) does not tend to hold up any better than ideas of preferential race mixing based on similarity of skin colour.
Moreover, its social meaning is the more important question here, because there is no \textit{a priori} reason why colour (the factor this person cites) should be a significant factor in the choice of marriage. It is however, that person's reality and it is, as W.I. Thomas suggests quite real in its consequences (1928).

These examples demonstrate that racism is a social construct and that it is a factor of the historical time period in which we live. Racism itself remains a factor as society changes although manifestations of "race" change due to social situations. Racial stereotypes characterizing Chinese men and women and European men and women were still quite prevalent in the interviews that I conducted in 1995.

\textbf{The "Ordinary" Relationship}

Even though most of the couples that I interviewed related stories of their encounters with respect to resistance and racism, there were couples who viewed their relationship as "ordinary" or as being no different than any other same-race couple. These couples recognized that "race" was a key factor when they got together; however, they were adamant in stating that their relationship is fully accepted by their families, friends, acquaintances, colleagues and generally, the community.

\begin{quote}
\textit{We're no different than anybody else. We have the same concerns for a family, the kids - if you have any - my house, my dog, my job, my daily life concerns.} (Olga)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{I just look at this relationship as she is my wife and I am her husband... Everyone else may be looking at it as a mixed marriage, which I think is really stupid for we're just like any other married couple. We are no different than a couple who married the same race as each other.} (Oscar)
\end{quote}

Some couples said that their relationship was ordinary and that there was nothing strange about loving their partner and living an everyday life with that partner. But when
someone in an inter-racial relationship characterizes his or her relationship as ordinary, it may be viewed as a challenge to those who oppose or stereotype inter-racial couples. From the perspective of the people who were interviewed, claiming ordinariness may be a counter to those who see them as unusual, strange, doomed to fail, trouble-makers, or otherwise inappropriate or defective. By saying, “We are ordinary,” a person in an inter-racial relationship is telling those who single them out as different that they are wrong and is also trying to defend against any words, stares, and so on that could have the potential to intrude on ordinary couple life. One clue to how the claim of ordinariness can be a counter to opposition and stereotyping and a defense is that, while talking about being an ordinary couple, some people also talked about those in their family or the larger society who singled them out as odd.

Rhiandra: Inter-racial couples are like all other couples, and... the fact that we are inter-racial is not the most outstanding or significant day-to-day thing in our lives... We didn’t marry each other from hidden agendas, you know. That’s another big stereotype.

Interviewer: What do you think people think those agendas are?

Rhiandra: Oh, that you’re rebelling from your family or you have low self-esteem... That’s, I guess, what they think about me, or that Rod... needs a White woman because he rejects his own culture. All that kind of stuff just really bothers me, that society can’t just allow people to choose their mates simply because they love them. It didn’t matter to me that Rod was Chinese. Sure I knew that, but that wasn’t the reason why I married him. When my friends and family tell me that my marriage is destined to fail before it has even started, that really makes me angry.

Acceptance

Acceptance of inter-racial marriages was also noted by the couples. Ethan and Dawn highlighted the ordinariness of their relationship and at the same time, were aware
of the resistance against inter-racial relationships, yet felt that the support they encountered was an expression of acceptance.

Dawn: I wouldn't say that we have had any problems in our relationship. That is, people know that we're racially different, but that hasn't affected the way people treat us. I mean, really, we're no different than any other couple. It is an issue for some people, like our friends who are inter-racially married, but I think that's because they have come across some rough terrain. They haven't had any support like Ethan and I.

Ethan: I wouldn't say that we haven't had any problems, and if we did, we probably rationalized it as not relating to our being inter-racially involved. I know that some of my friends, like Dawn said, who are inter-racially married have had tons of problems from families, co-workers, but Dawn and I wouldn't think of it as that if it did happen. Everyone we've come across has been really supportive. If they weren't, we would just disassociate ourselves from them for they aren't worth our efforts.

Interviewer: Do you think that Canadian society is more or less accepting of inter-racial couples today than was the case in the past?

Ethan: I think so. Even though Dawn and I say that our relationship has been totally accepting, we know the problems that our friends have encountered. That wouldn't say society is accepting, would it? But then, it wasn't so bad as it used to be... because family friends of my parents who inter-racially married in the 1950's were ostracized by their community. My parents told me that Don, my dad's friend, lost his job because he married a Chinese woman and no one wanted to be around them... it was a really ugly scene back then. If we compare then the way society used to be and the way it is today, yes I would say we're more accepting.

Dawn: I would say the same thing as Ethan. We know there are still problems how people perceive two races mixing, especially in the States, but it's different now. Society seems to be more relaxed than a long time ago, so like Ethan said, if we look at how things are in comparison, things are way more accepting today. Especially if we are just going by what we think in terms of what our marriage is like, then "yes" things are accepting. However, I know my friends have a different outlook and they wouldn't say society is more accepting, so it all depends on who you talk to.

Ethan and Dawn saw acceptance in society and saw their relationship as no different than other marriages that weren't inter-racial. Another couple stated that they
perceive society as being more accepting today than in previous times. As Jack and Joan state:

Jack: I see people being more educated and not as uptight as they used to be with mixed marriages. Long time ago there was probably a lot of racism against mixed couples, but since we've been together, we've only come across acceptance from all people... It does depend on who you hang out with, I think. I mean, Joan and I don't go to clubs and whatever, so we never get into situations where there are probably a greater chance of racism occurring.

Joan: I have to agree with Jack in that we've never had anyone come up to us and say, or do anything that would offend us. I find people stare, but that doesn't mean they aren't accepting. I'm used to that, and I think even though there seems to be many mixed couples around, it is still considered to be "new" so that's why people stare. Yet we think society is totally accepting of us. We haven't come across any problems.

Another couple, Nancy and Nick spoke of absolute acceptance they experienced during a family get-together:

Nancy: It was during our Sunday dinners at my parents place and I asked my mom if that would be a good time to meet Nick. My parents thought it was a great idea since they hadn't met Nick and I knew I kept talking about him to my mom saying "Nick this, Nick that" [laughs]. Never once when I talked about Nick I guess I never mentioned that he was Chinese so my mom and dad assumed he was White. I don't know why they thought that, but anyhow, they did. When Nick showed up, my dad did a double-take and just glanced my way to give me "the look" stating, "you didn't tell me!" It wasn't a big thing that Nick was Chinese, but they were surprised.

Nick: I could tell something was going on, and I knew it was about me, but no one said anything bad to me. In fact, mom and dad were easy going and wanted to learn about Chinese cultural things and showed a keen interest in the fact that I was Chinese. They treated me with total acceptance and when Nancy and I married, it wasn't any different. Her parents are not like that, and even though they talked with Nancy about marrying a Chinese man, they weren't against us. They totally supported our relationship from the start.

Interviewer: Why did your parents talk with you about marrying a Chinese man?

Nancy: I think they recognized that marrying someone from another culture is different than marrying a White man. It made no difference, but they were
concerned that maybe I didn’t know what I was getting into and all that - especially since Nick’s parents didn’t speak English very well and wanted him to marry a Chinese woman. I told that to my parents when we were dating so they were worried how his parents would treat me once we married. They’ve been great though. We don’t see them as much as we do my parents, and I think language plays a big part, but they always smile and try talking with me when we’re there.

These couples’ observations and accounts of their own experiences appear to indicate that society is accepting and inter-racial couples have few if any problems. Yet stories from other inter-racial couples suggest otherwise.

**Resistance - Tolerance/Intolerance - Familial, Friends, Acquaintances, Co-workers, and Community**

Most couples interviewed stated differences between acceptance and tolerance in their relationship. That is, most couples commented on the resistance they encountered as a couple due to their racial and cultural differences in their relationship.

“Race” was seen as a static concept and an unchangeable factor in inter-racial relationships. To marry across racial lines then was perceived to be unacceptable in some cases.

If we look to the historical context sketched at the beginning of the thesis (Chapters 1-3) we can see that centuries of economic, legal, political, and cultural processes reinforced one another to produce and maintain resistance against inter-racial relationships. Inter-racial relationships symbolically challenge the boundaries of communities structured by race and culture. Frankenberg summarizes,

“given a society that is more racially segregated than (quasi-) integrated, and given the generalization that people tend to find sexual and marriage partners within, rather than outside their class, community, and religious groups, it is perhaps not surprising that inter-racial relationships are the exception and not the
norm... such relationships are not merely exceptional... they are a focus of anxiety, disapproval, and taboo. Alongside concerns about the social and cultural problems that racially “mixed” couples and children may experience are arguments that turn (implicitly or explicitly) on notions of essential, irreducible differences between racial groups” (1993: 100).

Much of the resistance against inter-racial couples is comprised of perceived racial and cultural differences as absolutes. Normative ideologies often conceptualize families and communities as monoracial and monocultural. It is not surprising that most of the couples interviewed spoke of family pressure against them, often applied early in the couple’s relationships. Several had relatives who refused to attend their weddings, and others spoke of being “disowned”. Both these and other similar factors have symbolic value.

Refusing to attend a wedding can mean a variety of things, but there is a strong suggestion of refusing to attend endorsing an image of the “Other” as a stranger of the “wrong” kind entering into the closed family network. The public aspect of this event, or occasion is crucial. As Lucy talked about her marriage in 1992 to a European-Canadian, it became clear to her that her parents did not approve of her marriage:

Lucy: Making all the wedding plans were the hardest for us, especially for me. Lyle was extremely supportive, for he knew that I was going through a difficult time. What made me really upset was when my parents, specifically my mom said that she wouldn’t attend the wedding. My dad adamantly refused to help out financially, which was minor, but when I was growing up, my parents always said they’d be there for me, but when I announce I’m getting married, I got absolutely no support whatsoever.

Interviewer: Can you be more specific in what you mean by “no support”?

Lyle: Well, Lucy’s mom said that she wasn’t going to invite any of her ma-jong friends, and that Lucy would have to do all the planning herself. That was the toughest thing for Lucy was very close to her mom and felt this was going to be a mother-daughter thing as she always dreamed.
Lucy: I knew I was dreaming about them accepting Lyle as he is, but I guess I didn’t prepare myself to the extent they would disapprove of him in that they would not want to be part of the wedding at all...I would always...make attempts to get her involved for I knew that after the wedding she would never forget. You know how Chinese parents can be, say everything is fine to your face, but really hold the worst grudge and have long-term memories. So, I was aware of the consequences if she didn’t play a role which is why I kept torturing myself by phoning her often to ask her opinion about wedding things and repeatedly asking her which of her friends, or relatives were coming. She’d always respond ...that no one was coming, she wasn’t planning to invite anyone. That would make me cry all the time I’d get off the phone and Lyle would try to cheer me up...About a month before the wedding, I said to myself that this was it, I have to confirm the catering, hall and everything else, so the last time I called mom, I asked firmly: “is anyone coming?” She then gave me a wishy-washy answer and gave me a roundabout number of people.

Lucy’s mother eventually did invite a few of her friends, while only a few relatives who lived in the city, attended. However, none of her parents’ relatives from far-away places attended the wedding since her mother did not issue an invitation. Lucy said that when she asked her mother why she didn’t send an invitation to far-away relatives, her mother replied “They wouldn’t want to come and spend all that money to see my only daughter marry a lofan [white person]”.

It is also worth noting Lucy’s account of the substance of her mother’s objections to the marriage. Lucy suggested that she and her mother had argued before “over the same issue”. Lucy was referring this to mean dating European-Canadian men. Before she married Lyle, Lucy said that she dated other European men of which her mother did not approve; however, the most resistance occurred when she decided to marry Lyle. As Lucy states, “Getting married is rather different” which suggests to me that she was making a normative statement, and that Lucy shared her mother’s assessment of inter-
racial marriage as a violation of a cultural norm, though she obviously responded to it differently.

The importance of group and ethnic boundaries was indicated in Lucy's statement that her mother's family would have liked her to marry a "well-to-do Chinese man". Marriage to any non-Chinese might have provoked concern, but Lucy viewed it as being more specifically a targeted opposition, saying "My mother's side... they are very intolerant.... very strict. All my cousins have married Chinese even though they were dating Whites, yet they married Chinese for they felt threatened that they would be isolated and would not be allowed to come back into the family". "Strict" here suggests a tightly defended group boundary, an inflexible adherence to cultural norms. When I asked Lucy specifically how she regarded Canadian society in regard to inter-racial couples, she responded that just because her mother's side of the family was "intolerant," she didn't think that this reflected society in general. That is, she felt society was more or less tolerant of inter-racial couples, but not totally accepting, since there is still resistance.

Beside refusing to attend the wedding, some partners in the interviews stated that they were issued threats by their family of being "disowned" which at times carried financial consequences. The theme of "sanctions" placed on the individual or of being "disowned" was found among many couples. Ian, from a British upper-class background, said that he was repeatedly "warned" by his parents that if he decided to marry Irma, his parents, especially his grandfather to whom he was very close, said that they would not continue to support his education as they were doing at that time. In addition, he would
not inherit any property or the house as originally promised to him. As Ian said in the
interview:

Ian: I met Irma in Taiwan when I was travelling... I eventually stayed there because of Irma, but I always wanted to go back to England... After about 3 years of living in Taipei, Irma and I decided to move back to England and that was the first time she met my family. We were already engaged by then.

Interviewer: What did your family say when you said that you were getting married.

Ian: They didn't say much at all when I told them for they hadn't met Irma yet and I hadn't seen them for 3 years... I think they were hoping that I'd come back to England by myself without Irma so that we'd have time apart from each other.

Irma: When I met his parents, they just ignored me and didn't welcome me into the family at all. This wasn't the case for my parents in Taiwan for Ian and I were living with my family. It was really tough because we were staying at his parents place and they didn't approve of me so it did put a strain on our relationship.

Ian: It was during Christmas that the whole thing came to a blow. All my relatives came over and met Irma for the first time and my grandfather just stared at her, but later told me that he couldn't believe that I was marrying a "slant-eyed" as he put it. That just hurt me for I was always close to him. He also said that I wouldn't see a cent of his money and that he wouldn't help me finish school. A lot of ugly things were said. I know that I said some pretty mean things to him as well. Irma and I just left that evening and stayed with a friend of mine. Of course my parents tried to smooth things over by asking me to come back and apologized, but they still didn't say they wanted Irma back too.

Irma: I was crying all the time and didn't know what to do for I knew I was the reason for the rift, but I didn't want to leave Ian. I was willing to head back to Taiwan though without him for the situation was really bad by then. We didn't have much money and they knew this, and they also knew that Ian had to finish school.

Ian: My grandfather phoned me at my friend's place the following day and said he wanted me to come back and that he would give me money to finish school and that I would have my own place and all these other things. However I knew it was under the conditions that Irma wouldn't return with me that all this would occur... Irma and I just left after that. We went back to Taiwan so I could continue working there until I saved enough money to return to school. Irma's parents though ended up helping us. We didn't ask, but her dad knew we didn't like it in
Taiwan, so he gave us some money and we moved to Vancouver since Irma had a sister here and I could go to school here.

Ian had to endure financial consequences from his parents when he married an “outsider”. Beyond its economic aspect, the act of disowning makes the statement that “you are no longer my child,” a symbolic severing of genealogical ties to a family member who has, in the parents’ eyes, joined the “wrong” genealogical group. Like refusing to publicly acknowledge a marriage, disowning attempts to resolve a perceived contradiction or impossibility - the tying together of two groups seen as utterly separate - by rejecting and symbolically “colouring” the family members by marrying an outsider.

At the same time, tensions can arise when the person in question is the first in the immediate family to inter-racially marry. This theme was apparent for many couples. For Colleen, being in a relationship with Cameron was very painful for her family and stressful for the couple personally. During events such as Christmas and birthdays with some family members, anxiety and frustrations were apparent. Colleen’s story of her sister’s engagement to a Chinese man which occurred at the same time as Colleen’s, spelled out the complexities:

Colleen: It was during Christmas when Cameron and I decided to spend it with my family more or less to “get it over with” since we knew that not everyone had met him yet and it was the last family event before our wedding... Also my parents didn’t invite Cameron over, but I knew that if he didn’t come, they’d complain and if he did come, they would make him feel like an intruder. It was really hard just to sit there and have family members pretend you didn’t exist. Some of the family members just looked at Cameron but didn’t say much since they didn’t speak any English [laughs]. I think they were a bit surprised that I was marrying a White man since my parents are really strict and have always told everyone that his daughters would marry a Chinese man. Anyhow, it was really apparent who got all of the family support and who was the favourite when Carol brought Mike [Chinese] to the dinner. Carol got engaged about a month before Cameron and I said we were getting married.
Interviewer: How was it apparent that Carol received more family support than yourself?

Colleen: Well... we were all sitting at the dinner table and everyone’s speaking in Chinese so Cameron couldn’t really understand. Also, my parents were excited about “the wedding” which was Carol and Mike’s wedding. To make it more obvious, Mike speaks Chinese so, I mean, he didn’t do it intentionally, but the difference between Mike and Cameron was there, you know what I mean... I spoke with Carol after the dinner and told her how I felt and she understood, but what can she do. Our weddings were planned at the same time, a few months apart, and my wedding was before hers! But, no-one really said anything about mine. My aunt said, “I guess you are having a Canadian wedding”.

Cameron: I think to make it more stressful, there was a difference in how much financial help her parents were giving to Carol’s wedding and how much they were giving for ours. In a Chinese wedding, the male is supposed to pay for it all. Colleen and I decided that we would pay our own, but that meant obviously a smaller wedding.

Colleen: It wasn’t just that, the big difference was that Carol was marrying someone Chinese and I wasn’t. This was a big deal to my parents and relatives so they made me aware of it. I was the first to marry someone not Chinese and it wasn’t going over well with anyone. Even Carol noticed how much mom and dad and my aunt Linnie and them didn’t acknowledge Cameron. I heard my aunt tell my mom later on in Chinese that it was too bad that I didn’t marry Chinese for it was going to be really hard for them. That’s so selfish. I’m the one marrying, not them.

The fact that Colleen’s sister Carol was marrying a Chinese man and Colleen was not, made the difference more apparent. Their parents and relatives made it obvious when discussion evolved around Carol’s wedding, while Colleen’s wedding was ignored. Although Colleen’s relationship with Cameron was still strong after their wedding, Colleen felt that she was living a painful double life:

Colleen: Cameron and I didn’t want to spend the next Christmas at my family’s home, but I still had to go since it was more for family obligations. Of course, Mike and Carol were there, but yet Cameron wasn’t so I kind of felt like I was not loyal to Cameron. I mean he understood that I felt I had to come, but it didn’t seem right that I’m a married woman, and I didn’t feel comfortable about having
my husband spend time with the family during a holiday like Christmas. I felt like I was an impostor, with my family and with Cameron. I’m just trying to please everybody... For my parents, I felt like I should continue doing things for them since I’ve always done things like that before marrying, yet at the same time, I felt like I was betraying my loyalty to Cameron. I’m just trying to protect everybody, and I’m not being fair, or truthful to Cameron, or myself.

Colleen’s attempts to “protect” everybody were complicated: who was being protected, and from what? It is tempting to argue that, among other things, Colleen was protecting her parents from feeling the effects of their own prejudice.

A few couples interviewed spoke of others in their family who had an inter-racial relationship before their own. Some couples who had siblings who were inter-racially married mentioned that “the ice was already broken through”. In other words, they felt that there was less, or no resistance to their inter-racial involvement due to the fact that someone else in the family already was married.

**Tracy:** Both my older brother and sister married White so it wasn’t a big surprise when I dated Tim. Our parents wanted us to marry Chinese, but I think none of us really wanted to for we’re all Canadian. None of us spoke fluent Chinese so what would be the big thing to marry White? It was a big thing though to mom and dad when Don married Sandra for Don’s the only son and my parents wanted him to marry Chinese. When my sister married Bill it wasn’t as big a deal and when I married Tim, no one put up any kind of resistance! The ice was already broken so I guess my parents thought it was inevitable since all the kids married White.

However, precedents do not necessarily mean that a family is open. In fact, some family members may condemn the precedents set by other family members.

**I’m from a fairly narrow minded family. We’ve had inter-racial relationships in the family quite a lot. I can remember when I was a kid it was brought up because someone who would be like my third, fourth cousin...married a White woman. And that was an issue....It was never an issue in the sense of pushing the person out of the family. They’re still very much of the family, and the woman was welcomed into the family, but there was the kind of knowing looks behind that this isn’t going to last, and it didn’t...Since it didn’t last, everyone is saying**
that it was because of race. In other words, it wouldn’t have happened if my cousin had married someone Chinese! (Susan)

The need to blame the marriage break-up on “race” is used by resisters to justify behaviour against inter-racial marriages. If Susan’s cousin had married a Chinese woman, their rationalization is that the marriage would still be healthy. However, resisters suggest that only because of the racial differences did the marriage fall apart. In other words, the marriage break-up was used as a means to confirm racial prejudicial beliefs.

The risk of familial/parental censure is so great that inter-racial couples avoid the consequence by keeping their relationship a secret from their families. As a brief excerpt from a letter sent for Inter-race magazine states:

I’ve been dating an Asian Indian (Sikh) girl for over 5 years. This year we have plans on getting married since I will be done with my education. The only people who know about us, on her side of the family, is her sister and a cousin in California. Telling a Sikh girl’s parents that the person she’s going to marry is an American is a death wish, for all involved. I’m not sure her parents are all understanding, for if they were we would have told them by now. What bothers me most is that her parents have decided to come to America over 15 years ago and though they do not hold strongly to their religious beliefs, they have very strong feelings on who their daughter will marry... (09/10/93: 23).

For couples like the one portrayed here, concealing their relationship or the identity of their partner offers the path of least resistance. This account suggests that the couple fully expected the female member’s family to vehemently object to the relationship, and as a result, they opted to carry on their relationship in the absence of parental scrutiny and condemnation. In so doing, not only were they able to decide if they were compatible and if they wanted to pursue their relationship, free from pressure, but in some sense, they prolonged the inevitable. Given that the couple has decided to
make legitimate their relationship, they will confront the "death wish" they have avoided for the past five years.

Many couples I interviewed had similar experiences. Patricia and Peter, for instance, describe their relationship with her family:

Patricia: In the beginning I kept my relationship with Peter a secret for I was scared of the consequences I think. My mother never thought much of Chinese people. She would make comments about Chinese people and I knew that she felt I should date men of my own race, as she would say. So, when I told Peter that we should keep our relationship a secret, he was very surprised. He thought this was something a Chinese family would do... We kept it a secret for about a year before actually coming forward and telling my mom because we wanted to marry by then. Peter would pick me up at the corner of my house, or else I’d meet him at a place we both decided upon. It was difficult in the beginning, but we managed to work things out.

Peter: I thought it was really stupid at the start since I just told my family and knew they wanted me to marry a Chinese girl, but I thought it was better to get it out in the open early. I couldn’t understand why Patricia couldn’t do the same. I met her mom briefly for Patricia introduced me as a school friend, and you could tell she was suspicious and disapproving. After that introduction, apparently she gave Patricia the run down when they were alone. She would say, “I hope you’re not dating him. I’m not saying he’s a bad person, but don’t my feelings matter to you - what will people think, I didn’t raise you to give you up to the Chinese man”.

Rather than face the consequence of her mother potentially rejecting her, Patricia takes this route. Peter, on the other hand, recognized that his parents would prefer him to marry a Chinese woman, yet he opted to tell them immediately. It is interesting to note as well, that Peter thought that keeping the relationship a secret usually occurs on the Chinese side of the relationship, yet in their situation, it was the European-Canadian side. However, secrecy from family members does occur frequently on the Chinese side as the experience of the next couple illustrate:
Dawn: Ethan and I kept our relationship a secret for about 5 years. We even married before telling my parents. I knew that they would do anything to prevent that from happening, so we just went ahead and did it, before they could say otherwise. My sisters knew for they were my witnesses and they supported me in what I did. That was really hard for everyone, but we thought we did what was best...After it happened, my mom was devastated that we married, but she got over it; however, to this day, my dad refuses to meet Ethan. It’s not that we married without his permission for he wouldn’t give it anyhow, but that Ethan is White. I haven’t talked to my dad directly since we’ve been married.

Ethan: I didn’t have a good feeling about keeping it a secret, but there was so much anger directed at Dawn when her parents just suspected that she was dating a White man that we didn’t want any more resistance.

In each instance, the couples opted toward a strategy which they felt was the path of least resistance by keeping their relationship a secret in case of a perceived threat of sanctions from family.

What about the Children?

The couples I interviewed frequently made comments that they encountered resistance from family members in reference to children. Often, family members would not extend cultural membership to the couple or their children. This theme of “what about the children?” was mentioned frequently to inter-racial couples when they announced their intentions of marriage to family members. For example, Lucy (Chinese-Canadian) and Lyle’s experience illustrate this concern strongly. When they announced their engagement, her parents were resistant in regard to the problems that biracial children face from a non-accepting society. This type of resistance or concern was shared by many of the respondents. As Lucy says:

Lucy: When Brian was born, it was the funniest scene, actually.

Lyle: Both her parents and mine were there at the hospital waiting with me and her parents, especially her dad was concerned about what the baby would look
Ill... In the beginning when I heard this, this bothered me for it really doesn't matter. However, her parents were worried that the baby would look "weird", for the child wouldn't be completely Chinese...

Lucy: Anyhow, when Brian arrived, you really couldn't tell what features he would take or anything, so no-one really knew who he looked like. However, when dad saw Brian, he started to jump up and down saying in Chinese, "Thank God he looks Chinese, Thank God he looks Chinese!" Today he still believes this even though Brian doesn't look anything like me. He's taken all of Lyle's features and colouring!

Interviewer: Why do you think your father said this?

Lucy: Oh, I know why! He more or less convinced himself that no matter what, this baby will be Chinese and that's it. He still doesn't recognize that Brian looks White. He brings Brian to the club and brags to all his friends how Chinesey Brian is and how he's picking up Chinese words and all that, but my mom tells me that his friends just agree with him in front of him, but they think he's nuts.

Lucy's father needed to hold on to his hopes and convictions that his grandson would be Chinese, and was able to rationalize this to the point where the evidence to the contrary made this absurd. This lays claim to the argument that racial lineage is conceived of as a "need" for groups, particularly those who fear the loss of their collective identity.

Another couple shared a similar experience. Jeff (Chinese-Canadian) and his wife Julie stated that when they married, the main concern for both families were the potential children the couple would have. For example:

Julie: A conversation I had with my cousin really brought out this point about children Jeff and I would eventually have. We weren't married yet, but engaged, but I was talking about having kids right away since we discussed this together. When I told my cousin Kim, she just frowned and didn't say anything. When I asked her why, she said, "Doesn't it bother you about having mixed children? Think about the kid. The kid will be part Chinese and part White. What kind of identity will your child have? No one will really accept the child. The Chinese side will say the child's not really Chinese and the White side will say the same"
Jeff: When Julie told me about what Kim said, this bothered me for Julie and I don’t think that way and we didn’t think anyone else did too. Of course our kids will be part Chinese and White. Who cares! We’ll hopefully be able to teach them parts of both cultures.

Despite her cousin’s concern about social acceptability of the child, her cousin’s feelings arose out of a discourse that constructs groups and communities in biological terms. It is biological makeup rather than, for example, residence, socialization, or experience, that is seen to determine group participation. ‘‘Chineseness’…is within this conceptualization a state of being that cannot be socially constructed or socially achieved, but only physiologically ascribed” (Frankenberg, 1993: 95). Linked here is a notion of wholeness or purity: the mixed person it is suggested, does not belong anywhere. Implicitly then, biology is seen as underscoring culture, and an argument is being made that “race” is an essentially biological difference. As Frankenberg states further:

…the concept of a racially “mixed” person is an odd one. Even if it made sense to subordinate the social dimensions of humans to their physiological states, genetic matter and its combination are highly complex. The notion of a racially “mixed” individual brings forth a simplistic and entirely erroneous image of two pots of paint (or blood!) stirred together, so that a “half Chinese” person is exactly twice as Chinese as someone who is “a quarter Chinese,” and so on (ibid.: 95).

One might assume from the concerns raised about children that the resisting grandparents of the children would distance themselves from the bi-racial grandchildren. That was rarely the case in many interviews. Children could be the key to the grandparents becoming reconciled to the inter-racial marriage. Children from inter-racial marriages can bridge the rift between parent/family and the couple. Some couples who had broken relationships between themselves and their families due to resistance against
their union, were sometimes brought together because of the children. As Hilda and
Harold pointed out in their interview:

_Harold:_ We weren't talking at all with Hilda's parents ever since we married. They didn't approve of our marriage and the way they felt made us uncomfortable so we just distanced ourselves from them. They used to warn Hilda about the children we would have, that they would not fit in and they would be mixed and all that. So, when Hilda found out she was pregnant, we were a bit concerned if we should tell her parents. We ended up telling them for we knew we had to sometime, and they didn't give us support, as we expected, but when Casey was born, we were very surprised to hear from them right after. And then, her mom wanted to babysit and just be totally involved. We were worried in the beginning since they have grandchildren from Hilda's sister who are not mixed, just Chinese, so we were worried that she'd treat Casey not as well as her cousins. But, none of that happened. I think her parents just wanted another little one around and being mixed didn't really matter at all to them. Surprising though! Hilda's parents treat all the grandkids the same and I would say they even spoil Casey more for she's a baby. The other day I heard her mom say that Casey's a lot cuter than her cousin Natalie! Talk about turnaround!

A similar experience was expressed by Lucy and Lyle in that after having their son Brian, the relationship with her parents got better. Her parents wanted to become involved in their grandchild's life. In fact, Lucy and Lyle resumed having dinner at her parents place every Sunday as she used to do before marrying Lyle.

**Work Sanctions**

Being inter-racially involved can affect other relationships besides the family. Sanctions can be work-related. "Race" was seen in the following accounts as being biologically related within dramatizations of the impossibility of a White/non-White connection. This was evident in the disapproval Alex faced when he married Wendy:

_Alex:_ I knew the firm would have some reservations about Wendy, because she wasn't Chinese.

_Interviewer:_ Why is that?
Alex: Well I work with most of the cases that deal directly with the Chinese markets, more specific traditional Chinese clients. I think the firm wanted me to fit my personal life with the business part. Marrying an English woman was seen as not believing in Chinese ways, almost as if I was betraying them; this was definitely not helping the firm in their eyes. One partner actually said to me “In all of Vancouver and Hong Kong, you couldn’t find one Chinese woman you found appealing?” I discussed it with Wendy and I couldn’t work in conditions like that. It was stressful for me and for her during meetings. After the wedding, I felt alienated and wasn’t satisfied with the firm anymore after the treatment of Wendy and myself. I later heard from a business acquaintance that the senior partners didn’t trust me. That was the motivating factor for me to leave to start a practice with a friend from law school.

Alex faced resistance from colleagues and his marriage to a non-Chinese woman was viewed as distant and different, impossible to incorporate within the boundaries of the firm.

Another incidence of work resistance occurred for Darla. Darla married a Chinese-Canadian man (David) and took his last name. As she states below:

Darla: It’s sometimes amusing to watch people’s faces drop when I tell them my last name. Obviously “Wong” is a typical Chinese name so when people see my name they think I’m a Chinese woman. In one case, I applied for a chambermaid job and I got an interview. The hotel was owned and run by Chinese people, actually David’s family knew of them... I got there and waited and waited and waited. I was the only one in the waiting room. The Chinese lady had come out a few times looking for someone. She later asked me if my name was Darla Wong and I said “yes”. It was really funny watching her face drop. She asked me why I had this last name and I told her I was married to a Chinese man, and after that, her tone was really abrupt. I didn’t get the job, but I think it was because she didn’t approve of a White woman marrying a Chinese man.

Some of the resistance experienced at work was isolated, a single interaction that indicated that somebody lumps one’s inter-racial relationship into a category.

Brenda: When I first started at work, I had a picture of Chuck on my desk and (pause) I can’t remember the exact wording but a girl came up to me and her wording was...

Chuck: Wasn’t that the one that said, “Oh, you’re in one of those relationships?”
Brenda: Yeah,... and I just started there, I didn’t know who that person was. She just kinda like hopped into my cube.

One can also experience a categorizing from people who want to show that they are liberal about racial matters. Such categorizing can be taken as well-intentioned, but it also can be taken as a form of racism, or condensing one’s identity down to being a member of an inter-racial couple.

One of [my bosses] who I introduced to Fred just casually because Fred was dropping me off at work, and since then, he’s down in my office a couple of times talking about broad (laughs) social policy that has to do with race. And I’m certain that that’s why he’s down there... He’s not asking me questions, and I’m not even certain that he wants to hear my responses. I think he thinks that just because I’m in an inter-racial marriage, he wants to let me know that he’s tolerant. I don’t think he would be down there talking to me about those particular issues if he had not met Fred. (Emily)

Intolerance
Various actions suggest that there remain members within society who are unwilling or unable to accept inter-racial relationships. A June 1990 article in Ebony magazine makes this patently clear. It reveals that:

...intolerance persists. Some blacks and whites report that they have been mysteriously fired after employers discovered their marital status. And an interracial couple, according to the Center for Democratic Renewal, need only go two miles outside Atlanta to be the victim of attack. Elmo Seay and his white wife, Susan, fled from a suburban Atlanta subdivision after their home was vandalized and firebombed. Another interracial couple, Susan Hill, 29, and her black husband, John, 36, got so frustrated with the ostracism and rejection by friends, family, landlords and employers that they left Bolivar, Tenn., temporarily and settled in Jackson, Tenn., until the commotion died down (41-42).

In other words, intolerance toward inter-racial couples can ultimately lead to a change in residence. This points to one of the most difficult decisions that inter-racial
couples face, namely, deciding where to live. People talked about efforts to find tolerant communities. For some, the key was to find an urban area in which there was a great deal of openness to inter-racial couples, a place that gave them the freedom to play, work, shop, and so on with few worries. For some couples, a change in geography can mean the difference between being stared at perpetually or living in the absence of such behaviour. Fawn and Glenn (Chinese-Canadian) both stated that they decided to move to Vancouver since they felt that a bigger city was more receptive to inter-racial relationships:

_Fawn: We married in a small town in Saskatchewan and there weren’t that many inter-racial couples. People stared and weren’t very polite to us. I think it was when we were waiting in line at the fishing store to get a license and Glenn was ahead of me. The woman behind the counter asked Glenn for all the necessary personal background stuff and Glenn had his certificate of landed immigrant status, but his picture wasn’t there with it. She said it was irrelevant and kept insisting that Glenn show her his citizenship status. He had everything laid out on the counter, like his driver’s license, SIN number, and a few other things, but she refused to believe that Glenn was Canadian. What made me really upset was that she spoke to him as if he didn’t speak English. She was really rude and muttered under her breath after Glenn was finished that the Vietnamese are all alike, and a few other unmentionables. When I come up to the counter, she didn’t realize that Glenn and I were together. She casually mentioned that it’s nice to have someone speak English, and all that. I just glared and told her in a cold voice that Glenn was my husband, and that he was not Vietnamese and that we would not tolerate her treatment of him. She was quite stunned and just looked back at Glenn then at me. The next day Glenn wrote a letter to the office to complain but we never heard back from them._

_Glenn: Definitely Fawn wanted to step in, but I already told her I could handle it on my own. It wasn’t just this incident. There were other instances of name calling yelled at us by a group of white men in a parking lot. We were minding our own business and just walking down the street in front of this pub in the middle of the day. We usually walk this same street on our way home after shopping. These guys, all white are standing in a parking lot near this car full of people, laughing and whispering to each other. We ignored them as we walked by and they yelled out a few times “Chinky chink loves white woman” and “mixed couples are sick”._
Fawn: That was really upsetting to Glenn for that was the first time that it was directly at us. That was the motivating factor of deciding to move to a bigger city where you can get lost in a crowd and people don't really notice what colour you are. That's the main reason why we decided to come to Vancouver. There are tons of Asians here and we see a lot more mixed couples here than we did in Saskatchewan!

Another couple expressed similar opinions on why they moved to Vancouver:

This community is becoming more enriched as there are more children from inter-racial marriages, as there are more inter-racial relationships out there....We were fortunate enough to be able to move to a community here 11 years ago by choice. Knowing that we'd see other people like ourselves..., and still being able to find jobs and all those kinds of things. So we picked an environment where we would feel comfortable... raising a family. (Rod)

Some of the couples located their own ideas and their assessments of social acceptance of inter-racial relationships within national or regional histories. Barbara, for example, commented that in Victoria during the late 1960's and early 70's:

It was very hard not to notice Brad and I when we were together. There weren't a lot of mixed couples around then. People would stare at us, even point their fingers at us and we knew they were talking about us. During that time, everyone knew everyone so it was on everyone's tongue when we married... It just wasn't common during that time to date, or even marry someone of a different race... Now, it doesn't matter. Vancouver is of course a lot bigger than Victoria, but both cities have changed so much that inter-racial relationships are not a big thing anymore. However, when we were dating, we could count how many mixed couples we saw, and we didn't see many!

These couples above cited the view that living in a big city allows them to blend into a larger pool of diversity. Inter-racial couples in small communities they think are more likely to encounter problems of intolerance based on the smaller populations of similar groups.

Intolerance due to racial difference was also experienced by inter-racial couples in real estate purchase or rental. Brad and Barbara point out that when they bought a
home in Victoria in the early 1970's, they didn't realize how their being inter-racially married was such a factor:

Brad: We were looking to buy a place right after we married. Since both Barbara and I were quite a bit older than other newlyweds, we could afford a pretty nice house in a good neighbourhood. When we found a place that we liked, we told our Realtor and put in an offer. We didn't hear back from him in awhile so Barbara called him.

Barbara: When I called him, he told me that the meeting wasn't till a few days. I asked him "what meeting?" He paused on the phone and then told me that the meeting was a neighbourhood meeting in regard to Brad and I buying the house. I asked him why in the world they would have a meeting in the first place and he told me that it was because Brad and I were, as he said, "not of the usual kind of people" who would buy a house in this area. I then drilled him by asking if it was because we were inter-racially married and he didn't want to tell me, but I kept asking him and threatened to report them on what they were doing. I didn't know if they were doing anything illegal, mind you, but that made Brad and I so angry we didn't buy the house, and the Realtor lost out. He phoned us back stating it was all a mistake and the house had been reduced and other excuses, but Brad and I decided we didn't want to live in a neighbourhood like that.

Another couple described experiences of intolerance when renting.

Victoria: We used to live in the States ... in [a suburb]... We put in our application to live in this apartment and were specific that we wanted to live in a quiet building. Both Wayne and I were working full-time and were making fairly good money so we could afford the place. When the manager called us to let us know that we were accepted, we were really pleased. However, the building that we looked at was not the building we were placed in... We lived in the first building, the one closer to the road. And there was a building behind us... The second building behind us was real quiet and was the building that we had looked at. We also noticed after moving in our building, that everyone in the second building was white!

Wayne: When she pointed this out to me I thought it was in her imagination, but I felt that they had put all the misfits and people classified as "others" into this building. The other building was the quiet, white, working-class building. That really bothered us, for even though we are happy about getting this place, we were really looking for a quieter place and that building we thought had this... a few months after living here another tenant in our building who had lived here for quite awhile confirmed that all the "misfits" such as blacks, single parents, inter-racial or just minority groups were placed in our building.
Victoria: I don’t have a problem with this now, but it really bothered me before. I think what bothered me more was that the manager really looked at us when we walked into his office and had already made up his mind about where he should place us before really looking at our application.

**Racist Incidents Were Infrequent**

Despite the belief that there is a taboo on inter-racial relationships, most people said that they experienced only a few incidents in which racist acts or words were directed at them for being in an inter-racial relationship. This is a very important point. Although many people felt they were living in a society and a community in which there was considerable opposition to inter-racial couples, the number of incidents most people could recall was small.

*We’ve been real lucky, in that over ten years we can probably count three instances of overt racism ever as a family. I mean, we’ve had just great experiences all the way through.* (Ursula)

*From my own experience, we’ve been treated well, really well. People surprise me sometimes. I was told that a friend of my uncle’s was a real bigot against mixed marriages so I was preparing myself to come across a redneck, but he turned out to be a really decent fellow!* (Ethan)

How can sense be made of the contrast between feeling that there is a very substantial opposition to inter-racial couples and the experience of rather few incidents expressing such opposition? Perhaps the taboo against inter-racial relationships is not widely shared. Perhaps these couples are good at protecting themselves from situations in which they would be targets of racism.

Even if people recalled only few experiences of resistance directed at them as an inter-racial couple, some of the incidents were extremely hurtful or frightening. It would be an enormous mistake to equate reports of a small number of incidents with a benign
social environment. People may have considerable evidence that tells them that there is
disapproval of their relationship, even if they experience only a few overt incidents.
Incidents of overt racism may or may not represent an unpleasantly distinct edge to a
large, if less easily confronted, mass of hostility toward inter-racial relationships.

Counting incidents and assuming that life is easy and stress free when people in
inter-racial couples report only a few racist incidents may be a mistake in another way.
Even a single incident in a person’s lifetime may have serious consequences. It may take
only one incident to make a couple cautious about every venture outside the home, or be
defensive everywhere they go.

It is important to note that most incidents were remembered in vivid detail. That
is evidence that those incidents are not to be dismissed lightly. People recalled the
details because the situations were frighteningly or painfully memorable, an important
piece of information for them about their social world. After an incident remembered in
such detail, a person might always be on the defensive to avoid or ward off further
incidents, always be on the alert for possible dangers, and constantly investing psychic
energy in trying not to be affected by further difficulties or the possibility of such
difficulties. The painful incidents that do occur that are remembered makes coping
strategies useful to discuss, which is the next section.

**Learning From Each Other**

In any couple, partners will learn from one another. They will learn each other’s
expectations, needs, preferences, preferred coping strategies, dislikes, experiences,
habits, and so on. That learning occurs as their observations of one another, their
conversations, their disputes, and their other shared experiences accumulate. Partners in
inter-racial marriages inevitably bring different backgrounds to their relationship. The visible minority partner have most probably had more experience with dealing with racism and non-accepting or intolerant social attitudes.

The European-Canadian partner may have to learn about White privilege, about the many forms that racism takes, and about the pain and injustice that arise from racism. Although some of the European-Canadian partners had previous inter-racial relationships, many of these subjects talked about detecting and dealing with resistance as a married couple.

As an inter-racial couple, subjects discussed how they learn from each other in dealing with racial incidents and how they have become more aware of “race”:

_I never really dealt with race as much as I have since being involved with Irma. I just never thought of it. Being forced to deal with it, that is with my parents, family and all that has definitely made me look differently at people. My views are evolving, and everyday I learn something new, and I’m hoping that I’m changing and trying to understand Irma’s perspective of things that I used to consider unimportant_ (Ian).

_I am more aware of the struggles that we as an inter-racial couple face. And I realize that my life if I were married to a Chinese male would be very different. I have never regretted marrying a White man. Even though I have lost contact with my parents, some family members, I am thankful that I married him because I can see that I am a stronger person because of the racial problems we’ve encountered. He tries to understand things that affect me for it really affects all of us... We’re more aware of race, or I should say are more conscious of it, but we try not to let it control our lives even though it has shaped the way we are._ (Lucy)

The next chapter looks at the future direction studies on inter-racial relationships should take as well as a brief summarization of the thesis is offered.
"Race" as a Social Construct

This thesis attempts to gain an understanding into the lives of some very unique people. Interviews were conducted with married Chinese-Canadian and European-Canadian couples to explore how the social construction of race is reflected in their experiences and if their experiences represent the cultural pluralistic ideology of a multicultural society. By approaching this issue from their perspective, inter-racial couples are placed in the centre of the analysis. This study therefore offers conclusive data that significant insight can be achieved when using inter-racial couples as a point of reference.

I demonstrate throughout the study that the social construction of "race" is not only used in a theoretical context, but also in the practical context. That is, the process of the social construction of "race" is reflected in the experiences of inter-racial couples. Their experiences, in turn, demonstrate levels of commitment to multiculturalism as an ideology and social reality of cultural pluralism. These two issues were examined in this thesis through interviews with 30 married Chinese-Canadian/European-Canadian couples.

"Race" is a type of categorization applied to individuals and groups, constructed (and maintained as a construction) though a socio-cultural process (Spickard, 1992). The social construction of "race" involves biological distinctions which are thought to be unambiguously distinguishable in all people. The social construction of "race" also involves distinctions based on the geographical origins of one’s ancestors (ibid.). Elaborate and indefensible structures of ideas about how racial groups differ rest on these
distinctions. For all their vagueness and fallibility, these racial concepts and distinctions have been accepted as real and true by millions of people and are the "basis of immense damage committed against millions of other people" (ibid.). Given that history, one must be cautious of any writings that address matters of "race". However to study inter-racial relationships, the concept of "race" must be addressed.

The terms used to designate racial categories are highly politicized. People who strongly oppose racism may disagree with one another and preferred terms change from time to time. For instance, people disagree about whether to call themselves Chinese, Chinese-Canadian, Canadian, Oriental, or other descriptive terms. There is strong disagreement about the designations of "White", "Caucasian", "European-Canadian". There is also disagreement about labels for Chinese/European couples. In this text, I use the term "inter-racial", the most common designator in scholarly writings and the term I used while interviewing. It should also be noted that while the term "European Canadian" was used predominantly throughout this thesis, it is understood that this term may be both contentious and potentially misleading. This was a particularly relevant issue when I was drafting an advertisement to attract potential subjects for my study. Whom does the term European-Canadian include and would this label confuse those who may just consider themselves "White"?

The main point is that "race" is a social construct that must be recognized. Because race and inter-racial relationships are a reality for many people and because I wanted to illuminate how those realities affect certain couples, I use the terms found to be most agreeable with the realities of my subject population. This thesis challenges those realities, but to adequately address the issues, the terms must be used. The partners
in inter-racial couples may be similarly “trapped” (Frankenberg, 1993: 140) into using those terms. In that regard, Frankenberg speaks of the “‘givenness’ of a universe of discourse” that may limit discussion centred on racial matters at the same time that the discussion is intended to go beyond those limits. Even when people say “no” to racism, they are still captured by it in that it affects their lives in a distinct way. Discourse devoted to something oppressive is shaped by the oppression. One symptom of the problem is that people who are trying to escape the trap of being defined by racist discourse find that their language and that of their social environments are frequently at odds (Frankenberg, 1993: 141).

**The Study of Inter-racial Married Couples in Vancouver**

This study is based on married Chinese-Canadian/European-Canadian couples in the Lower Mainland area and their experiences of living in a multicultural society. It does not purport to represent the experiences of all Chinese/European inter-racial couples in Canada or even to the experiences of all such couples in the Lower Mainland area. Vancouver is not suggested as being an ideal representation of Canada.

It is important that the voices of these couples be heard in that their experiences signify much about society and speak to the issue of societal stereotypes. By approaching this thesis from the subject’s perspective through lived experiences, the inter-racial couple’s voices are placed in the centre of the analysis. The interviews with married Chinese/European couples revealed insight into the complexity of the racialization process and explored the multicultural ideology.

This study offers a comprehensive analysis based on extensive quotations, effectively allowing the subjects to convey a sense of their lives. These experiences
assume a prominent and central part in the study. It is not possible to obtain the insider’s perspective when their situation is analyzed from a quantitative perspective as has been done in the past. This particular study takes a more personal, insightful analysis by directly interviewing the couples.

The historical account of Chinese immigration and the powerful definition of the social construction of “race” provided a framework of how Vancouver has developed. The Canadian experiences of the people of Chinese origin owes much of its character to the “us” (signifying European superiority) as distinct from a “different” (and usually inferior) “them”. This dialectic of “us” vs. “them” was further legitimated through the definition of “race”, particularly by those with political or economic power. Historically and presently, both negatively and positively evaluated characteristics have been ascribed deterministically to people of Chinese origin, thus perpetuating stereotypical views.

With multiculturalism officially announced in 1971 and the policy of the Canadian government to push Canada’s image as one of acceptance of diversity, the question of whether society has changed from its discriminatory practices is raised. I argue that inter-racial marriages represent a test of the acceptance values and attitudes of a multicultural society since an inter-racial marriage represents a model of inclusion. That is, an inter-racial marriage may reflect the ideology of cultural pluralism, but it may also directly test the application of its principles.

**Perceptions of Acceptance in the Face of Resistance**

When the experiences of inter-racial couples are viewed from their perspective, evidence of resistance against their union is shown, yet the subjects still define current society as being accepting. This is certainly a most interesting social phenomenon, and
one that invites further discussion. One might be led to deduce from this seeming contradiction that racism is not the problem that it is made out to be in academic and media accounts. I would caution, however, that the relatively few incidents of prejudice and exclusion based on race found in this study do not suggest that the problem no longer exists. Racist attitudes and actions are a reality for those who are victimized. The assertion of an overall apparent decrease in hostile or antagonistic behaviours probably matters little to those subjected to this pain, even if the occurrence was or is isolated.

Further, the numerical assessments of acts of intolerance, such as hate crimes, do not convey the seriousness of these actions. Acts of resistance may be manifest in very dramatic means, symbolizing attitudes and orientations which most Canadians wish to believe are the problems of other countries. These acts of resistance come in many different forms as I have discussed in the data analysis, but they are not necessarily antagonistic. That is, some resisters against inter-racial marriages, mostly the family, genuinely believed that two distinct cultures should not mix. Some resisters used racial stereotypes as one method to argue against inter-racial unions.

It is certainly interesting, however, that these attitudes, manifest as they were toward the inter-racial couples in this study, did not produce in these same couples, a reaction against their society as intolerant or unaccepting. One explanation is that it appears as though these couples are making a distinction between the supposed isolated incidents generated by family and the general lack of such behaviours from the wider community. The ideological distinction between family and community is not difficult to accept, particularly in the case of the newly immigrant family or those with traditional Chinese parents. The children of these families are much more likely to be immersed in
the wider multicultural community than their parents, thus making exceptions for family behaviour which is inconsistent with perceived societal attitudes toward the inter-racial couple. We might suggest then, that the second and third generations will be increasingly accepting of mixed-race couples. This is not to suggest that racism is somehow “bred out” in successive generations, but rather that these children may well be more affected by the culture of others and less fearful of protecting one culture from another.

Another explanation may come from the assertion by inter-racial couples that the resistance from older family members represents a dated out-of-touch reality which no longer corresponds with current multicultural values. Historical comparisons are suggested, stating that much has changed with regard to the “mixing” of cultures, and that the resistance against inter-racial marriages is now much more likely to be hidden behind family walls. Data from interviews affirm this perception, although a more detailed comparative analysis needs to be done on this topic.

A geographical explanation may also be in evidence, as some couples suggested that Vancouver is much better represented in terms of Asian culture than other Canadian cities. The issue of total numbers of inter-racial Chinese/European couples comes into play, suggesting that this social arrangement has become “normal” or inconspicuous. Other types of “mixed” couples may face more pressure, especially where one of the partners’ cultures is not highly represented in the wider geographic community. Again, this question should be addressed in a dedicated study.

It was stated in a few interviews that the official programme of Multiculturalism may be responsible for the perceived absence of social antagonism against the inter-racial couple. This is a difficult assertion to make in light of the fact that the principles and
variables are abstract. One can only assume at best that policy has had a direct effect upon the acceptance attitudes of Canadian people. For example, one could just as easily argue that it is immigration policy that is responsible for the apparent decrease in racist or ethnocentric behaviours. It may be, however, that *perception* is the operative word, and that the inter-racial couple perceives Canadian society to be accepting in general, attributing the racist or ethnocentric behaviours that do occur to isolated and disparate factors. As argued previously, this may occur with family resistance, as the couple in question may ideologically distinguish their family from the multicultural society.

Even though many of the subjects describe society as being accepting, at the same time, many couples mentioned that there was still a long way for society to go in order to achieve absolute acceptance. I would argue that though most of the interviewees describe society as being accepting, their experiences suggest a society more accurately characterized by the term "tolerant". The continuum to which I referred throughout the study, in which acceptance and intolerance are placed at each end of a scale, would see many of the incidents described herein as toward the accepting end, but probably closer to actual tolerance. The experiences of opposition that were cited in couple’s narratives point to systemic problems of racism still inherent in societal practices toward inter-racial couples. This does not suggest complete acceptance.

**Resistance from Chinese Families**

The role of family and the resistance encountered by the inter-racial couples in this study are central concerns, both in a methodological and theoretical sense. In the preceding chapter, it is demonstrated that most of the pronounced acts of resistance against the marital union of the two cultures originates from the Chinese family. This
then leads to speculation as to the source of this resistance, its applications, and its effects on the wider society. We are led to ask, Is this racism or ethnocentricism? How are these behaviours to be distinguished from historical mistreatment of the Chinese by Europeans? Are these actions a result of perceived threats to the minority culture?

Questions such as these raise extremely sensitive issues regarding the inter-relationships of cultures in a multicultural society. They also lead one to suggest that the minority culture has internal pressures and divisions that may be considered racist in nature. The aspect of the inter-racial couple brings this to the surface. Consider that Chinese sons and daughters who inter-racially marry may be classified as “misguided”, “culturally insensitive”, or as betraying the culture in general. Family members who resisted the inter-racial marriages of couples in this study, often expressed to their children that their family would suffer the shame of the wider cultural community. Thus, the entire family would be negatively affected by the inclusion of the “other’s” culture.

These actions and attitudes unfortunately remind one of similar arguments made to arbitrarily separate “races” in Canada’s past. It is also indicative of the reasoning behind the social construction of “race”. The point is that all acts and attitudes to exclude the “other” solely or particularly with respect to “race” have origins, applications and consequences which are truly social in nature. They are not the province of any one group. “Race”, then, is a powerful concept which is employed unilaterally.

I suggest that there is a great temptation to view resistance from the Chinese family against the Chinese/European couple as a benign cultural protectionism. A common or popular conception is that the family is simply worried about the prospects of their children “losing” their culture. They fear that the marriage represents a trend away
from traditional folkways and customs. A Chinese/European couple, in this line of thinking, represents a couple that is less "Chinese" than the "traditional" arrangement. These behaviours suggest an ethnocentric worldview which tend to push the culture of the "other" to the periphery. Like racism, it is generally based in ignorance, but may be due more to a lack of contact with other cultures. It is less antagonistic and does not seek to penalize or attack the culture of the "other".

Racism, on the other hand, is much less concerned with the "injury" to the "other", and may in fact seek that treatment. Racist behaviour is more than the prioritizing of one’s "race" and culture against others, it is definitive "exclusion, inferiorization, subordination and exploitation that present specific and different characters in different social and historical contexts" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 2). Resistance experienced by inter-racial couples in this study, demonstrates that the actions and attitudes directed against this social arrangement are reflective of historical subjegation of the "other". It is not confined to the oppression of the minority or immigrant culture.

Specifically, the resistance shown herein which originates from the Chinese family, has clear historical and ironic associations to the types of behaviours practised by 19th century European power brokers who sought to oppress Chinese people. The data suggest that in several instances, resistance against inter-racial couples from Chinese family members took the form of ranking of cultures. It was suggested that the monoracial marriage was optimal; the Chinese/European union was less desirable, and the Chinese/Black relationship was anathema. Clearly, this is a form of ranking according to racial superiority, similar to that used in historical and socio-biological accounts.
Inter-racial Couples and the Process of Representation

...representations of the Other are holistically neither static nor unitary. They have undergone transformation over time, in response to changing circumstances, including the economic and political position of those producing and reproducing the representations. The characteristics attributed to the Other, the evaluation of those characteristics, and the explanations offered for difference, have therefore been altered, although again rarely in a holistic manner (Miles, 1989: 39).

In the case of the European representation of Chinese men, while skin colour has remained a constant distinguishing feature, representations of being “dirty” to “effeminate” have been historically variable. This indicates the ways in which earlier historical moments continue to shape present-day experience and subjectivity. The couples I interviewed spoke at times of change or progress with regard to the social acceptability of inter-racial relationships. And it is indeed the case the number of inter-racial relationships are now more prevalent than they once were. However, it was striking in hearing some narratives, that elements of today’s discourse came into play well before the twentieth century.

Marriages between European and Chinese people were once considered to be “improper”, and “uncivilized”. Through racist belief systems, strict controls on inter-racial relationships were encouraged, though mostly at the informal level in family associations. As I have argued in Chapter 2 on Chinese immigration, European descendants in British Columbia had a racial belief system that argued for White racial superiority articulated in the language of Christianity. These beliefs were succeeded by, and absorbed into, so-called scientific racism, and biology-and evolution-based theories of race hierarchy. Each in turn laid the foundation for beliefs of essential difference between groups defined as racially different from one another. “Consistent with the
notion of essential difference was the idea of ‘mongrelization’ as the dreaded outcome of inter-racial sexuality and procreation” (Frankenberg, 1993:73).

These racial belief systems of historical times came up in many of the interviews with my subjects. The traces of history emerged time and again, in both blatant and subtle ways. Most visible were the stereotypical descriptions of Chinese men and Chinese women. Through the narratives, it appeared that stereotypes were often used as the bases against Chinese/European marriages. As I discussed in the data analysis, many resisters against inter-racial marriages, resisted on grounds historically premised on racist ideas. Such reasoning was used by resisters to protest against marriages involving the Chinese-Canadian partner, based on ideas which were often directly contradicted when the parties were first introduced. Ironically, many of these stereotypes have persisted in those circumstances, despite the fact that resisters are provided with on-going evidence that should lead to the abolition of these beliefs.

It is apparent that even after entering into a married relationship, people are able to carry with them stereotypes and expectations based on preconceived racial beliefs. Marriage itself doesn’t imply that all stereotypes and racial attributes are abandoned. For example, one European-Canadian male married to a Chinese-Canadian female, believed that Chinese females were “docile” and “exotic” even though his wife did not fit these stereotypic characteristics.

What these references bring forward is the inter-relationship of gender and “race” which manifests itself in gendered stereotypes. As stated in the data analysis section of this thesis, these stereotypes are used to further categorize the “other” as inferior because their culture somehow makes them “less of a man” or “less of a woman”. These
representations are carried forward from historical usage. Frankenberg (1993) was used as a reference throughout the data analysis for her thesis directly supports the idea of the gendered stereotype. In my study, inter-racial couples' narratives clearly reflect the ways constructions of masculinity and femininity were differentiated by “race”. These constructions ranged from the simplistic, stereotypic, and blatantly racist to others that were more positive, complex, and clearly grounded in intersubjective experiences.

Future Considerations

Even though there are many visible Chinese/European couples today when casually observing people in the Vancouver area, there has been a glaring blind spot in the literature on inter-racial couples and specifically Chinese/European couples. Discussions of inter-racial couples usually are in an American context, focusing on Black/White couples or more specifically taking a quantitative approach. The latter has generally focused on analyzing marriage licences and looking at census data. This type of research, although informative and enlightening, is not applicable to the wide range of inter-racial couples in general. A vital research gap from the above methods is the study of inter-racial couples from their perspective. The experiences of inter-racial couples and their own perceptions allow a more in-depth analysis into this topic. My interviews place inter-racial couples at the centre of analysis and offers them a voice to express their experiences.

Twenty five years ago, one could scarcely imagine undertaking this type of research. This project is possible now because of the increased number of Chinese/European couples and the willingness of couples to open up their lives to
research. This study demonstrates that we can now study the topic of inter-racial couples at a more personal level if we look to the couples themselves.

In dealing with resistance at any level, inter-racial couples discussed ways of coping, or finding support. An interesting point that most couples highlighted, was having other couple friends who were also inter-racially involved. This allowed them to identify with others who may have had similar experiences. None of the 30 couples were part of clubs for inter-racial couples (Spickard, 1989). A few couples talked about attending workshops, support groups and other programmes for inter-racial couples and families. Sometimes, these programmes made use of input from somebody who was considered an expert on inter-racial family issues, but the heart of the workshop, support group, or other programme was the active participation of those who attended. Some of the people who were interviewed framed their answers to questions about inter-racial relationships by talking about their relationship-supportive experiences at specific workshops or support groups.

*Gary kind of wondered why I had called and said let’s participate in this interview. We don’t even talk about it or think about it. It’s not even like an issue. I said, “Let’s just do it, like the workshops that we go to a few years ago.” He says, “Why do we have to talk about this? Let’s just live our life.” But it’s not that it’s more important to me,... since being involved with Gary I’ve had a few encounters with intolerant people and it really sticks in my brain... I try to forget it, but it’s very difficult to do that, so that’s when I wanted to know how other inter-racial couples deal with racism which is why I went to the workshop... We’re not confronted with problems very often at all, but the few that have occurred it’s enough to concern me where I need to find out about other people’s experiences... get support from them (Gloria).*

Some people felt that their relationship had benefited from their participation in the workshops for inter-racial families sponsored by a Vancouver church.
I feel like part of an inter-racial community when we went to these sessions... We had just moved to the area and even though we saw many inter-racial couples like ourselves, we never knew them personally. When we started attending the Church—we've sort of found people that were similar to us. When I think back to it, I think we went to these sessions to meet other inter-racial couples, not necessarily because we had any problems and needed support... However, the workshop was terrific for we met a lot of friends like us through it.

By asking inter-racial couples questions about their experiences, I was able to explore how they perceive and interpret events around their relationship. In addition, I also gained an understanding of how “race” appears in the couple’s relationship both between the partners and with their relationship with others. This work reveals that not enough has been written about inter-racial couples in general and Chinese/European couples in particular. This study has also revealed that there is a need to have inter-racial couples’ voices heard rather than analyzed from a statistical perspective.

This thesis merely grazes the tip of the iceberg. I have explored Chinese/European couples in Vancouver, but there are many other avenues to investigate. For example, resistance or racism from the Chinese family level requires more research. Research can be done to empirically investigate if resistance decreases as future generations become less directly associated with their origins. Such factors might include geographical, historical, linguistic and familial relationships. For example, do children of inter-racial marriages born in Canada face better prospects in terms of resistance than their parents?

Other avenues might include a more in-depth study of this resistance itself. One might better examine this issue from the perspective of those family members who have so adamantly rejected the idea of inter-racial marriages. Is it a conservative ideology that
rejects change? Perhaps it is a fear of losing identity in an environment where old traditions and folkways seem to be rapidly disappearing.

Another interesting direction might be in regard to the children of these inter-racial relationships and their effects on resistance. It was shown in several accounts herein, that the introduction of grandchildren often "softened" the resistance of the inter-racial couple's parents. Why is this so? Much more study could bear fruit in this area, providing insight into possibilities for resolution of differences.

This thesis has presented the particular problems of inter-racial married couples in a background of theoretical and historical arguments which, it is hoped, will provide an understanding on several levels. While there are no easy answers as to why racism and intolerance continue, I do suggest that we at least need to be critical or perhaps cautious in trumpeting the virtues of Multiculturalism while people in our society are marginalized and repressed. I have argued that what often passes in popular discourse for acceptance, may be better assessed as tolerance, specifically when the experiences of inter-racial married couples are included. If one particular aspect of this study stands out, it is that these experiences need to be heard, as they represent a refreshingly real snapshot of a lived reality that counterbalances the rhetoric of official policy.
Bibliography


*Interrace*. 09/10/93.


*Newsweek*. “You Can’t Join Their Club”. 06/10/91: 48-49.


Appendix A - Advertisement

Advertising Poster

STUDY ON INTER-RACIAL COUPLES IN VANCOUVER

A research study (Master's thesis) at U.B.C. is currently being conducted with Chinese /European married couples in the Vancouver area. If you and your spouse meet the following research criteria, your participation in this research is sought:

- one partner Chinese and,
- one partner European background (non visible minority)
- currently living in Vancouver
- married in or after 1971

This research involves the participation of inter-racial couples in describing their experiences of living in a multicultural society.

For more information, please call Lili at ————.
Appendix B - Interview Questions

General Information:
1. How old are you?
2. What is your educational level?
3. Where did the two of you meet?
4. Why did you choose to live in the Lower Mainland?
5. Before marrying, what expectations (if any) did you have for your partner?
   Was “race” a consideration when choosing a partner?
6. Do you have siblings who are inter-racially married?
7. What is the racial composition of your friends (as a couple/as individuals)?

Attitudes
1. When you first introduced your partner to your family, what was the general response?
2. When you first introduced your partner to your friends, what was the general response?
3. When you first introduced your partner to acquaintances, what was the general response?
4. Do your family, friends or acquaintances treat you any differently since you inter-racially married?
5. If you have children, has that influenced the way people in general perceive your inter-racial relationship?
   Is/Are your child(ren) treated differently than other children?
6. After people recognize that you are inter-racially married, do you feel that they have treated you any differently because of that? If so, please explain.
7. Have your perceptions about inter-racial marriages changed since becoming involved in one?
8. How would you describe the attitudes shown toward you as a couple in this country- Acceptance / Tolerance / Intolerance?

Activities/Networking
1. In what extracurricular activities do you participate in as a couple?
2. Do you as a couple have social contacts with other inter-racial couples? If so, what is the nature of those contacts (friends, associates?)
3. Have you and your partner ever been treated unfairly when travelling together?
4. Have you and your partner ever been denied service when on holiday, or on trips together?
5. In regard to your community - Have you ever been denied service in a store because of your inter-racial relationship? In a restaurant? In a hotel? Have you received unequal treatment in any of the above?
6. Have you been treated unequally when looking for an apartment or house due to your inter-racial relationship?
7. Do you believe that Canadian society is more or less accepting of inter-racial couples today than was in the past?
Appendix C - Subjects' Birthplace

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<th>16 Couples</th>
<th>1 partner Chinese-Canadian male</th>
<th>1 partner European-Canadian female</th>
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<td>2 E.C.F. born outside of Canada</td>
<td>6 C.C.F. born outside of Canada</td>
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<td>14 Couples</td>
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<td>1 partner European-Canadian male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 E.C.M. born outside of Canada</td>
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C.C.M. = Chinese-Canadian Male  
C.C.F. = Chinese-Canadian Female  
E.C.M. = European-Canadian Male  
E.C.F. = European-Canadian Female
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<th>Education</th>
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<td>Jane</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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</table>

**Legend:**
- Yes: Married
- No: Single
- @: Children
- Grad Student
- HS: High School
- B.S.: Bachelor of Science
- M.S.: Master of Science
- Ph.D.: Doctor of Philosophy