

THE INTERMARRIAGE EXPERIENCES OF
FOUR CHINESE CANADIAN WOMEN

by

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Abstract

The Intermarriage Experiences of Four Chinese Canadian Women

This study examined the marriage experiences of four Chinese Canadian women who are married to Caucasian husbands in Canada. Employing a phenomenological qualitative approach, in - depth interviews were conducted with these women in the ethnically diverse city of Vancouver, exploring their lived experiences in these relationships.

The findings in this study reflect upon this and tries to bring some understanding to this rather complex phenomenon. The first finding is the non – accidental nature in who we choose to bring into our world. This important element was highlighted in the findings as it speaks to the reasons why we seek certain people to be in our life, including our spouses. The women in this study all spoke about early influences and experiences which reflected a sense of being an outsider in their own world at some point. These experiences have in one form or another shaped how these women approached relationships and in particular marriage. The second finding speaks to the effortlessness which these women present when moving between their Chinese and Canadian culture. The skills of negotiating and interpreting were highlighted by one of the women as a role that she has grown up with but now also finds useful in her marriage. This role appears almost invisible to most people because of the way these women incorporate it into their day to day living. The last major finding is the importance of seeking a balance between the two cultures in intermarriage. In doing so, it allowed the women in this study to find

a safe place for them to freely express the two sided nature of their culture which up until then remained separated. In some cases it also provided the impetus to revisit their culture of origin to rework another understanding of the role of Chinese culture in their lives.

The findings of this study provide a beginning understanding into the work which these four women negotiated in intermarriage to achieve a balance between the Canadian and Chinese cultures in which they live. The findings from this study bridge a gap in the understanding of the phenomenon of interracial relationships in Canada and contribute to a broader cross cultural practice in social work and family therapy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter I	Introduction
	1
	1.1 Purpose
	4
Chapter II	Literature Review
	2.1 Theoretical Perspectives: Assimilation
	7
	2.2 Intermarriage: Overview
	10
	2.3 Chinese and Intermarriage
	19
Chapter III	Methodology
	3.1 Qualitative Exploratory Research
	29
	3.2 Selection of Participants
	31
	3.3 Data Collection
	33
	3.4 Data Analysis
	37
Chapter IV	Stories of Intermarriage
	4.1 Stuck in the Middle – Kerry’s Story
	43
	4.2 Seeking Balance – May’s Story
	62
	4.3 The Negotiator and the Interpreter – Linda’s
	Story
	77
	4.4 We are Different but the Same – Nancy’s
	Story
	93
Chapter V	Findings
	5.1 “It Is Not Accidental Whom We Bring Into Our World”
 104

Chapter VI

Conclusions

Limitations of the study	121
Implications for the Future	123

Bibliography

.....	130
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Appendix A

A Discussion on the Relationship in Labor, Trade and Education Between the Chinese and Dominant Community in Vancouver (1871 – 1923)	135
--	-----

Appendix B

Letter of Introduction	157
------------------------------	-----

Appendix C

Interview Guide	159
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**It is not the mountain we conquer,
but ourselves.**

Sir Edmund Hillary

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Immigration and assimilation of immigrants has long played an important role in the nation building process of Canada. Present day immigration policy continues to support this process through its demographic, economic, social and humanitarian objectives (Knowles, 1992). However, unlike the early years in Canada where the majority of immigrants were European, there has been a steady increase in the last two decades in the number of immigrants from non - European areas and a concurrent decrease in European born immigrants. "By 1986, Asian - born immigrants made up the largest group of recent arrivals, accounting for 40 percent of all immigrants in Canada who came to this country between 1978 and 1986 " (Knowles, 1992, p. 177). By 1994, immigrants arriving in Canada were primarily from Asia (52 %) and Hong Kong (16%) (Marchant, Pindera, Scott & Stoyloff, 1995, p.23). This trend has created obvious changes to Canada's ethnic character. This is particularly the case in British Columbia where up to one quarter of the new immigrants to Canada in 1996 have settled and the existing community has had to adjust to rapid changes to the 'face' of their community.

The receptivity of the existing Canadian community to this recent wave of Asian immigrants has yet to be fully examined but there are signs that the community is uncomfortable with this trend. In a recent poll by Statistics Canada, 57% of the respondents stated that they would like to see less immigration to Canada than is currently occurring. With respect to the possibility of immigrants coming into this

country and not adopting 'Canadian values', 51% strongly agreed and 27% somewhat agreed that this was a concern (Marchant et al, 1995, p.23).

As international mobility and immigration become more accessible, marriages across racial lines are becoming more common. However, intermarrying involves more than just crossing geographic boundaries. Historical factors, receptivity of each partner's respective communities as well as culture, family and personal experiences all influence the adjustment of couples in an interracial marriage. With such high levels of Asian and Chinese immigration into Canada, particularly in the last 10 years, intermarriage may be inevitable as part of the assimilation and acculturation process for the Chinese.

Marrying out of the group is one of the most critical steps in inter-group relationships for it would be difficult to maintain an ethnically pluralistic society when there is extensive mating across group lines.

(Kitano, Yeung, Chai, & Hatanaka, 1984 p. 180).

In his review of assimilation literature, John N. Tinker (1982) noted that after cultural and structural assimilation occur with a minority group, the final step is marital assimilation. He reasons that intermarriage rates and patterns inform us of the state of separation between minority and dominant groups. Tinker summarized:

... the norms of social distance and deference that keep minority groups apart from the dominant society in which they are embedded are directly challenged by the norms of intimacy and social accessibility which govern the family. When the gulf between groups is great and intermarriages are few, the network of intimate ties in an extended family may be torn apart by a marriage which crosses a group boundary. When the intermarriage rate is high, however, this both suggests that the norm of distance between the group has lost its force and signals the knitting together of the groups by an intricate web of family ties. (p. 62)

Based on this, Tinker (1982) argues that by studying, in his case, Japanese American intermarriage rates, we can learn about the current place of the identified minority and more importantly, about the significance of race itself in this society. Tinker also positions the United States as a racist society and that because of this, studying the intermarriage rates of a 'visible' ethnic minority, such as the Japanese (versus 'non visible' European immigrants) assesses the importance of race as a social boundary in the United States.

The history of discrimination and hardship experienced by the early Chinese in Canada are well documented. The racism suffered by the Chinese allowed the dominant community, which was primarily British and European at the time, to maintain the belief of the Chinese as 'other' or 'alien' and therefore unable to assimilate and undesirable (see appendix A for a more in-depth discussion

regarding this topic). While economic and social opportunities have certainly improved for the Chinese in Canada today, concerns of non-assimilation and displacement of the existing community continue. Despite this, intermarrying between Chinese and Caucasians are occurring.

Current studies have relied heavily on the unique American experience with interracial relationships and are by and large quantitative in nature. Quantitative research provides the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population but in doing so, is unable to capture the richness of the personal and basic nature of the experience (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). The few available studies examining interracial marriages from a Canadian perspective use it as a measure of assimilation and acculturation into the existing community. For people who intermarry, the confounding experience of marriage is also influenced by the amalgamation of their social, cultural and personal variables. While it is important to view interracial marriages from the larger social context, it is also necessary to understand the lived experience of the people in these relationships.

PURPOSE

This purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Chinese Canadian women who are married to Caucasian men in Canada. The second purpose was to explore the meaning of intermarriage to the Chinese Canadian women in these relationships. In other words, what was it about their marriage that these women

found significant and important to themselves that were related to being married to a partner from outside their own Chinese culture.

The multicultural nature of Canada, particularly in urban areas reflects a picture of the future of our country. Immigration is creating a globalization of the urban city with many different cultures and racial groups living together. With the opportunity for people of different cultures to meet and work together, intermarriage is inevitable.

There is a dearth in available literature regarding intermarriage experiences in general, but particularly from a Canadian perspective. As a Chinese Canadian woman in a intermarriage, I was interested in finding stories and studies to acknowledge and validate this experience. When realizing that there was none, it provided the inspiration to seek answers to my own question of, “ What is this experience about?”

Current research on intermarriage has concentrated primarily on the unique American experience and is largely quantitative in nature. Little is known however from the Canadian perspective of intermarried couples and their own experiences with intermarriage especially as it relates to family, community and personal factors. Intermarriage has been used as a tool in examining race relations and discussing assimilation concerns. While intermarriage should be viewed from the larger social context in which it exists, it is equally important to examine

intermarriage from the personal perspective of those involved. For those who choose to marry outside of their own race, there are many social, cultural and personal factors which they must contend with along with the confounding experience of marriage itself. This is a limitation in the existing body of knowledge which is currently available regarding interracial marriages.

With the knowledge and stories provided by the Chinese Canadian women in this study, the findings of this study are relevant to the fields of social work and family therapy in two ways; by providing a beginning understanding of the unique work and the roles involved in these relationships and the meaning of intermarriage in relationship to the experience of Chinese women in Canada today. In recognizing the unmapped territory which these women must navigate, we can learn more about the role of intermarriage in integrating the Chinese and Canadian identity. And lastly, it will assist in gaining a better understanding of how the social context constructed by family, ethnic and dominant communities affect the development of these relationships.

The following chapters will provide a review of the literature on intermarriage and the qualitative methodology employed for this research. Four Chinese Canadian women and one Korean Canadian woman were interviewed for this research but only the four Chinese Canadian women's stories are presented. Each of these women's stories were interpreted by the researcher and the themes which were brought to light are discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following will provide a brief overview of the major theories of assimilation and relevant literature on intermarriage. The purpose of this review is to provide an understanding of the role of the social and personal forces on intermarriage.

Theoretical Perspectives: Assimilation

In general there are three perspectives on assimilation. These are anglo-conformity, melting pot and pluralism. Anglo-conformity involves a process of managing diversity where newcomers are expected to abandon their own heritage of language, culture and identity for the dominant Anglo-saxon group's behavior and values. The melting pot views assimilation through a two way process in which the dominant and immigrant group forge a new cultural identity together reflecting all cultures. This blending of ethnic differences is largely accomplished through intermarriage and education. Pluralism is the most recent of the theories of assimilation. Unlike anglo-conformity, which seeks to eliminate diversity through absorption into the dominant culture or the melting pot, whose aim is to incorporate diversity with the dominant group to form a new cultural identity, pluralism proposes that ethnic diversity is valuable and beneficial and seeks to retain aspects of minority culture without loss of social equality or integration (Fleras & Elliot, 1992; Richard, 1989).

Anglo-conformity has historically been the Canadian method of assimilation as evidenced by the early government's preference for British and European immigrants and their zealous attempts to restrict immigration of all other ethnic groups. It wasn't until 1971 when the Canadian government announced their policy of multiculturalism, that a shift in political policy was made addressing the benefits of an ethnically pluralistic society and the contributions of minorities to the social and cultural order (Fleras & Elliot, 1992). However, the recent wave of Asian immigration within the last decade has unleashed a series of anti-Chinese sentiments which reflect a level of intolerance on the part of the dominant community to ethnic diversity and it is apparent that the "... ideology expressed by anglo-conformity still seems to prevail in the minds of policy makers and the Canadian people" (Richard, M. 1986, p.10).

Intermarriage has been frequently used to explain and predict the outcome of an ethnically diverse society. While assimilation theory generally views intermarriage as an inevitable final step in the amalgamation of different racial groups, there are varying observations on the meaning of intermarriage in an ethnically diverse society. Anglo-conformists view intermarriage as a step towards the homogenization of a group and the eventual loss of attachment to one's ethnicity. The more liberal of the assimilation view's considers it to be a result of increased tolerance for heterogeneity and an indication of acculturation rather than a weakening of ethnic identity (Judd, 1990). Pluralistic models tend not to assume the inevitability or the desirability of integration and amalgamation. Racial, ethnic

and cultural differences may continue to exist for various reasons and this may be reinforced by the ethnic groups themselves. This model “ allows individuals or racial and ethnic groups to work things out by themselves on the basis of freedom of choice” (Gordon, 1981, p. 183). Individuals and ethnic groups may strive to maintain their culture and racial purity through family sanctions and group pressure or through more formal measures such as legislative lobbying. The more powerful the group, the more effective it will be in maintaining its own autonomy. Examples of this can be seen in the early antimiscegenation laws in the United States of America which restricted intermarriage between races. Kitano (1984) also gave an example of ethnic minorities employing this model when immigrant families threaten to disown a child for marrying out of their own culture.

The intimate act of marriage between ethnic groups raises questions on the meaning of intermarriage and its role in the assimilation of the ethnic groups involved. While those who choose to intermarry may not enter the union with the concern of ethnic or cultural survival of their group, the importance of it should not be underestimated in view of the fact that intermarriage will affect the ethnic composition of successive generations to come (Richard, 1986).

Marcson (1950) argued on the other hand that intermarriage and assimilation were not necessarily functionally dependent and that other factors must be involved aside from assimilation. These factors include high education, middle class status, middle income, professional and proprietary occupations, second and third

generations and rural non - farm residence (p. 77). In a similar tone, examining intermarriage and maintenance of Jewish ethnic identity, Judd (1990) debated that increased intermarriage did not necessarily lead to assimilation. She defines acculturation as a process of learning the manners and style of a new society and assimilation as involving the dissolution of group differences even at the most intimate primary levels of friendship and family. Increased intermarriage within Jewish culture is described by Judd as an act of "apostasy". However she goes on to argue that the, "real test of assimilation versus acculturation is not that more Jews are marrying non - Jews but how those intermarried couples choose to raise their children" (p. 252).

Intermarriage: Overview

In 1872 the California Civil Code stated that, "all marriages of white persons with Negroes, Mongolians, members of the Malay race, or mulattoes are illegal and void" (Tragen, 1944, p.272). Up until 1968, when they were ruled unconstitutional, twenty states in the United States of America had laws forbidding interracial marriages through an antimiscegenation statute enacted in 1850. (Kitano, Yeung, Chai, & Hatanaka, 1984). More recently, the Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act prohibited marriages between 'colored' and 'whites' in South Africa up until 1985 when it was finally repealed (Cowell, 1984).

While no such laws have been known to exist in Canada (Habib, 1992), the discriminatory immigration, education and labor laws in Canada towards the

Chinese and other Asian immigrants, which were in place from 1885 until 1967, served to maintain an 'unofficial' barrier to interracial socialization and integration (Baureiss, 1987; Chan & Helley, 1987; Cresse, 1987).

It was not until the end of World War II and the American occupation of Japan that the first wide scale broaching of the 'color line' between Asians and Caucasians in North America took place. In the years 1947 to 1964 there were over 15,000 'war bride' marriages of which two thirds were between Americans and Japanese (Kitano et al, 1984).

Nancy Cox, a theologian studying interracial and interfaith marriages stated that the tolerance of mixed marriages varies from region to region in Canada and that with the increased flow of immigration in the last several years, it has become more common for Caucasian's to marry Japanese, Chinese and other people outside their race. Interracial and interfaith marriages, "are increasingly the reality in Canadian society, and there will be more such relationships as long as immigrant groups enter the country" (Habib, 1992, p. C4). Warren Kalbach, a Toronto sociologist also noted that, "Marrying across ethnic lines is increasing as Canada becomes more heterogeneous and ethnic groups get larger" (Semanak, 1984, p.C1). Using data from the 1961 and 1971 Censuses of Canada, Kalbach's study found the rate of out marrying increasing for ethnic and religious groups but at a relatively slow pace (Kalbach, 1983).

Couples who choose to marry outside of their own race or ethnic group can still find themselves at risk of being ostracized by their families, friends and

communities. U.S. researcher Tom Smith has been studying the attitudes of Americans on this subject for the past twenty years. Smith, who is employed with the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, found in a 1991 study of 1,500 Americans of all races that 1 in 5 believed interracial marriages should be illegal compared to 2 in 5 in his 1972 survey. Smith commented that, "the overall situation isn't dramatically different from the '60's" (Habib,1992, p. C4). In Canada, a report in the Montreal Gazette in 1984 revealed that one of Montreal's largest dating agencies turned away prospective clients who were not white because 95% of their clientele refused to be paired with non-white partners. The owner of the agency explained, "No matter how tolerant we've become, most still don't want to cross the line" (Semanak, 1984, p.C1).

Census Canada has not collected data on race since 1971 and therefore does not have any current statistics on interracial marriages in this country. However, a study by Ram (1990), used information from the 1981 Canadian Census to explore the propensity for intermarriage among immigrants originating from 40 countries. Ram (1990) also attempted to examine how variation in the structural background of the immigrant groups influenced their tendency to marry. Duration of residence in Canada, occupational heterogeneity and an imbalance in socioeconomic backgrounds between the sexes of a ethnic group were major findings of this study which were positively associated with increased propensity for intermarriage. The study also found that foreign born women were least likely to intermarry and that intermarriage was most prevalent among persons originating from the U.S.,

Australia and Western and Northern European countries, and least prevalent among those originating from Asian, Caribbean and South European countries. Ram (1990) raised the question as to why this distinction exists and questioned the hypothesis of intermarriage as the most important indicator and “inevitable by product” of assimilation (p. 225). The limitations of the study included the difficulty in operationalizing the concept of intermarriage by the data used by the researcher, “ ... the findings of this study are tentative and suggest the need for further research “ (p. 226). Ram suggested that more refined measures of intermarriage need to be developed than currently exist in Canada. These include fine tuning the census to include identifying marriages which occurred in Canada and controlling for ethnic origin as the 1981 Census did not allow for this type of analysis.

In their review of the literature regarding ethnicity and marriage, McGoldrick and Preto (1984) concluded that ethnically mixed couples were more likely to get divorced and their children tended to have more personal problems than ethnically homogenous families. McGoldrick et al speculated that ethnic diversity in intermarriage could be problematic. However, in a study by Amy Chan (1986) comparing marital happiness and perceived stability of interracial marriages to that of same race marriages, overall findings indicated that only spouses in minority male/white female marriages perceived lower marital happiness and stability compared to those in same race marriages. Marriage between white male/minority female appeared to be as happy and stable as their same - race counterparts. Chan (1986) concluded that her study only partially supported the general notion that

interracial marriages have lower marital quality and greater likelihood of separation. Given the results of her study, Chan also emphasized the importance of future research specifying the race and gender of the spouses in interracial marriages due to the variability in the level of satisfaction among the various racial combinations.

McGoldrick and Preto (1984) outlined the following factors to consider when assessing the unique adjustments required in interracial marriages (p. 349-350):

1. **The extent of difference in values between the cultural groups involved.** A couple from similar cultural backgrounds will probably experience less disparity than couples from diverse cultures;
2. **Differences in the degree of acculturation of each spouse.** Couples are likely to have more difficulty if one spouse is an immigrant and the other a fourth generation.
3. **Religious differences in addition to cultural differences;**
4. **Racial differences.** Interracial couples are most vulnerable to being alienated from both racial groups for their union and may be subject to discrimination from both groups;

5. The sex of the spouse from each background. Sex roles intensify certain cultural characteristics;

6. Socioeconomic differences. Partners who come from very different socioeconomic backgrounds or from cultures placing a differential value on socioeconomic status may have added difficulties;

7. Familiarity with each other's cultural context prior to marriage;

8. The degree of resolution of emotional issues about intermarriage reached by both families prior to the wedding. Lack of permission to marry has serious implications for the marriage.

In family therapy, McGoldrick and Preto (1984) explained that along with helping couples to understand family patterns, the role of sibling position and life cycle stages in therapy, it is also important to understand the impact of ethnic differences. It was their conclusion that intermarriage required a degree of flexibility not needed for those who marry within their own group and that certain differences in values, emotional reaction and world views may never be bridged. They conclude that what is crucial in intermarriage is recognizing and celebrating such difference rather than denying their existence. In their view, "awareness that these gaps are natural is crucial for transforming differences in this process successfully" (p.362).

The assumption by McGoldrick and Preto (1984) that intermarriages tended to be problematic and their children are more likely to have problems appears to be a rather broad stroked generalization particularly in light of the results from Amy Chan's (1986) research which contradicted this assumption particularly with white male/minority female relationships. As well, while McGoldrick and Preto (1984) succinctly summarizes the unique adjustments sometimes required in intermarriage, they fail to address any of the structural influences and barriers (eg. racism, stereotypes and sexism) people in intermarriages encounter in their formative years prior to being in the relationship or once in the relationship. And lastly, while recognizing and celebrating ethnic diversity in the relationship is a goal for all to aspire to, the experience and motivations of persons in a intermarriage as they work towards that goal is not addressed and not very well understood.

Christopher Clulow (1993) from the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies reported on a international meeting of family related organizations in 1992, specifically to look at issues regarding what they termed as "cross frontier marriages".

Every marriage crosses frontiers of gender and family culture, however similar the partners may be. But differences of nationality, ethnicity and religion highlight collective aspects of the nature of marriage which can be overlooked, especially by cultures which espouse the value of individual choice (p.82).

Marriage was defined at this meeting as being both a social institution and a personal relationship.

It has public and private aspects. The visibility of these aspects is different at different stages of a relationship and according to the culture in which couples live out their lives together. The arranged marriage based on parental choice, and the companionate marriage based on romantic love, are not alternative models; they simply occupy different places on the continuum between collective and individual values (p. 82).

The social, political and religious implications of individuals choosing to marry across frontiers can be targeted when communities feel their resources are at risk, their belief systems are under attack and their security is at stake. They gave the example of marrying across opposing national boundaries during war time can sometimes be seen as a treasonable act.

The more cross frontier marriages there are, the more fearful will the indigent population be about the erosion of its identity. These marriages may then be regarded as subversive to the existing order. They endanger traditional institutions (p. 83).

They acknowledged that the couples themselves are unlikely to attribute these meanings to their choice of partner. However at the point where the private and

public sphere converge, Clulow (1993) argued that there will then be a preoccupation with identity. At the collective and individual levels there is a desire to differentiate between 'me' and 'not me', and 'us' from 'them'. Any differences can be concealed by emphasizing similarities and similarities can be concealed by emphasizing differences. The cultural differences of the partner may only surface as an explanation for problems in the relationship. The report also identified the concern that the absence of a shared history, culture or language could give rise to misunderstandings and poor communication which could contribute to the destabilization of a marriage during crises.

The above areas of vulnerability were also the areas of potential strengths in cross frontier marriages. These were reported as follows:

1. Couples may succeed individually in managing differences that communities have failed to manage. Their success may offer hope to other who wish to bridge the gap between conflicts which threaten to tear communities apart.
2. In the absence of social support, there may need to be a level of commitment between couple marrying across frontiers that is higher than the norm.
3. The differences between partners may encourage planning and communication between them, developing their capacity to negotiate with each other and those outside their immediate circle

4. These difference may also be very enriching, providing access to cultural, linguistic, culinary and other worlds that would not otherwise be available and;
5. The potential for developing a mature partnership in which each partner subscribes to his or her own beliefs and supports the right of others to do the same may be enhanced in cross-frontier marriages. Partners will be less dependent on parents and others to define their values for them, and their children stand to gain from a model of partnership between their parents in which there is tolerance and acceptance of differences in others.
(Clulow, 1993 p. 83).

Chinese and Intermarriage

A 1990 study by Lee and Yamanaka revealed that over 25% of Asian Americans (Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese) married outside their own race. The Chinese had one of the lowest rates of out marrying at 15.7% but of those 66.5% selected Caucasian spouses (p. 291).

Factors affecting intermarriage among Chinese Americans were examined by Betty Lee Sung (1990) through an analysis of marriage license applications in New York, the 1980 U.S. Bureau of census and personal interviews. She concluded that Chinese Americans who chose to intermarry were influenced by a number of factors including generation, education, occupation, income, sex ratio and age.

Sung (1990) identified 'generation' to be the strongest factor impacting upon intermarriage in the United States. Rates for intermarriage were lower for foreign born first generation Chinese Americans than those who were born in the United States. In 1982, only 8% of Chinese women born in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong married non - Chinese spouses. Comparatively, 34% of Chinese women born in the United States married outside of their race. Similar rates were also found for Chinese men (p. 341). Lee and Yamanaka (1990) also found similar results in their study. In another study on intermarriage among Asian Americans in Los Angeles, Kitano et al (1984) found that for Chinese females, the first generation out-marriage rate, which included marriage to other Asians such as Korean's and Japanese in addition to Caucasians, was 18.4%, the second generation out-marriage rate was 55.6% and by the third generation the rate had increased to 74% (p.181). Controlling for the other Asian spouses, Kitano et al (1984) determined that of the 716 Chinese marriages which occurred in 1979 in Los Angeles, 30.2 % (216 marriages) were to non - Asian spouses (p. 181).

Other significant factors affecting intermarriage found in Sung's (1990) analysis included education and occupation. Sung (1990) found that the Chinese who married out generally had higher education than those who married in. For Chinese women this factor was especially significant, Sung found that 72 % of the Chinese women who out-married had some college education compared to only 20% of those who married in. Along with higher education, Sung found that out-married couples tended to have better jobs and higher incomes. This was particularly the

case with the Chinese wife and Caucasian husband couples. Sung found that 39% of these couples were in upper family income levels (p.345).

While there has not been an equivalent study on Chinese Canadians, Clifford Jansen (1982) examined ethnic intermarriage in Canada using data from the 1951 and 1971 Census and found that high levels of educational attainment, occupational and income status were also associated with ethnic exogamy in Canada.

In her doctoral dissertation examining the motivational influences in Chinese American women who intermarry (1992), Diana Chen compared 40 interracial married Chinese American women with a control group of 40 Chinese American women who married Chinese spouses through a series of surveys and checklists. She found that both groups were comparable with respect to social class, educational and generational level. However the women in interracial marriages were found to be correlated with a greater degree of American acculturation, lower ethnic identification, less adherence to traditional ethnic cultural values and less perceived family pressure on marital choice. Chen (1992) also hypothesized that for those Chinese women who believed in a more egalitarian relationship between men and women, they may reject the subordinate role cast upon them by the traditional Chinese values and customs. "Consequently, for these women, interracial marriage may become an alternative avenue to fulfill their needs for nurturance and egalitarian relationships ..." (p. 51 – 52).

Fong and Yung (1995) used in-depth interviews with Chinese and Japanese American women and men in the San Francisco Bay area who are or have been married to Caucasian spouses to examine factors involved in contemporary Asian – white heterosexual marriages. Specifically, they wanted to find out what factors were involved in their decision to outmarry, which factors were shared by both women and men and which were unique and why a higher proportion of women than men outmarried. Their findings support the view that intermarriage is facilitated by the dismantling of racial barriers and the assimilation process. They also suggest other factors are involved including: aversion to Asian patriarchy; overbearing Asian parents; cultural and economic compatibility particularly with Jewish Americans; upward mobility and media representations of beauty and power. Of note, the age of the participants ranged from being born in the 1940s to 1950s which limits the findings to the experiences of that generation affected by the civil rights movement and anti-miscegenation laws in the United States of America. Nevertheless, the results are fascinating and worth reviewing.

Our findings complement these studies in showing that interracial marriage is a complex phenomenon – the result of assimilation factors to be sure; but more importantly, additional factors intimately related to issues of racial and gender power relations (p. 79 – 80).

Factors which were found in their study to be common with both Asian American men and women intermarrying included the following:

1. **Proximity.** Most of the men and women interviewed met their spouses through school or work and that marriage came out of mutual attraction and love. Fong and Yung (1995) used this as evidence to support the assimilationist understanding of outmarriage which postulated that without prior contact between members of different races these relationships would not develop. However they clarify that while this may explain the increasing rate of outmarriage, the participants indicated that other factors were also involved.

2. **Timing and Unavailability of Asian American Partners.** Timing appeared to be an important factor in the decision to marry. Accomplishing professional and career goals and in some cases resolving struggles between their minority status and relationship with the dominant culture were factors which contributed to their readiness. "Whom they married sometimes seemed less significant than their readiness" (p. 82). Availability of Asian American partners was also a factor affecting intermarriage. Participants spoke about living in geographic areas or working in specific fields where there the pool of Asian Americans was limited.

3. **Cultural Affinity.** In this study 18 % of the Chinese and Japanese Americans women and men interviewed were married to Jewish partners. Although these participants married Caucasian spouses, they described sharing a cultural affinity with their Jewish culture. Common values regarding family ties and educational achievement as well as a immigrant legacy were found lacking in other non-Jewish relationships. As well Fong and Yung (1995) pointed out that in these

relationships both spouses shared a similar middle class value and socialized in the same professional circles.

4. Aversion to Marrying within the Same Race. Even when potential Asian American spouses were available, many of the participants found them to be, “less attractive” than the white partners they eventually chose (p.84). Fong and Yung’s (1995) analysis of the interviews concluded that both men and women had formed negative opinions and feelings about Asian Americans of the opposite sex.

On the one hand, cultural attributes such as a patriarchal family structure, an overbearing mother, or growing up in an ethnically insulated neighborhood turned them away from seeking Asian American partners. On the other hand, the media promotion of white beauty and power encouraged them to date and marry white Americans (p.84).

A number of the participants (the exact number was not included in this paper unfortunately) also identified growing up in “repressive family situations where one or both parents were unbearably domineering and manipulative and where negative reinforcements and strict discipline were practiced” (Fong & Yung, 1995, p.84). Based on these experiences, these participants placed great emphasis on marriages based on romantic love and grounded in mutual respect and equality.

Of the experiences of the women who were interviewed; media representation of white culture, incompatibility with Chinese American men due to their perception of them as being more sexist and different courtship patterns (eg. Asian American men were less aggressive with pursuing women) were identified as some of the reasons for choosing to marry Caucasian husbands over their Chinese American counterparts (Fong & Yung, 1995).

The men identified similar concerns regarding attributes they wished to avoid in marriage. Other issues identified included wishing to avoid unhappy relationships like their parents and the feeling that marrying a Chinese American women would be like marrying their own sister given the small tight knit Chinese community which many of the participants grew up in. Of interest was the sense of empowerment identified by one of the participants regarding the result of relationships with Caucasian women:

You have more access in the society if you're connected with the majority. I realized that very early on. I don't think it was any conscious thing that I was only going to date white in order to get into these places, but in fact, you operate in a fashion where you take chances you wouldn't take. I don't have to protect, be in a position of being responsible for my Chinese [American] wife if someone calls her a Chink or [threatens] to beat her up. You're connected to the majority. That dynamic is very real (Fong & Yung, 1995, p.89).

Fong and Yung (1995) found that both the women and men in the study essentially faulted the opposite sex for similar weaknesses: being overly serious, having pragmatic occupations or narrow interests, being rather lackluster and not a part of the dominant or counter culture (p.90). One of the participants explained that while they would be attracted to other Asian Americans like themselves, “ ... but like me, they were also looking elsewhere ” (p. 91). Fong and Yung (1995) concluded that in these cases, “white American culture is regarded as superior” (p.91) and that Asian Americans are attracted to those who are part of the dominant culture. Given two equally acculturated Americans, they will choose the ‘real’ American over the ‘imitation’ who is Asian American. As well, that because of the racial hierarchy of preference ingrained in them through their parents and popular media, they will choose Caucasian over Hispanic or African Americans for spouses.

And lastly, in seeking an answer to why higher proportions of Asian American women than men have chosen to marry Caucasian husbands, Fong and Yung (1995) speculated that racial and gender hierarchy as well as stereotypes play a crucial role. Mass media portrays Asian American women as petite, submissive and sexually desirable, which departs little from the mainstream image of what constitutes as attractive feminine woman. Caucasian men on the other hand are finding Caucasian women to be too liberated, career minded and demanding and may be finding Asian women to be more attractive because of this. Of the images

which are available regarding Asian men tend to represent them as small and socially inept. Based on these images most women would not be attracted to Asian American men (p.92). While mass media most definitely contributes to the image and stereotypes of Asian Americans (and Canadians) particularly with regards to the negative imagery of Asian American men and the stereotype of the “submissive” Asian woman, the notion that Caucasian men are attracted to Asian women largely because of their disenchantment with Caucasian American women requires more investigation.

The review of the above literature provides a beginning understanding into the complex phenomenon of intermarriage. Clearly, choosing to marry outside of one’s own culture (be it religion, ethnicity or race) involves many areas including personal, social, cultural and historical factors. The few studies reviewed here examining specifically Asian or Chinese intermarriage, were all American based. Their results confirm that intermarriage between Asian Americans and Caucasians exist and are increasing with each generation. They also reveal that while structural barriers to intermarriage may have been removed with the repeal of antimiscegenation laws, racial and gender stereotypes and hierarchy continue to influence these relationships. The study by Fong and Yung (1995) in particular provided a clearer picture of the intricate weaving between personal and social factors which influence Asian Americans who have chosen to marry Caucasian spouses.

A gap remains in the literature regarding the Canadian perspective of intermarriage especially as it pertains to the Chinese Canadian experience. The available literature also attests to the unique position Chinese women experience with regards to acculturation, media portrayal, racial and gender power. The study by Chen (1992) confirmed that while the Chinese American women who choose to marry Caucasian spouses were similar in class and education to their counterparts who married Chinese spouses, they differed significantly when it came to ethnic identification and acculturation. Clearly, Chinese women who choose to marry Caucasian spouses have a different 'story' to tell with regards to intermarriage. The Chinese Canadian women in this study have invited us into their world and provided us with personal accounts of their experience with intermarriage. Their stories fill a void in the literature and research currently available not only because of the Canadian perspective but also because the attempt was made to preserve their 'voices' in telling their story as much as possible.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Exploratory Research

An interpretive social science approach was chosen as the theoretical paradigm which guided this study. This approach was chosen because of its emphasis in empathic understanding and interpretations of how, “ people create and maintain their social worlds “ (Neuman, 1994, p.62). Interpretive research does not assume that all people experience the world in the same way. Instead it seeks to understand how people experience the world and whether there is shared meaning in this. Unlike positivist social science which relies on empirical observations, replication and causal laws to generate explanations and theory, interpretive social science relies on a person's definition of a situation to inform the researcher on what is meaningful or relevant in how everyday lives are experienced. For the interpretive researcher the goal is to invite others to understand deeply the reality of those being studied:

The theory or description is accurate if the researcher conveys a deep understanding of the way others reason, feel and see things ”

(Neuman, 1994. p.62 - 65).

A phenomenological strategy was used in this study. The experiences of Chinese women married to Caucasian husbands in Canada, is a subject area which has remained relatively unexplored in the field of human science. Using a

phenomenological strategy provided a fuller and richer understanding of the lived experiences of people who choose to intermarry. "The phenomenological tradition seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and their intentions within their 'life – world' " (Morse & Field, 1995, p.22). It looks to answering the question of what a particular experience is like. The phenomenological approach not only provides an accurate description of the phenomena but the 'essence' of the experience as well. In other words it seeks to uncover and describe the structures and the internal meaning of the structures of these lived experiences (Van Manen, 1994).

A qualitative methodology was employed as the focus of this research was exploratory. The phenomenon of interracial marrying between Chinese and Caucasians in Canada remains a poorly understood area. A qualitative approach provided a more comprehensive holistic understanding of this phenomenon, grounded in the experiences of the participants (O'Connor, Social Work 554, Qualitative Research class notes, November 16, 1995).

Research which focuses on the participant's perspective will assist in developing insight into the phenomenon and provides us with strong narrative descriptions which are not always available in quantitative methods (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The participant's experiences were validated by an exploratory approach as these experiences are recognized as significant and valuable. A qualitative - exploratory design allows the participant to have a voice and an opportunity to

express in their own words their lived experience as a Chinese Canadian woman in an interracial marriage.

Selection of Participants

Four Chinese Canadian women who are married to Caucasian husbands were interviewed in the Vancouver area. All of the women had been married between 12 months to 13 years. It was the first marriage for 3 of the women and the second intermarriage experience for the other. Only one of the women interviewed was born in Canada to immigrant parents, the other three women immigrated to Canada between the ages of 3 years to 21 years of age. The age range of the four women ranged from early 20's to early 40's. All the women interviewed had attained university education and were part of a professional middle class group. None of the women were currently seeing a therapist / counselor or considered themselves to be in a vulnerable or crisis period.

The women who participated in this study were selected purposefully because they were Chinese Canadian women married to Caucasian husbands and had expressed an interest in sharing stories about their intermarriage experiences. Purposeful sampling involves a selection of typical or atypical "information rich cases" which provide a deep understanding of a particular experience. While this form of sampling is limited in its ability to generalize to a population, it provides the qualitative researcher with expert information by virtue of the participant's direct and personal knowledge of that event (Sandelowski, 1995).

Using this method, I spoke informally to friends and contacts that knew of Chinese Canadian women married to Caucasian husbands who may have been interested in participating in this study. A letter of initial contact was then given to the friend/contact once the potential participant agreed to receive more information (see Appendix B). Those interested in finding out more about the study or who were considering participating was then asked to contact myself directly at the phone number listed on the covering letter. When I did not receive any contact from the prospective participant one week after the letter of initial contact had been delivered, I asked the friend/contact person to contact the participant to remind them of the letter. Once an appropriate participant agreed to participate in the study, the confidentiality of their participation as well as any identifying information gathered was kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researchers home. Only the primary and co - investigators as well as a professional transcriber had access to any of the data gathered. Once the data had been gathered and transcribed, all identifying information was changed to protect the participant's identity (eg. names, cities, occupations).

The participants were informed prior to their first interview that participation in this study was strictly voluntary and that they had complete freedom to withdraw at any point of the study. No deception or coercion was involved.

Data Collection

Each of the four participants were interviewed once in a face to face interview with the primary researcher. Three of the interviews were conducted in the participants own home at their discretion and the other participant was interviewed at a mutually agreed upon location to accommodate her work schedule. In all of the interviews, attempts were made to ensure the convenience and comfort of the participants by allowing them to choose the location of the interview. Individual interviewing was chosen as it allows for more depth and intensive exploration of a topic. Each interview lasted between 90 to 120 minutes and all interviews were audiotaped. Questions were asked following a general interview guide (see Appendix C). The interview guide was divided into 3 parts and open-ended questioning was employed:

Part 1: focused on allowing the participant to tell their story of intermarriage.

Part 2: focused on experience with family and cultural influences such as attitudes and expectations towards intermarriage and;

Part 3: focused on exploring the meaning of their intermarriage experiences to the women interviewed.

A general interview guide was used rather than a structured set of questions because the interview guide allowed for more flexibility in terms of wording and sequence of questions. At the same time, the guide provided an outline for the topics and issues which the interviewer wanted to cover. Rubin and Babbie (1993) described the guide as ensuring the focus on predetermined topics and issues,

“while at the same time remaining conversational and free to probe into unanticipated circumstances and responses” (p.374). This was particularly helpful in ensuring that all the relevant areas were covered while at the same time encouraging participants to talk about their experiences in their own way. I found that the interview guide was referred to only from time to time as all of the participants would almost automatically determine what it was that they wanted to talk about relatively early in the process.

The questions throughout the interview focused on the participant's perceptions, interpretations, thoughts, beliefs and feelings regarding her experiences in a interracial marriage and clarification was sought whenever necessary. While there are other forms of collecting qualitative data (eg. participation in the setting, direct observation, document reviews), in depth interviewing was chosen for this study as it is considered to be the most appropriate way of disclosing and discussing emotionally laden subjects and allows for clarification and discussion (Selltiz, Wrightsman & Cook, 1976; Reinharz, 1992). In addition to allowing the researcher to respond to information which may be unexpected it also allows for flexibility in the field to question, hear, interpret and frame another question to delve further into the phenomenon being studied (Rubbin & Babbie, 1993). And most importantly face to face interviewing allows the interviewer to develop rapport with the participant. By using listening skills which demonstrate care and caution, it, “...enables another woman to develop ideas, construct meaning and use words that say what she means” (Reinharz, 1992, p. 24). Exploring a person's marriage

may evoke strong emotions and therefore in-depth interviewing in person will allow for the emotional needs to be adequately addressed. The limitations of interviewing include the necessity of having the co-operation of the participants, interviewees may be unwilling or uncomfortable sharing certain information, elements of the conversation may not be properly comprehended by the interviewer, and reliability of the information (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The interviews all seemed to reach a natural conclusion with no need to prematurely end the conversation. Themes and clarification of any of my understanding of their experiences were largely clarified during the interview. Interviewer self disclosure also occurred during the interview. All of the participants were informed prior to the interview that I was also a Chinese Canadian woman married to a Caucasian spouse. I attempted to 'pace' the amount of self disclosure which occurred in the interview depending on the cues which the participants gave in terms of their readiness to know more about me (Reinharz, 1992). In some cases the disclosures were limited to a shared laugh over a story which was mutually understood or in other cases involved specific questions directed at my own experiences with intermarriage. Reinharz (1992) noted in her review of the literature that some researchers argue that self disclosure during interviews is "good feminist practice" and that this disclosure can assist in putting women participants at ease (p. 32). She wrote further, "Self disclosure initiates true dialogue by allowing participants to become co-researchers" (p.33). By positioning myself as a Chinese Canadian woman in an intermarriage as were the

participants, this allowed for meaningful conversation which seemed to flow almost automatically with all of the participants. While critiques of self - disclosure include the problem of generalizing from one's own experience, I found the opposite occurred. Hearing other woman's experiences expanded upon my own understanding of intermarriage which up until that time was the only one I had any understanding of. In some cases, stories were similar and paralleled my own experiences and other cases were new and unknown. In Reinharz (1992), this process is highlighted in a study of rape by two women, of which one is a survivor:

As we sat and listened to one another we became aware of ways of experiencing rape that were both like and unlike our own experiences... If we had been unwilling or unable to listen to the voices of these women telling their stories, the final form of the interview schedule and the associated data would have been incomplete at best, and an extremely biased piece of academic rhetoric at worst (p.34).

In the end I believe it was this open and reciprocal approach which allowed me to develop a fuller and deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants outside of my own experience with the phenomenon of intermarriage.

Data Analysis

A narrative research approach was applied in the analysis of the findings as it allowed for the stories of each of the participants to be understood in its context as much as possible. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) explained that,

People are storytellers by nature. Stories provide coherence and continuity to one's experience and have a central role in our communication with others (p.7).

Furthermore, to explore and understand the inner world of individuals, one of the most readily available methods is through verbal accounts and stories presented by narrators about their lived experience (Lieblich et al, 1998)

According to this approach, stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world; at the same time, however, they shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality. The story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to other, by the stories we tell (Lieblich et al, 1998, p. 7)

... by studying and interpreting self-narratives, the researcher can access not only the individual identity and its systems of meaning but also the teller's culture and social world (Lieblich et al, 1998, p.9).

The basic features of narrative research often involve studies with smaller groups than sample sizes in more traditional research due to the volume of data that can be gathered even with one interview. As well, no two interviews are alike and it is this uniqueness which Lieblich (1998) et al. described as “manifesting extremely rich data”. Lieblich (1998) et al also explained that the narrative materials can be analyzed along a “myriad of dimensions”. It is these dimensions which require the work of sensitive reading or listening in order to gain understanding to the research question.

Analysis in narrative research is interpretive and an interpretation is always, “personal, partial and dynamic” (Lieblich et al, 1998 p. 10). While analysis of the data in this study began in the data collection stage when patterns and themes emerged within the interview, the formal process of analysis began by transcribing the interviews into written form. The audiotape of the interview was submitted to a professional transcriber and instructions were given to transcribe the interview verbatim and to include the expressive parts of the interview which might otherwise be lost when on paper such as pauses, laughing, sighing, two people speaking at the same time etc.

While the interviews were conducted within a two month period, the analysis of the data was delayed by over a year. I was aware that this was unusual, as it is normally recommend that the researcher review’s the data as soon as possible.

There was much introspection during this time as to why I was hesitating with taking the next step in my research. I came to an understanding of myself during the twelve months that I needed to prepare myself and be in a position to be able to "hear" the stories that these women were telling me. In other words, I needed to be ready. I was entering the second year of my own marriage at the time of the conception of this research and was enthusiastic about my area of interest, however, I was not prepared for the amount of self reflection which would result from doing research so close to home. I was in many ways, fearful of lifting the proverbial rock and finding out what was lurking below. The interviews were all informative and personal and I sensed that in them lay the answers to at least some of my own questions of what intermarriage was about. In a study on working class lesbian bar culture in the 1950's and 1960's, the two researchers spoke about the effect of the stress of their interviews on them:

[We]... have had our own experiences of marginality stemming from our sexual identities We ... found that our conversations with these older lesbians caused us to reflect upon our own lives ... For instance there was a period of about 14 months during which we did almost no work on the paper. When we finally found the courage to discuss this with each other, we realized that we were shaken and depressed by the number of stories we had heard of alcoholism, suicide, and other forms of violence. Our avoidance of the project became data that we used to help us look at these women's lives from another angle (Reinharz, 1992, p. 36).

The state of readiness for myself came about after spending time examining my own marriage and my own conscious (and unconscious) reasons for intermarrying. I had sensed that marriage for me was not only about finding a loving and supportive partner but it was also about seeking some part of myself that has remained unknown and unanswered. Through the safe confines of my relationship I was able to start looking at my family history, the history of the Chinese in Canada and through this, develop a better understanding of who I am, both past and present. The process has been a deeply personal and meaningful journey. The course of this journey has been filled with moments of doubt, fear and frustration but this has been countered by the wonderment and thrill of seeing the results of the research and the sense of sisterhood with the women who I hope this exploration will speak to. It was with this resolution that I was then able to move to the next stage my analysis which will be discussed.

Following a holistic content analysis approach outlined in Lieblich et al (1998) each of the participant's stories were read in the following manner:

1. The transcript was read along with listening to the audiotape at least on two occasions. I attempted to listen with an open mind. I carefully listened for stories and meaning. Lieblich et al (1998) described this stage as one where, "There are no clear directions" but that one needed to, "believe in your ability to detect the meaning of the text, and it will 'speak' to you" (p.62). I looked for meaning in their story as a whole but also paying attention at the same time

to the significance of the other aspects of their story as well. These included what the participant choose to speak about first, expression of emotions or feelings, stories, judgements or evaluations. Notes were made throughout this process both in the margin of the transcript and also on a note pad. In addition to any fields notes, these were then combined to assist in formulating the next step.

2. I then carefully began a process of putting down onto paper my initial and overall impression of each participant's story. This consisted of not only summarizing the general content of each story but also making note of discrepancies, omissions, significant stories, repetition of stories or themes, the amount of time devoted to any one story/theme and any preliminary understanding of themes. In some cases the stories "spoke" to me very clearly and in other cases I struggled in trying to bring some understanding to what this person's story was about. In one particularly difficult case, referring to my field notes again and listening to my own reaction to her story assisted me in coming to a better comprehension of that particular interview.
3. Using these initial impressions which Leiblich et al (1998) describes as "special foci of content or themes" (p.63) I then reviewed the themes again with the whole transcript, reading each part which corresponded with the theme. By looking at each story, I also attempted to pay attention to the content, mood and the relationship of these parts to the story as a whole.

4. After reviewing the information from all stages of the above process, each woman's story was then rewritten with the intent of maintaining their "voice" in the story. This included using direct quotes as much as possible as well as writing their stories in a manner which followed loosely the process of the interview itself. While this was not planned, it always became the most comfortable way to write.

The dominant theme of each women's experience was identified and developed in a written format. The theme's and intimate dimensions of their intermarriage stories which emerged were then used to develop a framework in which to comprehend and find meaning in their intermarriage experiences. The following are the stories of these four women.

Chapter Four

STORIES OF INTERMARRIAGE

Stuck in the Middle – Kerry's Story

Introduction

I met with Kerry in her home in False Creek on a sunny afternoon. She had just returned home from an outing with her 3 year old daughter Kim. Kim is bright and polite and watched the Little Mermaid video while I interviewed her mother in the dining room of their clean and modest apartment.

Kerry was open and easily engaged in our conversation. She was born in Hong Kong but came to Canada at 16 years of age to go to school in Manitoba by herself. She is university educated and is employed with a large retail company in Vancouver as a buyer. She is in her early forties and has been married to Bob for over 5 years. She is unique from the other women who I have interviewed for this study because this is her second marriage.

The Experience of Intermarriage

Kerry very quickly opened up and gave me a history of her experience with intermarriage. Both her previous and current marriage has been with Caucasian men.

Um, actually Bob is my second husband and uh, my first husband was also Caucasian and my second experience has been a lot more smooth than my first experience.

She was married at the age of 21 to her first husband Jack and that marriage lasted for about 10 years. Kerry met Jack after she had been engaged to the son of a prominent Chinese family in San Francisco. The engagement was orchestrated and supported by her own family because of the social status of the family. Kerry then returned to Canada to continue her university education where she met Jack. He questioned her reasoning for getting engaged at the time and Kerry eventually conceded that the engagement was not what she wanted in her life at the time. She broke off her engagement and was married to Jack after she finished school. Kerry recalled the anger of her mother when she disclosed her plans to marry Jack. She described her mother's behavior simply as "blind rage". Kerry believed that her mother's anger and rage stemmed from her belief that her only daughter should marry someone Chinese and of some social standing. Jack was not Chinese or a person with the type of perceived status expected by her mother at the time of their marriage.

Um, I got married to my first husband Jack when I was 22 and I'm the only daughter in the family, there are three kids and my mother was um actually quite horrified that I had decided to marry a Caucasian, and a student at that. So I guess for her to have the only daughter married to a um, in the

Chinese culture it seems like you know, you want your, your daughter to marry a doctor, a lawyer ... So a student was like way down on the totem pole. So to be white and to be a student, and to have your only daughter marry this, this man, was quite traumatic for her.

For two years her mother refused to communicate with her.

So I came here when I was 15 and got married at 21, so it, it was very hard for her and she couldn't accept the fact that she, that I was marrying someone, um that was not a doctor or a lawyer or, and it was non – Chinese and, so she actually stopped talking to me for two years. And um, I was here and she was in Hong Kong and it was a very ugly scene. Like she just would hang up on me and, and she told me that uh, that she didn't want to have anything to do with me and it was just kind of a blind rage.

It was only with the encouragement of Kerry's grandmother and aunts that her mother eventually softened and started speaking to her again.

You know it took about two years and my family other than my mother, my, my family was very supportive. My grandmother, her mother was actually very supportive. She was at the time I think, she was about 75 years old, so she was actually quite a lot more open – minded than my own mother and she said that you know, if, if you like the guy, who cares what

color. And so it took, it took my mother about two years to turn around and with the help of her, her sisters, like my aunt and you know, everybody was rallying for me. So it took her about two years to turn around and she started talking to me again.

The relationship lasted for 10 years. When she remarried to her current husband Bob, her mother she felt, had “learned” from her previous marriage that there was no point in telling her not to marry someone because he was “white”.

... the marriage lasted about ten years and uh, then when I remarried, um, I think they, especially my mother kind of learned from her first uh, mistake. She, although we never really talked about it, she realized that there was really no point to say, don't marry him because he is white.

Currently Kerry describes the relationship Bob has with her family as “cordial” and that her parents give Bob the “respect” that one would give to a son-in-law but that by her own definition, “there really isn't a relationship there”. She feels is largely due to a language barrier. While her mother and father both speak some English, she feels that it's still very difficult for them to hold a conversation in English with Bob. She now tries to orchestrate their meetings so that neither one of her parents have to be alone in a room with Bob for too long as it is awkward for both parties.

With both of her husbands, Kerry described them as having made an effort to get to know her family and culture but that it has been harder for her family to get to know her husbands. She describes being immediately accepted into both of her husband's families and that being Chinese was never a perceived problem.

Um, actually Jack was, Jack was very good. I mean he, he attempted to learn Chinese, he certainly um was very um, uh, anxious to try out anything that's new. We went to Hong Kong together, we went to China together and he was actually um, a lot more accepting of the culture than, than Bob actually. Bob is very accepting too, but you know there are certain foods he definitely wouldn't eat, he has no intention of learning Chinese and that sort of thing. Whereas Jack was, he sort of plunged himself into this, oh you know, I think I'm game, let's let's try something new. So, that part was actually easier for me and he, Jack actually wanted to communicate with my family, more so than, than Bob. It it could be also because it was age difference too. I think Bob when I married he was 33 and when I married Jack he was 21, and I think when you are in your 20's you are a lot more exuberant about things than when you are in your 30's.

In both relationships she identified that it was her own family which she felt was the larger source of stress for her because they were less accepting of her relationship. However it was not clarified as to what it was that Kerry felt contributed to the difficulty on her family's part in getting to know her husbands.

While she identified language as a barrier, she also referred to her family's reluctance to get to know her husbands.

... so, um, as far as both my husbands, there really is, some, um effort to get to know my family, although it's very hard for my family to get to know them. I think my mother now recognizes the fact that he is a son – in – law and I will give him the respect that I would give to a son – in – law, but you know, it's not like she's just going to go out and uh buy him a present tomorrow because she feels there really isn't a huge relationship there.

Kerry's parents are divorced and both of them live in Hong Kong but visit regularly, often for extended periods of 3 months. Their visits appear to be a source of stress for Kerry, not only because of the perceived demands which they make for Kerry's time when they are here but also the general lack of ease with which her parents and husband display when they are together. Often the family gatherings will revolve around the dinner table and a meal. Kerry discusses how difficult these meetings have been for her when both her husband and her own extended family are together:

... unless it's a birthday or whatever special event, I really try to leave him out of it because my family doesn't actually make a point, I mean they, they make a point, they they are cordial, they say 'hello', you know 'what

did you do today', but that's about it, so during the entire meal, Bob would be sitting there counting the tiles on the ceiling and it's very unpleasant for him. I think Jack was a bit more um, accepting of that. Jack would try to make small talk, like he would just keep on trying and trying and trying until it drives you crazy. Whereas Bob is just sort of 'oh, well nobody wants to talk to me, I don't want to, I don't want to be here'. So I don't, I don't ask Bob to come anymore and I, I feel that every time that we go out for an occasion, I'm always stuck in the middle, so it's hard work for me. It's never enjoyable for me so I have to talk to my parents in Chinese and I have to talk to Bob and sometimes translate, then I end up sort of working all night.

Kerry described Bob as having joked about the situation and threatened to form a support group called WHAAP – White Husbands Against Asian Parents. He apparently had 4 or 5 men in similar relationships who were ready to enlist with the common complaint that when they go to restaurants they read the menu because "nobody talks to me". Kerry described her way of coping with family gatherings now is by having "learned the trick" whereby she'll make Bob go to the first and last dinner – the welcoming and good bye dinner for her parent's and does not expect him to attend anything in between unless it's a special occasion like a wedding or birthday. Also they have come to the understanding that when her mother is here that one day each weekend Kerry will meet with her mother, whether its for dinner or lunch, so that the grandparent's can play with their

granddaughter and Bob will have his own time. Kerry also added that when her mother is in Hong Kong then this "is not an issue".

So while Kerry seems to have found a way to cope with the demands of her own extended family when they visit, it was our discussion about her recent trip to Hong Kong with her daughter which revealed how much pressure she experiences at home when she tries to accommodate her husband's needs within her own family's activities. Kerry described discussing with Bob about her plan to visit her family in Hong Kong with Kim and that when Bob was unable to go due to work related duties, she described feeling "secretly happy about that" though she never disclosed this to him.

Deep down I didn't want him to come because I, it would be in, I didn't want to feel the pressure for like three weeks to have to play tour guide and have to you know, translate everything 24 hours a day.

For her the trip was about spending time with her family. She found the trip to be a wonderful "mother - daughter bonding experience" with lots of visiting with family. Kerry's mother is very close to her own sisters and Kerry has been included into this close circle of women. She regards her relationship with her aunt's as being very important to her and one she wants to nurture and continue.

Neither sisters have grandchildren yet, so my mother was the first one to have a grandchild and she talked incessantly about Kim, so it was nice for all the relatives to finally meet her, they were very welcoming and, and it was just no pressure for me to you know, we went out like every day, twice a day and I think Kim went to dim sum 17 times in 21 days. But it was intensive family gatherings that Bob would just be bored completely out of his mind. And um, that's why I didn't want him to be there.

Kerry acknowledged that Bob (her current husband) has expressed frustration with what he perceives as manipulation tactics by her family to get her to do things. Kerry agrees that she often does things with her family because she is unable to say "no" to them and out of feelings of guilt. She also spoke about doing things out of "duty" and "respect" as well, " ... he knows that I don't often want to go, but it's a duty that I have to go ...". I think even for Kerry it is not clear to her how much of her action is due to cultural considerations and how much of it is due to her own family dynamics. She identifies herself as 'Caucasian' but also acknowledges that because she moved to Canada at the age of 15 years that much of her 'cultural upbringing' had been established already.

Uh, I've been here 25 years so I'm I'm more uh, Caucasian than Asian

Although I, because I was 15 (when I moved to Canada) and by 15 you really have your roots set, you, you have that cultural upbringing, so I still

have a lot of that, um and for better or for worse I think it does tend to get into the relationship sometimes.

While Kerry self identifies herself as being more western in her thinking, she remains strongly ruled and influenced by her eastern upbringing. It appears that this dual identity has been something she has struggled with. Kerry told me a story about how her father had expectations that when he grew old that she would be the daughter to live with him and look after him.

My father was um, when he moved here, uh Jack and I were still married and being the only daughter, he he always treated me um different I think than, than uh, he has one daughter and one son, and my other brother is a half- brother with my, its my step-father's son. So my father has somehow expected that um, when he grew old that I would be the daughter to look after him, to um, to uh, live with him and all that and when he first came to Canada he basically wanted to buy a house so that Jeff and I and him could live together.

He had expressed to Kerry that, " I never remarried because I have you, so I don't really need a mate, um, you're there to look after me." Kerry described a period of time where he lived with her and her first husband – she found that he expected her to cook, clean and entertain him in addition to working full time.

He, um, expected me to make the meals, do his laundry, do, you know, everything plus have a job. And I just felt that it was, it was really interfering with, with our marriage because uh, he did stay with us for about two months and when he stayed with us, he would get up every Saturday morning at like dawn and he would sit in the kitchen waiting for me to get up so we could go out and we could do things together. So of course my husband was then sort of second place. And even though Jack never really complained too much, it, it was not right and I was always trying to sort of appease to both of them and ... it was a lot of pressure on me.

In her second marriage her father had also invited himself to their honeymoon, Kerry and Bob compromised by going on a day trip instead and planned on a longer trip several months later without him. For Kerry, straddling the traditional role of the dutiful Chinese daughter and her new culture and life in the West has not been easy. She described her experience with her father as making her feel, "stuck in the middle", that she spent her time trying to "appease" both her father and her husband and in her own words, "It was a lot of pressure on me". Kerry was able to see that there were aspects of her relationship with her father which were "unhealthy" and had considered alternative arrangements which would have been more appropriate. However for her she found that she could not set boundaries around his demands or express to him her feelings that she did not want anything to do with him if he was going to continue to expect so much from her.

Kerry realized that this was hard for her husband Bob to understand as his relationship with his mother was, “ ... totally different than my relationship with my mother” and one could add, her father as well.

... you know his mother is a, a very non – interfering, I mean she definitely gives her own space and she wouldn’t just drop in and you know, she’s a she’s a wonderful mother – in – law and so whereas with my mother I think she expects that I’m sort of an extension of her and she has every right to ask me to do certain things and she wouldn’t even bat an eye requesting that I pick her up to go shopping, do whatever chores for her.

In the following dialogue, Kerry is unsure of whether her own parent’s expectations of her being available to assist them and do things for them are based in cultural expectations or just because its her family. Yet, when I questioned her directly on this later on, she concluded that these expectations are culturally related. Nevertheless, the pressure which Kerry feels in meeting the expectations of her family is clearly described here.

Um, simple examples, like my mother would phone me and say, let’s go for lunch Saturday and I would probably say yes, sometimes out of guilt, because I haven’t seen her all week, or because I have said no to her for some other chores during the week and I feel that I have to, whereas I think I watch Bob with his mom, I mean no is no and I can’t do it, tough beans.

Um, sometime if um, if say Bob's mom needs, she lives alone, if she needs some help, say her tap needs fixing, so she would phone and say 'my tap needs fixing'. To me, I would rush over right away um, to Bob, he would, and its not because he's, he disrespects his mother, **it's just that he seems to work more on logic than raw emotions**. Um, he would say, 'okay, well, I can't do it tonight, I'll have to do it on Saturday, you'll have to wait three days with a leak tap'. And, whereas **I would try to make time, even if I have to be there until one in the morning, I would probably go and do it right away** so that you know I get it out of the way and so that she wouldn't have to live with a leaky tap. So I think in those instances, I tend to jump immediately when summoned, more so than, than he does. Now I don't know if it's cultural because it's just my family, but I, I feel that in many ways, I'm required to do that and if I, if I don't do that then um (pause) ... it's not because I think that they will think less of me, I mean, **it's just that I think that it's my duty, in they need help then I have to be there. And I don't question that.** (emphasis added)

She is obviously torn in many ways by the diverging practices and expectations of her dual culture in which she lives in. She speaks frequently of 'duty and respect' when discussing her family which are common Chinese familial themes. However there is a clear difference in how 'duty and respect' is interpreted by her in the two cultures in which she lives in. While she observes and interprets her husband's approach with his own mother as more 'logical' and with clearer boundaries, she

remains resigned to her own practice of 'duty' with her own family of origin. Perhaps most telling of her motivation in meeting the duties expected of her family is her response to my question of whether her mother viewed her marriage to a Caucasian as a rejection of being Chinese or the Chinese culture.

No, I don't think so. Because I think by action I have shown that I'm not really, you know, like I have hopped to her every demand, so I think she should be happy about that.

What it means to be in an intermarriage: Stuck in the Middle

The duality of culture Kerry exists in appears to be an ongoing source of stress for her and her relationship with her husband. These cultural differences become more apparent when her Chinese family is involved either directly or indirectly. Interestingly, Kerry interprets these cultural differences as "baggage" which she brings into the relationship.

You know, I, although I told, I told Bob when I was going out with him and before we got married that, you know, 'I have this huge baggage that I have to sort out and I really don't know how to sort (it) out'.

In her interpretation of the meaning of "baggage", Kerry clearly felt that her 'duty' to her family of origin was something which she and other Chinese women will

bring into a intermarriage relationship and this was something which needed to be acknowledged.

Um, I think anybody who is entering into an interracial marriage, um, and I can only speak for the Chinese and the Caucasian, um, I think they, as much as you are in love and, and you think that that can conquer all, I think it has to be made very clear that there is this set of, if you want to call it duties, baggage, whatever you want to call it, that it's there, whether or not you like it or not.

For Kerry, Chinese and Caucasian marriages are different from other relationships because of the differences in culture. However she places the larger part of this responsibility of 'difference' on to her own culture of origin and family. In the following quote Kerry speaks to her perception of these differences based on the type of pressures Chinese and Caucasian families place on their children.

Every case is going to be different, the severity is going to be different as far as how much pressure the Chinese family is putting on the child, but I think there, there is always some, much more so that the, than Caucasian side. Not that the Caucasian side doesn't put any pressure on their children to do certain things, but I think that statistically, if you look at say 100 Caucasian families and 100 Chinese families, the Caucasian child would feel a lot less pressure about certain obligations um, **whereas I think the,**

on the Chinese side there is always some [pressure and obligation], you feel that you have to do it, no questions asked because you are the offspring.

Kerry also discusses the role of discrimination in her relationships. In her experience she feels it has been solely from her own family. However she concludes that even though one may believe that because you love this person, “it’ll be enough” she seems to be saying that this really isn’t the case and that people in these relationships need to be prepared for this fact.

I think it’s there and the, and the person who is coming into uh, the Chinese side of the family have to understand that cause I think that often, from my experiences that the um, Chinese can be the most discriminatory of people, way worse than Canadians. I find that um, I mean I really, in the last 20 some years I haven’t had any discrimination from the Caucasian side, it’s usually the Chinese side, they say ‘oh, and he’s white you know, he can’t be very good’. And so I think the, the white partner has to recognize that there is some form of discrimination somewhere and they have to be willing to deal with that and um, as much as you say ‘oh well, if I love this person, it’ll be enough’, somewhere along the line I think its going to come up.

From Kerry's stories it is clear that she has struggled with trying to "appease" both her husband and her family of origin. She identifies her family of origin as the main source of her stress and the cause of many of her problems in marriage but it is also noted that her current husband Bob has contributed to this in his own way. Kerry has described feeling "stuck in the middle" at times when she worked to try to fulfill her duties as a traditional Chinese daughter and also as a spouse in her marriage. She accepts on one hand the expectations of her family which she believes is culturally related and yet on the other hand struggles with the consequences to her marriage in trying to fulfill these "duties and obligations". There is an ongoing theme (and feeling) that Kerry is "stuck in the middle" between her two families. Curiously though, her interpretation on how one copes in these circumstances appears to be so different from her own experience.

So, I think as long as you understand that and put that right up front, um and deal with it, then you know I really don't see it as a problem.

Conclusion

Kerry's story illuminated several areas in the experience of Chinese women in intermarriage. Firstly, the balancing of two cultures for Kerry has been difficult and a source of ongoing stress. From coordinating the time spent between her husband and her parents to meeting the needs and expectations of her own family and her family of origin, this experience highlighted the fact that Kerry required not only a great deal of diplomacy and patience but that she also internalized the

problems and took personal and cultural responsibility for the difficulties which she encountered in her marriage when she identified them to be culturally related.

Secondly, Kerry viewed these cultural expectations as “baggage”, something she is burdened with and has very little choice in the matter. While she clearly embraces her Chinese culture in certain situations as evidenced by her satisfaction after her trip to Hong Kong and her desire to have her daughter understand her Chinese heritage, this becomes problematic when her family of origin is involved at her home and/or with her husband. There appears to be ‘no middle ground’ for Kerry to be in when her husband and family of origin are together. Instead she orchestrates their meetings so that neither one has to spend too much time together and when possible (and preferably), to spend separate times together. Indeed this seems to mirror the feeling that for Kerry, her life is separated by her two cultures.

And lastly, the strong sense of filial piety predominating Kerry’s relationship with her family is grounded, in her mind, to her Chinese heritage. Her sense of ‘duty and respect’ has been her way of honoring her family of origin by doing what she believes is expected of her as the offspring of her parents. Often this desire to honor her family in this manner has led her to compromise her marriages to some degree. It was never directly addressed as to why Kerry felt so compelled to meet the demands of her family of origin even when she identified some it as “unhealthy”. What is apparent is that she has spent a great deal of time attempting

to validate her role as the dutiful daughter and perhaps indirectly her Chinese heritage.

Seeking Balance - May's Story

Introduction

May is a Chinese Canadian woman in her early 30's. I met with her in her lovely Vancouver home on a sunny summer afternoon. Her husband Doug and 3 year old daughter Amy were away on a camping trip at the time and May was trying to get some rest before the arrival of her next baby. May was in her last trimester of pregnancy and on maternity leave from her accounting job with a small company in Vancouver at the time of our interview. She is originally from Hong Kong but came to Canada at a very young age and grew up in Alberta. She is the eldest of 3 daughters and is university educated. May was bright, chatty and enthusiastic on speaking about her experiences with intermarriage.

The Experience of Intermarriage

1. The Dating Experience

May and Doug have been married for almost 6 years at the time of the interview. They met through mutual friends at a party shortly after May moved to Montreal following graduation from university. The dating experience was unique for May as she described being "courted" by Doug and that this was the first time this had ever happened to her. While May had dated other Caucasian men, she had never dated anyone who was Chinese. According to her, "Chinese men didn't even enter my dating realm". She identified several reasons for this. Firstly, the function of availability. There were not very many Chinese boys in her neighborhood where she grew up:

I grew up in Edmonton at the time when there wasn't a lot of immigrants. So in my graduating class in high school, I was one of three Orientals; the only Chinese, one Korean and one Vietnamese.

Secondly, no one wanted to date a Chinese girl in her school. May felt that there were social norms about who you dated at that time and also because she was the stereotypical studious and high achieving student.

No one would get caught dating me because it was like, she is a Chinese girl, she is different.

And lastly, there were no role models available to May. Nothing on television, in magazines or popular culture at the time reflected Chinese men as attractive or sexy. She also grew up in a school and neighborhood which was primarily Ukrainian, Russian or British and all the "popular" guys at school happen to be Caucasian. Consequently May stated she was never interested in Chinese men.

In her relationship with Doug, May did not feel that there was any conscious reasoning which went on between them when they were dating in regards to their racial and cultural differences. However she was aware of the fact that she had never wanted to date anybody who was Chinese and also understood the impact this may have on her family because of her father's expectations that she marry somebody Chinese. Whether Doug ever thought of her Asian heritage as

stereotypically “exotic” in any way May felt that this was never an issue. She reasoned that at the time they were living in Montreal which she described as a very “cosmopolitan” city with many examples of intermarrying.

It is very open culturally wise you know. The big thing for me was meeting Jewish people because I had grown up in a Catholic neighborhood you know, and when I moved out East I was like, ‘Oh there’s this whole Jewish culture, like what is this all about ?’ so there’s, you know, we made a lot of friends who are half Jewish, half WASP so it was kind of a very accepted thing.

According to May, she knew that her father would not be enthusiastic about her relationship with Doug primarily because he was not Chinese. She recalled her father having some very clear expectations about his daughter’s choice in marriage while growing up. For example he had stated to her at one time:

You are 100% Chinese, you should remain 100 % Chinese. Any children you have should be 100% Chinese. The Chinese must breed within Chinese.

He went so far as to send May to Hong Kong for a semester of school in Grade 12 with the explicit intent for her to find herself a Chinese boyfriend. However this didn’t quite work out in the manner her father had hoped for as explained by May:

Well he sent me to an all girl's school, you know, okay great, you know, how am I going to (meet someone) and Chinese people are so much more conservative, and you have to be introduced by the right people, so it's like it's not my way of meeting somebody.

She had brought pictures of Doug home one Christmas and explained to her family that this was the man she had been dating. She recalled being able to tell that her father was "a little disappointed" but added, "I don't know how he expected me to find a Chinese man in deepest, darkest Edmonton when there was nobody ". Her mother on the other hand had a more liberal attitude, choosing to reinforce the fact that what was most important to her was that her daughters find somebody who loved them and that race did not matter. Interestingly enough, May's younger sister has claimed that she will not marry a Caucasian husband. May describes her sister as in her mid 20's and is a university student. Most of her friends are Chinese or Indo Canadian. While she has spent time with May's in laws she explained to May that she found David "so white" and that she felt that the cultural differences would be too much of an obstacle to overcome. May gave an example of having to interpret for David something her sister said in Chinese and then having to explain it contextually so that he could understand the larger meaning of the statement. Her sister stated that she did not want to have to explain these things to a person and that this form of bridging of cultures is too much work.

According to May, “ she just wants it to be instant recognition that this is just the way it is”.

In trying to comprehend how her youngest sister, who had a similar upbringing, would develop such a different understanding about intermarriage May felt that the family’s move to Vancouver in the early 1980’s from Edmonton may have been a factor. She noted that while her mother had worked very hard at “adopting the white ways” when she first immigrated to Edmonton from Hong Kong she noticed that when she moved to Vancouver she reconnected with many of her Chinese friends and has become “more Chinese” in her practice as she gets older. She believes that this may have had some influence over her younger sister.

As for Doug’s family, May felt that they were generally supportive of their relationship. However she recalled an interesting first meeting with Doug’s father. His parents had been out of the country for a period of time and when they returned Doug had arranged for them to meet. She recalled the look of “shock” on his father’s face when he first saw her.

I came down, he was in the basement when I first met him, I came down the stairs and he looked at me and he was just in shock because, you know, he was like, ‘Hi, nice to meet you’ and he shook my hand and he looked up and he looked down. We had a drink or something and then I kind of took Doug aside and said, ‘Didn’t you tell him that I was Chinese ?’ and Doug

goes, 'Well, I told my mother, I just assumed she would tell him' and I said, 'Well, what do you think?'. He said 'I don't think she told him'. He had made an assumption that Doug's girlfriend would be white.

2. Getting Married

The wedding itself was, in May's own words, "... a real mix of Canadian and Chinese traditions ". In an attempt to please Doug's family May agreed to a church wedding and a traditional white dress, as the church was a big part of his family. For her side of the family May agreed to a formal Chinese banquet with the traditional cheong sam (formal Chinese dress).

So I said for your mother and father, cause church was very important, okay, I'll put on the white dress and I'll walk down the aisle, we'll do this thing with the priest and blah, blah, blah , blah, blah but for MY family I change into the red dress and, you know, the cheong sam and we will have a big Chinese banquet reception. And I said it is normally not popular you know, normally you eat and you leave, but we had a DJ and we had dancing so it was kind of, it was a real good combination of mixing of the cultures, I think, and how it worked out.

While May and Doug seemed to work out the logistical problems of planning a wedding long distance (both were in Alberta and the wedding was to be in Vancouver) the greatest stress identified by May came from getting to know how

to communicate with her future mother in law. May felt that her new mother - in - law communicated in a very indirect fashion usually and that May was used to what she identified as a Chinese way of communicating which was far more direct in it's approach,

... the way she communicates is very different than the way Chinese ... you know, Chinese people are very direct, very in your face, very tell you like it is. His mother is very circum ... round about, always tells you things through people.

This was trying at times especially during the planning of the wedding and came to a crises when her then future mother - in - law planned a post wedding brunch which excluded May's family. May was upset and perceived it as insensitive. While she and Doug resolved it to their satisfaction, in hindsight May feels that it was largely related to the fact that her mother - in - law comes from a different place both economically and culturally.

She is the eldest of her family from a very affluent family, where I think she, you know, she is very much of the June Cleaver era and I just, I have no experience with that and I have, it's not that I don't have sympathy or compassion for this role that she has had to play into but I don't tolerate that very well because it is very WASP and very conventional and very these are her roles, they are her perceived rules, this is the way things are

done so I don't know whether or not she did it because it was a white versus Chinese thing or if she did it because I think she just did it because this is the way it should be done.

What it means to be in a Intermarriage: Seeking Balance

Since their marriage, May talks about the "balance" they have created in their life between their two cultures. This theme of balance became more apparent in the latter part of the interview when we started discussing the impact of having a child on their relationship. For May, her daughter Amy is a true mix of both of their cultures and an example to her of what the future is going to look like. May's father had once said to her that the children of intermarriages were the one's who suffer due to confusion in identity.

He has always said that you can love a white guy but the people who suffer are your children. They are going to suffer because they don't know if they are Chinese or they don't know if they are white and they are going to be so confused.

However May reasoned that the world is now increasingly a global world and that the future will depend on this form of cultural understanding which comes from knowing other cultures, being able to bridge whatever differences there are and embracing them. Unlike Kerry, May takes the position that this responsibility lies with everyone involved, not just herself.

I am a firm believer that in the way the world is going now - we are such a global world that there is going to be, you know, with this intermixing of races and having these ethnically mixed children, that this is the way of the world. And this is the way the world is going to start getting along is, if they realize (that) these mixed children, they are not one culture or the other, they are both. And I am going to understand your culture and you are going to understand my culture, and I really believe she is the way of the future in terms of global understanding and world peace and all of that kind of stuff too.

May also felt strongly that the example she and Doug would provide as two loving parents from racially different backgrounds would prepare Amy to embrace herself and to help her pass on to the next generation a more global appreciation of world. While May pondered about what sort of identity issues Amy may or may not encounter in her development she reasoned that there are so many mixed children in her age group that there will no longer be such a "stigma attached to it as it was if, you know 20 years ago" and that being in Vancouver it will be even less so with its cultural diversity.

May and Doug have also tried to create a balance in their lives with the day to day duality of cultures with which they live within. May recognizes that both she and Doug come from different upbringings and that their respective cultures may also

have different ways of marking transitions. She describes the different ways both families celebrate and mark transitions as an example of this,

We have different upbringings, that's for darn sure, and we recognize that and it's really funny to hear his stories of being, his story is very much, his culture stuff is very much based around the church, and this event and that event, this christening, that christening, blah,blah-blah and his family is very WASP that way in that everything goes around church. My family on the other hand, everything is based around food, you know, this banquet, that banquet, this meal, that meal, right.

This desire to create a balance in their life can be seen in the way they use different titles to address their daughter's grandparents (Grandpa, Grandma for Doug's parents and the traditional Chinese titles of Gung Gung and Po – Po for May's parents). They celebrate the holidays and celebrations in both cultures, such as the traditional Moon Yuet party for a newborn and a christening, the western religious counterpart. And lastly they try to give Amy a balance in terms of language, food and culture.

We have very much balanced, we try to balance the culture in Amy's life a little bit so that she realizes she has got both and unfortunately for Doug since his family isn't here, Amy goes out for dinner every Saturday night with Mom to a Chinese dinner and I think Doug is very accepting of that

because everything else media wise for her is going to be quite oriented any ways [to western culture] so it's nice that she gets a balance of cultures.

And we tried to like you know if there was something that we did that was white culture we would try to do Chinese culture, like the Moon Yuet [referring to the One Month Celebration and Christening]

May has also taken the step in enrolling Amy in Sunday School at their local church as a way of doing something for Doug's parents as she knows that religion is very important to them,

... so I have tried to forge that link so I feel like I am doing something for them, for his parents, you know, and she was very happy to hear that we have gone back to the church.

It seems that a conscious and concerted effort is required to balance and include both cultures in a intermarriage. In striking this balance, a commitment and an appreciation from both partners to include this in their relationship is needed. May described the work involved in doing this and how it has evolved over time in their relationship:

It just so happens that we come from two different cultures. I find that there is a balance, you know, there is a fine balance that you have to strike with the two families but as we go further down with time it becomes much easier, it doesn't even feel like the juggling act anymore. At the beginning it was very much a conscious 'white culture - Chinese culture, lets weigh this out and make sure everybody is getting balanced out'. Right now it is just a matter of um, also because we have a child, we are going to have children soon. And you just take things more into perspective, what is important here, you know, what is the priority here ...

I suppose as you have more experience it doesn't become, I don't find it a juggling act, you just find this balance and I think any couple does that with any two opposing families, you know, making a new family out of these two families.

May also introduced me to the experience of rediscovering one's own culture of origin through intermarriage. Despite being raised in a western culture and appearing to be acculturated, May felt a need to look into her own culture when it came to important transitions in her life such as marriage and childbirth. Again a balance seemed to be struck with a reflection between the experiences of the past and those in the present.

It's funny, as you get older is when you start reverting back to there [your culture of origin]... that's when you get interested, like when you go through the marriage experience, when you go through the child birth experience, that's what brings you back to, 'I wonder what it's like in my culture – wise ?' you know what I mean, so its very different that way, so that's when you start I think that is when you start reflecting on something like that, you go through daily life.

While May would appear acculturated to a Canadian lifestyle, the balance in cultures which she and her husband have fostered has in some way contributed to her rediscovering her Chinese heritage.

Conclusion

May's interview brought to light several areas in her experience of intermarriage. Firstly, she was able to identify some of the reasons why she found it difficult to date and marry someone from her own culture of origin. She succinctly identified both personal and social reasons that may have contributed to her decision to marry outside of her own culture. While it is unclear to May how much of this was consciously or subconsciously available to her when she made her decision to marry Doug, there is nevertheless an underlying sensitivity towards this notion of being an 'outsider' within the Canadian culture which she has lived in.

Secondly, the understanding that striking that balance of cultures in a intermarriage requires a commitment from both partners. It appears that May and Doug both had a tacit understanding that this balance was important and therefore necessary in their relationship. While May described being quite conscious of this balancing act early on in their relationship, it has, over time evolved and integrated into a natural part of their family and how they operate. With the arrival of children into their relationship this function of balancing cultures is now embodied in their children. May describes her daughter as a "true mix" of both of her cultures both in how she looks and how she understands her world now based on the approach her parents have taken to raising her.

Thirdly, the experience of rediscovering her Chinese heritage was brought up as a point of interest since she has been married. In particular, periods of transition and milestones such as marriage and childbirth are times when May has found it particularly important for her to look back to her culture of origin. Again it is unclear whether this particular experience is enhanced through intermarriage but that it is worth considering the possibility that in a ethnically homogenous marriage that these differences may not be as pronounced.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, May reflects on the essence of her intermarriage experience:

I don't know if it was conscious, I don't know if it was subconscious, I just know that something between us was right. And so whether it was, I don't think color had much to do ... we are very much soul mates, Doug and I and so whether or not it was a color thing ... that was more superficial than anything I think.

The Negotiator and the Interpreter - Linda's Story

Introduction

Linda is a Chinese Canadian woman in her mid 20's who had been married to her husband Kent for just over a year at the time of our interview. We met on a busy street in downtown Vancouver as Linda was just getting off work and we walked to my office where we had our interview. At the time, Linda was a teacher with a private school which provided English as a Second Language (ESL) education to students from all over the world. Linda stated that she really enjoys her work and finds it rewarding.

Linda's parent's immigrated to Canada in the 1970's and she was born and raised in the Lower Mainland. She is the eldest child in the family with two younger brothers. Linda and Kent met while in university through mutual friends but did not actually start dating until they were reacquainted several years later through a church group. Both Linda and Kent identify themselves as Christians and their religion is a large part of both of their lives. Kent is a leader at a church, which mainly provides services to a Chinese congregation. Linda appeared happy to discuss her experience with intermarriage with me and was thoughtful with her responses.

The Experience of Intermarriage

1. The Dating Experience

Linda described dating Kent as being “quite natural. ” One of the things which Linda noticed when she started dating Kent was that she immediately started drawing comparisons between her own family and his around how differently they functioned and more importantly, how it made her feel. She describes Kent’s parent’s home as “very stable and very open” and her parents home as the “antithesis” of Kent’s home. She had been introduced to Kent’s family fairly early in their relationship but found it more difficult to introduce Kent to her own family. She felt that she needed to culturally “debrief” Kent on what to expect when she introduced him to her family as she felt that her parents had more formal expectations of Kent than with his own family.

Linda described having to go over what to call her parents when meeting them for the first time and cautioning him to conduct himself with a lot more care than he is normally used to. Complimenting her parents as much as he could and having to present a more serious side of himself were some of things she recommended. She felt that they could not be as casual in her parent’s home as they had been in his parent’s home (i.e. helping yourself to food in the fridge, calling his parents by their first name). She also cautioned him to expect to eat every time they visited and that, “It has to be a big meal, there is no such thing as a snack”. And lastly, unlike his family she cautioned him on the unequal relationship her parent’s had with each other and that decision making in her family was usually unilateral with

no input from her but yet an expectation that she obey. Kent made a concerted effort to get to know her family through finding ways to have a conversation with her father – Linda advised him to ask for his advice on practical matters such as financial planning because it demonstrated respect for his opinion. With her mother Kent spent time taking cooking lessons from her. Despite her concerns, Linda was pleasantly surprised at her parent's response to Kent overall, though they, “ ... made it quite clear ... that they would have preferred somebody who was not white”.

Experiences with extended family were very positive. Linda stated that there was nothing in particular with Kent's family except that she found them all to be very supportive. With her own family she recalled how apparent it was that Kent was seen as different through their efforts to speak English to him when they normally would not speak English. Also that they would make a special effort to accommodate Western cuisine during family gatherings for Kent even though he did not have a preference.

Interestingly enough, Linda used the metaphor of travelling to a foreign country when describing her introduction to Kent's family. Despite being born and raised in Canada Linda was surprised at how different she found it to be in Kent's home and that Kent had not anticipated this either.

He just assumed that, you know, I'm quite white, Canadian, but then after I had been to his house, he hadn't been to mine yet, I was like, oh my gosh ... this is such a foreign world for me.

Common activities such as meal times and how Kent's family interacted, were things which Linda found she needed to adjust to. Linda also felt that even though she had been exposed to homes of her Caucasian friends, this was different as she realized that she would have to accept and incorporate this lifestyle with her own if she were to marry Kent. The comparison between families continues here as Linda describes the different experiences she has with how she is regarded by both sets of parents,

I think the biggest thing for me was my relationship with his parents cause it's such a, it's such a dramatic difference like I can't believe the whole thing that they regarded me as equals and wanted to pursue a relationship as a peer with me and that [they] valued my opinions as an adult was just beyond me.

There was in fact some internal conflict as Linda struggled with coming to terms with the fact that her relationship with her own mother was not as comfortable as it was with her mother – in – law.

... in some ways it felt like I would be betraying my mother because I really do want this type of relationship [with her] but to have it with [my mother in law] first, versus my own mother was quite a conflict for me actually.

Linda recalled having discussions with Kent regarding cultural differences they may have had with each other during the early part of their relationship and trying to determine, “ ... what is wrong and what is right, what is just different and interesting.” The discussions seemed to focus largely on communication patterns that Linda used which she feels were in part learned from her upbringing and in part her own way of coping with stress.

We had some discussions about making judgments about each other's cultures and what is wrong and what is right, what is just different and that was interesting because we really felt coming from a Christian background that we needed to identify what issues, especially cultural ones, we felt were actually not healthy, they're actually wrong even though we can justify them as cultural, they're not healthy and we had a long discussion about communication and communication patterns that I had or the non – communication patterns that I had for my responses to stress or whatever were not healthy and, um, it was hard because I would always feel like my culture is always screwed up or something or my culture is always dysfunctional.

For Linda, having been brought up in a family in which the use of overt emotion, expressing anger and castigation was a common way of communicating, she realized that she had to learn to communicate differently in her relationship with her husband. Linda identified her family's way of communication as being culturally based.

I guess one big thing was my tone of voice because of course, like what he could see, he could hear in my, with my parents is they just tend to use complete emotion and, um anger is no problem and in his family, he came from a family where um expressing anger such in, in an uncontrolled was is just not acceptable whereas in my family it was just normal and that was a big thing to say, no this, and I agreed with him that that is actually unacceptable buy yet that was just a pattern that I had from my family ... and a lot of it we felt was culturally based...

Learning how to modulate her tone of voice so that the conversation appears more "calm", to learning to communicate differently from her own family of origin have been tasks which Linda has had to struggle with in her marriage.

2. Getting Married

Not unlike the experiences of other engaged couples, the process of getting engaged and planning the wedding was both joyful and stressful. However in the

case of Linda and Kent, they were also expected to accommodate both a Western and Chinese style wedding. While both had wanted a smaller more intimate wedding, Linda realized early on that for her parents and in Chinese culture, a wedding is much more than just a union of two people:

It's the whole idea of bringing relationships, friendships together and reconciliation. It's a lot of things tied in. It's not just us getting married.

As a result they tried to accommodate her parent's wishes as much as they could by holding the reception at a Chinese restaurant, having Chinese translation, inviting more of her parent's friends and having a tea ceremony (a traditional Chinese ceremony to demonstrate respect to the couple's parents and elder relatives). Kent had expressed some feelings of frustration that Linda's parents would be inviting more people than both of them combined. However for Linda, she understood that for her parent's this was a very important occasion because she was the only girl in the family and therefore they believed they should have more say in the wedding. As such she found that it was easier on herself to accommodate her parent's wishes.

However Linda and Kent didn't defer to her parents on everything but instead found creative ways to incorporate their own style to the wedding in addition to the formal expectations of her parents. These included inviting friends they couldn't invite to the reception to a dessert buffet and dancing afterwards. There were also

some Chinese traditions such as the pre - ceremony bargaining and bartering of the bride to leave her home by the groomsmen and the tea ceremony which both fully embraced. What they accomplished in the end it seems, was a way to honor both the Chinese and Western parts of their culture through the wedding.

The Intermarriage Experience: The Negotiator and the Interpreter

It was in our discussion about how Linda organized her wedding that her role as the negotiator and interpreter in her family became apparent. Between formal family dinners and wedding planning, Linda found that she spent much of her time negotiating, interpreting and being a cultural map reader for her family and her future in - law's:

Well, I guess like probably most other couples, it's you, the Asian person who ends up doing all the negotiating and is the go between and liaison. Even though he [Kent] had wanted to say certain things directly, I [knew] that he could be open to misinterpretation and everything.

For Linda there had been much pressure from Kent's family to meet her parents even before they became engaged. Her role as cultural interpreter and mediator for both families clearly manifested itself as she carefully organized their first meeting. Her parents had reasoned to her that they were not comfortable with meeting Kent's family until after they were engaged due to a previous friendship with her brother's ex-girlfriend's family which ended unpleasantly after the

relationship concluded. Linda felt that there was additional reluctance on her parent's part to meet Kent's family because they were uncomfortable with socializing with people who were not Chinese. English is a second language for both her parents and she acknowledged that this contributes to their discomfort. Also Linda understood that her presence was expected with any meetings between the families to help with any translating or interpretation which may be required.

I think they were probably intimidated that here's another couple who are not Chinese and they realize that's a little bit more work cause, that's intimidating. (brackets added)

The first dinner between both parents was carefully orchestrated to accommodate her parents needs as Linda felt they were less able to adjust to something different or new. The first meeting between the parents went well, however despite this, Linda's parents continued to be reluctant to socialize with her new in-laws. Since then any encounters between the two parents continue to require Linda to be present. Linda felt that the reluctance to socialize with Kent's family is primarily due to the fact that they are not Chinese. She felt that had Kent's family been Chinese that the relationship between parents would be much different. She feels that her parents would be more willing to visit each other's home and have more to talk about. Her presence would likely not be an expectation as it is now.

For Linda the role of cultural interpreter is something she has been familiar with since she was a young girl:

You know when you're a Chinese Canadian, it's, you are, your foot is in both cultures and you have, and it's amazing how you can come home and conform. You know, play to my, I sometimes say play, play this role there and then you know, you're with your friends or whatever, it's totally different and, and I remember when I was young having to explain to friends like how come my parents can, my parents would say, 'Okay you have to eat dinner tonight, you have to come home and eat dinner now, right now'. And I would do it and they would go 'why would you do it?' and they couldn't understand that whole relationship you had with your parents and I think you start doing that when you're young and you have to explain things to friends and especially when they come over and like, I remember having to do that all the time and debrief people, so in some ways it wasn't new to do that to Kent. That's for sure. It wasn't a new experience so I guess, I guess, yeah, it's not, it's already been there since, since we were young.

It appears that Kent's family has accepted this role for Linda as an acknowledgement and respect for her family's culture. However Linda acknowledged that the role of mediator and negotiator is not reciprocal generally. While Kent does interpret some of the idiosyncrasies within his family, Linda felt

that this would be the case with any relationship regardless of race. It is the cultural aspects of his family which is rarely interpreted for her as there is an assumption that because she has been brought up within a western culture that these are things that she is already acquainted and familiar with in general.

While Linda has learned to embrace her role as negotiator and interpreter not only for her family but also as an ESL teacher, she is trying to allow Kent the opportunity to do the same as well.

Yeah, I think so, I just kind of accepted that this is just going to be the reality for a while, yet at the same time I don't want to detract from Kent like having the opportunity to kind of deal with them directly either because he could learn just as much too, in doing so. I think in general um what I've started to do is kind of, if I can, not be but as a last resort, I'll jump in if it's going to be more convenient, although it's hard because in general it's more convenient for me to do it, to explain things or to understand what they want, what they're expecting and what they want. At least from my parent's point of view.

This is not to take away from Kent's attempts to understand Linda's culture and family. Kent has had the unique experience of being employed in a primarily Chinese based church. In essence he experiences a cultural immersion when he is at work and has had to learn to find different ways to communicate in the

predominantly Asian culture of his workplace. While sometimes frustrated by what appears to be inflexible Chinese culture and values, Kent has adjusted by adapting and taking a position of learning when it comes to understanding Chinese culture. This more humble approach seems to be appreciated according to Linda. It's a quality which he has learned to use both at home with Linda's family and at work. Linda feels that this is by far one of the most important traits of Kent's which has helped them through their relationship.

I think that's the one quality, um, that has just made it so easier, like I mean, I could imagine that for so many other couples it would be so hard if you're always having to demand it from your culture point of view of from your culture. But you know, he's, if it wasn't like that I don't think I would [have married] him because it would have been so incredibly stressful.

While the role of negotiator and interpreter appears to be a focal point with my interview with Linda, she also brought up her views on what this role in her marriage has helped her to discover for herself. The act of intermarriage has in some ways assisted in clarifying the role of Asian culture in Linda's life.

I guess one thing that we've really, I've started to really appreciate though, is finding out things to appreciate about the Chinese culture. [They] have also really been reoccurring since I've been talking with him about kids

and stuff. For example like the work, like the things I value, like the work ethic of the Chinese, um and the type of loyalty, family loyalty there is and um the importance of education, that these type of things are values that we've talked about that we do want to instill in, they're the same as the Chinese.

For the longest time I would see the whole dysfunctionality of it ... but then it was really with the relationship that I started to see, yeah, but there are really good things too.

Linda admitted that marrying Kent was in some way an attempt to do something that was not expected. She described being the person in her family who always tried to do things differently and that she was never able to meet her parent's expectations of being a more stereotypically feminine, quiet Chinese girl. However whether this had any influence in her decision to marry outside of her own culture of origin is unclear.

... that's just also part of who I am, I mean I was always sort of the rebel in the family but also in my approach to things were always very, uh, more confrontational with my parents and um, I didn't, and in some ways I wanted to express myself differently too so, but I don't think it was necessarily deliberate you know, like it wasn't like a conscious thing but yet it did happen that way.

In her role as negotiator and cultural interpreter, Linda appears to have managed to bridge two cultures through marriage. Furthermore what she has created for herself and her husband is a safe middle ground which brings together both Western and Eastern influences into the relationship. It would seem that through intermarriage, Linda has sought some way to balance her earlier life experiences of living in what seemed to be two separate and distinct cultures. What she has found is that by intermarrying, she has found a way to complement those aspects of her world which was till then, separate from each other.

Yeah, yeah because I could see, I guess what happens is for me, I could see in my family what was lacking and what's good but what's lacking and then, you know to have for example what was in his family, it just complements my family in that way, things that I find lacking in his family.

Conclusion

Linda's stories helped me to understand several areas in her experience of intermarriage . Firstly, the Chinese partner has a responsibility in their marriage and to their family of origin to negotiate and interpret both literally and culturally the practices, expectations and beliefs of their culture of origin. From the very beginning of their relationship, Linda describes how she debriefed Kent on the cultural expectations of her parents regarding his presentation. She also provided cultural interpretation to his family and negotiated meetings between them when

they planned to marry. Even in marriage, Linda's presence continues to be expected whenever there is a gathering between the two families to mitigate the experience somewhat for her parent's as they remain uncomfortable in being alone with Kent's family.

Secondly, that the interpretation and negotiation which Linda felt primary responsibility for in her family and for Kent's family is usually not reciprocated. Even though Linda experienced a degree of cultural immersion when she became a part of Kent's family, it was assumed that she would not have any difficulty integrating due to her assimilated presentation. Linda was aware of the differences in both families and culture and worked hard at culturally interpreting and negotiating between the two. To his credit, Kent had tried to do some of the work himself, however Linda herself admitted that this would have been too difficult and would have placed him at risk for misinterpretation.

And lastly, intermarriage may be a way to seek that balance in the cultural experience of the Chinese Canadian woman who feels divided between two cultures. With Linda we can see that as a Chinese Canadian child, as an ESL teacher and now as a wife in an intermarriage, that there has been a pattern of negotiating and interpreting which has been a part of her life. Intermarriage appears to be an extension of this and has given her the opportunity to bridge the two cultures which she has lived in. And as in May's story, being married to someone outside of your own culture appears to have provided an opportunity and

perhaps the impetus to explore her culture of origin. This revisiting of Linda's culture of origin has allowed her to review and reaffirm those parts of her culture which she values and takes pride in.

We are Different but the Same – Nancy's Story

Introduction

I met with Nancy at the home of our mutual acquaintance on a sunny morning in the summer of 1999. She is in her late forties and is a therapist for a large downtown hospital. Nancy was born in Malaysia but her family immigrated to Hong Kong when she was still very young. She grew up in Hong Kong and then immigrated to Canada in the mid 1970's and completed her university education in the United States. She is the youngest child in her family and except for a brother in the United States the rest of her family remains in Hong Kong. Nancy describes herself as having grown up in North America even though chronologically she spent the larger part of her 20's in Asia. She feels that much of her value system was formed during her undergraduate years while studying in the United States and as such this made her transition to Canada much easier. She identifies herself as being "Canadianized".

Nancy tells me that she met her husband Jack while attending a retreat in Vancouver. She was living in Alberta at the time. However it wasn't until a second visit to Vancouver by Nancy that the relationship began to blossom. She recalls a rather whirlwind courtship and they were married 3 months afterwards in an eclectic ceremony attended only by some of Jack's family and no one from Nancy's family. They have been married for 13 years now.

The Experience of Intermarriage

1. Feeling different

Nancy grew up in Hong Kong with her mother as her primary parent as her father had died when she was an infant. She recalled her mother telling her that she would prefer that she marry somebody who was Asian – any type of Asian would be preferable to a Caucasian husband. While she could not recall when her mother told her this, the memory of the statement remains clearly in her mind. From here Nancy brought up her feelings of attraction towards Caucasian men. She reasoned that she has always felt “different” from other Asian women and did not feel that she could fit into a more traditional Chinese female role, which may have been expected if she had married somebody who was Chinese.

I, somehow I, I don't think I have ever consciously um, verbalized those thoughts, but I just feel that my values probably would not fit into what they see, what they want in a, in a wife you know. I, I think I felt that.

Nancy used the example of the importance of food in Chinese culture to illustrate this point. For her, eating and cooking Chinese food has never been important to her but she feels that to somebody else in her culture this would be viewed differently,

Eating is a big thing you know. And to me it was never a big thing. Like I can eat anything and be happy, but a lot of Chinese people they have to eat rice, even if they go to Quebec City, they want to look for a Chinese restaurant. But those things are never important to me and I, I in a way I think I feel inadequate to become a, to be married to a Chinese people because I don't have those skills.

She went on to explain further her feelings of being different and not belonging to her own culture while growing up. She described how her larger physical presentation was one of the reasons she felt like an outsider while growing up in Hong Kong,

... because I'm I'm always taller, I'm always taller right. Taller than a lot of the Chinese girls I grew up with and I, one thing I always feel I am very overweight and also that I am too big for a Chinese guy. I actually, I always used to feel that.

Nancy discusses feeling different from the other women in Hong Kong when she was growing up and that she has always had an attraction towards Caucasian men. While she does not explicitly make a link between the two, feelings of being unable to fulfill the role of Chinese wife, self identifying as "Canadianized" and acknowledgement that her value system is North American is associated with her reasoning for looking outside of her own culture in marriage.

2. Recollections of intermarriage in Hong Kong

Nancy and I discussed what she felt was the general view on intermarrying in Hong Kong when she was living there,

I think a lot of Chinese, they feel that if you marry a white person you almost like marrying up ... that is in Hong Kong. Yeah, yeah that was pretty true.

The statement presumes that being Asian is lower in class and hierarchy. Nancy reasoned that because of the British colonization of Hong Kong that Caucasian men have been in a position of power over the Chinese. Despite this, Nancy's mother demonstrated her disapproval of mixed marriages through stories and making her feelings known when several of her own cousins married Caucasian men.

My mom didn't think these were good men, right. Because they were, I, I remember one was a captain of a, a passenger liner or something like that. And, my mom didn't really feel that positive about these marriages and we associated with them once in a while, we saw them and I remember the kids who were mixed kids, right and they, they went to a different school and they only spoke English anyway.

Nancy also recalled a particularly powerful story her mother told her when she was a young child about one of her great uncles in China who had married a Caucasian woman.

... my mom told me the story that one of her uncles from Canton, you know how they had many wives and one of his wives was actually a white, white English woman, that's what my mom told me and she told, she told me the story about how the villages there did not like her and they burned, I don't know the details but that's just what, they burned the uh estate down, I can't I can't remember what it was and she was burned to death. I, I don't know the detail of which uncle or whatever, but I remember her telling me that story.

Nancy's only other sibling who lives outside of Hong Kong is her brother. She recalls her brother dating a Caucasian woman when she was first immigrated to Canada however the relationship ended and to her surprise her brother married a Chinese woman whom Nancy describes as "very nice but traditional". Her brother had explained to her that,

... it just wouldn't work if you married a white person ... he just said that they won't have the same background to understand how he is feeling and stuff like that, but most of his friends are American.

It appears that her brother believed that a non – Chinese person would be unable to bridge some form of a cultural gap in intermarriage relationships. Despite these early and powerful admonitions by her mother and brother, Nancy reasoned that in the end it was the examples of intermarrying which she witnessed in Hong Kong which she feels made the act of intermarrying acceptable to her.

What it means to be in a intermarriage: We are different but the same

Several things which Nancy identified as significant in their relationship included their age difference (Nancy is about 7 years older than Jack) and the different socioeconomic background from which their families come from. While her siblings had expressed some concern about their age difference Nancy did not feel that this was a concern for herself or Jack except as it related to childbearing. Her siblings also expressed some concern about his socioeconomic background but added, "... not overwhelmingly so because they know that I will do whatever I want to do any ways". Nancy describes her family of origin as a fairly middle class university educated group. Jack's family on the other hand was a Catholic "blue collar" factory employed family with 8 children. All of Jack's siblings also now work for the local car manufacturing plant. Jack was the only one who moved out of the community and attained a post secondary education. Nancy recalled the first time she traveled to Ontario to meet Jack's family. She was uncomfortable with meeting them as she anticipated that his family would not have had much exposure to people from other cultures. However they were welcoming and had tried to extend their hospitality by taking them out to a local Chinese restaurant and a

bingo hall. Nancy appreciated their welcome but realized that she and Jack came from very different backgrounds.

Nancy described the main concern she and Jack have had to adjust to over the years were related to child rearing matters. Jack comes from a large working class family and his mother had experienced some mental health problems that Nancy believed may have been related to having 9 children in 11 years. Nancy came from a small family where education was encouraged and was financially more stable. Nancy identified herself as being "quite Canadianized" especially with raising her children and found that there was a difference between how she wanted to raise her children and the experiences Jack had with his own family of origin. She found that Jack often had difficulty with the children crying and expected them to stop immediately, where she tended to be more accepting of their emotions and would have to explain to Jack that this was normal for children. Nancy relates this to Jack's experience in growing up in a large family and that it was difficult for 9 children to garner individual attention, let alone being let to cry and be comforted for it.

Aside from child rearing concerns Nancy does not feel that there are any issues which have arisen in their relationship which she feels may be due to their intermarriage of cultures. It seems that Nancy tries very hard not to use culture or race to explain any of her experiences with marriage.

... one thing I want to say is you know, like with marriages you always have , there are always issues anyways, so you can identify race as an issue or you can identify age or, or you you know, you can really pick out, identify an issue and make it an issue in your marriage, whatever it might be. So if you want it to be race, then yeah, then it would be race. But it could be anything else, too, it's just a reflection of something much deeper than that.

She describes where the strength in their relationship lies is in their spirituality. She believes that while there are many things that are different about themselves whether it was in upbringing, culture or careers, when it comes to their world view they are almost of one mind. This similar spiritual view transcends any racial, class or religious differences:

I think the one thing about Jack and I who are very, which is very interesting despite we are very different, with our upbringing and our you know career and everything, religion and everything, spiritually I think we have really the same approach in life, like, uh, the philosophy about how we should treat people, we are very similar. So, so like even those other things we are very different, I think what ties us together we do have the same value as far as treating other people goes. Like I think those things are very important, the values, they are amazingly similar, spiritually and uh, how we perceive the world, we are very much the same. I, I don't

know how we do that, but it's just that, he will see someone and he will say to me, well ... and I will agree with him you know and say, yeah, that's how I perceive certain person too. Most of the time, however it's really quite amazing how um, like how we decide to bring up the kids spiritually, it's really similar so there's no argument there.

Nancy spoke about how she and Jack think alike and that despite growing up in different cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, this transcends any differences they may experience. So while she doesn't feel that the relationship is without difficulties she does believe that it is this similar world view which has helped them through the more difficult times in their relationship.

Being different but the same was a theme which was also extended to our discussion regarding Nancy's children. Her two daughters are an obvious source of pride and joy. We spent some time talking about her experiences as a mother of two biracial children. Nancy felt that both her children are happy well adjusted kids. She approaches their biracial background in a matter of fact way that is reflected in the way her children explain their background to their friends. Her daughters describe themselves as "half and half" – half Chinese and half Caucasian. Nancy states they are actually quite proud of their Chinese heritage and their friends often reinforce this by telling them how lucky they are because they have the "best of both worlds". She does not think that they have ever encountered any negative experiences related to being biracial. Nancy has tried to give her daughters a sense of themselves by recognizing their biracial heritage as

something “different” from the other children but at the same time similar and appreciated.

They have to know they are different, but it's nothing like negatively different, it's just they're different, it's just because how things are for them but it's not negative, nothing negative about it. That's what I'm trying to do to them

I think they have to recognize they are different, they were, they will be different, I mean that's part, that's what they have to cope with even though they haven't had any negative experience, they ... the reality is, they are different.

Conclusion

Nancy's interview highlighted her experience with feeling different from her culture of origin and the effect this has had in her choice to marry outside of her own Chinese culture. While Nancy states very clearly that she does not think race or culture is a problem in a intermarriage unless the couple makes it a problem for themselves, what is evident is the development in identity prior to getting married which seemed to strongly influence Nancy's decision to marry outside of her Chinese culture.

The theme of feeling different and not belonging to one's own culture of origin is interesting. Nancy identifies clearly that she spent many years feeling uncomfortable and as an outsider in her own culture. She also states clearly that she has a physical attraction to Caucasian men which may be loosely related to the above. Combined with the early influence that intermarrying could mean "marrying up" in the world then what does this say about why one would choose to marry outside of their own culture ? Presuming that this is not a conscious decision, then is the attraction actually fueled by some element of finding a way "out" of one's current situation? While Nancy and Jack married out of love as our other 3 couples did, and Nancy feels strongly that their marriage is no different than couples in ethnically homogenous relationships, what her experience sheds light upon is the impact early influences may have on the way Chinese women view relationships.

Chapter Five

FINDINGS

“It Is Not Accidental Whom We Bring Into Our World”

The four Chinese Canadian women presented in this paper provided us with a glimpse into their unique and challenging lives, not only in marriage but also in the experiences which influenced them as people prior to their marriage.

Three of the women immigrated to Canada and one was born here to immigrant parents. It became clear that to understand the experience of intermarriage with these women, one needed to spend some time getting to know them and their experiences with being Chinese Canadian. It was these experiences I believe which formed a need for these women to seek a different type of relationship in marriage.

Marrying somebody outside of their culture of origin was never a conscious decision by any of the women I interviewed. Instead, like most marriages, the participants describe a mutual love and a respectful relationship which was the base of their decision to share their life together. Each of the participants had common and unique experiences when it came to this process. Their stories contributed insight to what the intermarriage experience is like for some Chinese Canadian women. However in trying to understand what these women have told me in the context of what is already known in other research, the meaning of these

experiences seem lost. While certainly acculturation, racism and lack of role models have contributed and influenced intermarriage in Chinese Canadian women, why these women choose to marry outside of their own culture remains to be discussed.

The findings in this study reflect upon this and tries to bring some understanding to this rather complex question. The first finding is the non – accidental nature in who we choose to bring into our world. This particularly important element was highlighted in the findings as it speaks to the reasons why we seek certain people to be in our life, including our spouses. The women in this study all spoke about early influences and experiences which reflected a sense of being an outsider in their own world at some point. These experiences have in one form or another shaped how these women approached relationships and in particular marriage. The second finding speaks to the effortlessness which these women present when moving between their Chinese and Canadian culture. The skills of negotiating and interpreting were highlighted by one of the women as a role that she has grown up with but now also finds useful in her marriage. This role appears almost invisible to most people because of they way these women incorporate it into their day to day living. The last major finding is the importance of seeking a balance between the two cultures in intermarriage. In doing so, it allowed the women in this study to find a safe place for them to freely express the two sided nature of their culture which up until then remained separated. In some cases it also provided the

stimulus to revisit their culture of origin to rework another understanding of the role of Chinese culture in their lives.

The family of origin approach provided a systemic and holistic approach in trying to understand these women's stories, which have not been available in other research. Freeman (1992) explains that:

Helping the couple understand what each partner brings into the relationship from the past leads to a better sense of connection, intimacy, and positive honoring of the past in the present (p. xiii).

Freeman (1992) goes on to explain that each spouse brings into the relationship some form of "unfinished business" that has been taken from their original family and introduced into their new family.

Generally there is little recognition that each parent, as an emotional being, brings into the current situation his or her own complicated history. The degree to which husbands and wives understand this dynamic will determine how connected they are in being able *to bring the best of their past into the present* in order to make the future different (p. 3) (emphasis added).

It is this need to make sense of the past in order to understand the present (and perhaps the future) which makes the family of origin approach so fitting in trying to comprehend these women's stories.

A framework for understanding relationship behavior is discussed by Freeman (1992). In it he questions why is it that we are attracted to certain people but avoid others? He suggests that, "It is not accidental whom we bring into our world" (p.18).

We can learn a lot about ourselves by understanding whom we bring into and exclude from our world. What we have not worked out emotionally is reflected in the types of people with whom we are comfortable and with whom we associate. The characteristics we most admire about others say something about what we feel we most lack (p. 19).

Feeling special, intimacy, developmental differences between men and women and fear of being alone are the four categories identified by Freeman (1992) in this framework which tries to answer the question of, "why do we form relationships?". Using this framework discussed by Freeman (1992), the need to feel special, the need for intimacy and developmental differences between men and women will be addressed to better understand the reasons why these women chose to marry a Caucasian spouse. The category of 'fear of being alone' has been excluded in this examination as it explores an aspect of the individuals need which

I was unable to identify through the interviews any relationship which may be specifically related to intermarriage.

1. Feeling Special. The basic principle underlying this point is that, “we are attracted to people who can give us and/or complete in us what we have not gotten from our own family experience” (p.19). In other words, we seek in our spouses something which will make us feel safe and secure in our world. As I mentioned earlier, all the women described their marriage as resulting from a relationship based in mutual respect and love. However it would also be useful to consider what it was that the women in this study were seeking in their relationship to complete in them what was missing from their own family of origin experience. While there are certain to be personal reasons individual to each of the women interviewed which would explain partially their reasons for marital choice, the one common theme is their need for balance between cultures.

Perhaps the best example of this is from Linda’s story. She identified very clearly her experiences growing up with her “foot in both cultures”. In it she describes the very delineated boundaries which existed between her world at home and her world outside of it and having to learn to live between the two. She did so by developing skills in interpreting and negotiating which have stayed with her through marriage. It is through intermarriage that Linda was able to find a way to balance those aspects of her world which were until then, separate, “ ... I could see in my family what was lacking and then, you know to have for example

what was in his family, it just complements my family in that way ...". Being intermarried gives Linda the opportunity to find a home which is safe and secure for her to be both her Chinese and Canadian self. Indeed, it appears to have also given her the opportunity to explore and revisit her Chinese heritage in a manner which she had not done so before. Linda spoke about how through her marriage she was able to redefine those aspects of her culture which she appreciates and wishes to continue to practice whereas prior to marriage she had not had the opportunity to do so.

May also provided some understanding into what she was seeking in a relationship. May gave very explicit reasons as to why she was not attracted to Chinese men in general. However in that explanation she also identified herself as also being excluded from mainstream culture as well. She recalls never being asked on dates in high school because of the implicit understanding that Caucasian's do not date Chinese people, which was the pervading thought in her community at the time. Given this dynamic, May was in a double bind. She was not attracted to her 'own kind' due to the racism and stereotypes she was subjected to regarding Chinese men while growing up but yet was excluded from the Caucasian world of dating. May describes a sense of something being "right" between her and Doug when they met. Love is the first thought when I think of what was "right" between them, but I also believe the other reason is acceptance. Fong & Yung (1995) identified the sense of empowerment one of their participants expressed regarding the result of his relationship with Caucasian women. He

identified having more access and feeling more connected with the majority (p.89). Being in this relationship gives May the opportunity to be accepted into the dominant culture at an intimate level that until she married she had been told in many ways, she could not be a part of.

2. Intimacy, according to Freeman (1992) is the second reason people form relationships. "Intimacy is partly feeling special and partly knowing that with at least one other person we can share a part of ourselves in safety" (p.20). The following is Lerner's (1989) definition of intimacy:

... an intimate relationship is one in which neither party silences, sacrifices or betrays the self and each party expresses strength and vulnerability, weakness and competence in a balanced way (Freeman, 1992, p. 20)

Achieving intimacy is no small task. The ability to be intimate is partially determined by how well we have worked through our original attachment and separation issues with our parents. Before we can let go of needing people to validate us, we need to be validated by others. Usually this is the primary job of the family to validate the child's basic sense of being important and loved (Freeman, 1992).

The women in this study show us that in their journey in learning to be intimate in their relationship, this includes having to be comfortable with both their Chinese

and Canadian selves. All of the women discussed some degree of unfinished business regarding their ethnic identity as evidenced by their discussion of revisiting their culture of origin after marriage, their relationships with their family and how intermarriage affects this and their need to continue to find ways to incorporate their Chinese culture into their day to day lives. To be able to openly explore, discuss and celebrate their Chinese culture seems to be linked to their ability to be in a relationship in which they feel safe to do so. In other words, feeling safe to explore this side of themselves without being silenced, betrayed or to need to sacrifice this part of themselves.

Kerry's story provided the best example of how culture and ethnic identity can influence one's journey towards intimacy. Kerry's story centered around her frustration with her own family of origin and her need to meet their demands through expected "duties" as their daughter. This often led her to compromise her marriage to some degree that she recognized but felt unable to control in many instances. This then leads to conflict between herself and especially her second husband. In her stories regarding her need to demonstrate "duty and respect" to her parent's, she struggles with accepting this role without question. At the same time though, she is resisting and feeling frustrated with it as evidenced by her negative identification of Chinese culture as "baggage" which she sees that many Chinese women bring with them in marriage. For Kerry, there is a compelling need on her part to meet the demands of her parents even though she is able to identify some it

as “unhealthy”. What is apparent is that she has spent a great deal of time trying to validate her role as the dutiful daughter and perhaps her Chinese heritage.

What makes Kerry’s experience different from the other women’s in this area is that while she describes her husband Bob as supportive, the stories she tells seem to provide a different picture. Rather than feeling safe in the relationship to be herself, Kerry spends much of her time, whenever her family of origin is involved, in keeping both of them separate as much as possible. She describes the sense of “pressure” she feels whenever they are together to meet the demands of both. She also speaks of feeling “guilty” when she says no to her parents and can only be “secretly happy” when her husband cannot accompany them on a holiday rather than feeling free to express her feelings. Furthermore her husband reinforces this lack of safety with derisive quips which seems to widen this gulf between the two groups (eg. White Husbands Against Asian Parents). It is understandable that her husband is also frustrated with what appears to be sometimes unhealthy and intruding demands by his wife’s family. Also what we have is a one sided picture provided by Kerry alone. What is clear though is there is something missing in their relationship that prevents Kerry from being able to come home and explore in a safe environment her relationship with her family and her culture. She is silenced by this lack of safety to discuss her Chinese culture, both good and bad. Instead her energy is directed towards being reactive towards her family by “jumping when immediately summoned” and working at “appeasing” everybody. She is also sacrificing herself and being betrayed through her family and through her

relationship by being denied the opportunity to be herself when she is with them. All of this requires a tremendous amount of energy to maintain. However in doing so, it prevents and distracts Kerry from having the opportunity for her to revisit and explore her culture of origin and being able to make sense of it for herself so that it can be reworked into her relationship in a manner which is comfortable for her. It is hard to see how intimacy for Kerry will be achieved in this relationship when such a significant part of her self remains unsafe to explore.

May and Linda's experiences provide a different perspective regarding how they and their families have coped with this task. For May, the expectations from her family of origin has not been as prevalent in their lives as in Kerry's. She does speak of certain duties which she sometimes feels compelled to meet with her parents. However rather than feeling "manipulated" as in Kerry's situation, May describes a "tacit understanding" between her husband and herself regarding the balance in cultures which they have tried to maintain through out their relationship. There is an ongoing give and take of both of their cultures which has been embodied in the birth of their first child. May speaks of creating a "balance" in their daughters life regarding her two cultures and "forging links" to make "a new family out of these two families". She also identifies support from her husband Doug to do so.

For Linda, she described an ongoing process of communication with her husband, comparing and discussing behaviors and practices which may or may not be

related to culture. For her, the practice has sometimes been difficult as she described always feeling as though it was her own culture which was problematic. Despite this, Linda feels that being married to Kent has assisted her in clarifying the role of Chinese culture in her life. Through their many discussions around their relationship and in looking towards the future particularly as it related to having children, Linda feels that it has been this process which has helped her to appreciate the role of Chinese culture in her life. She was able to identify certain values which she feels are related to Chinese culture that she finds valuable and important and wanting to instill them into her own children.

For both May and Linda, the process of seeking safety to be able to explore the role of Chinese culture in their life has not been one without difficulties. However they have both managed to find a way in the relationship to be open and free to discuss and share their Chinese self whether it relates to family celebrations, communication patterns or relationship concerns. Both women spoke about exploring their Chinese culture again in a manner which they had not done so before. And while it may not be possible to make a direct link between their intermarriage and their desire to revisit their Chinese culture, it would be worth exploring in future research its relationship. For Linda and May though, whatever the impetus may have been in revisiting their culture of origin, it has allowed them to review and reaffirm those parts of their culture which they value and take pride in. In being able to validate this integral part of who they are, they are moving

towards the path of feeling safe to be themselves and ultimately towards intimacy in their relationship.

3. Developmental Difference Between Men and Women. Freeman (1992)

identified developmental differences between men and women in how they enter relationships, seek intimacy and in their experiences with family. Freeman (1992) explains that a basic assumption in family of origin theory is that:

many relationship problems are not based on lack of love, caring, or commitment but on the misinterpretation of the differences that men and women bring into a relationship. How we define these differences and the meaning we give them seem to create greater obstacles to couples' feeling intimate with each other than the actual differences themselves (p. 23).

McGoldrick (1989) goes further by exploring the specific differences throughout the life cycle both in families and at work. McGoldrick (1989) identifies that along with clear differences in development there are significant variations in how men and women experience marriage both at home and at work. Curiously though, ethnicity and its effect on these developmental differences were not addressed. McGoldrick (1989) does explain that, "Ethnicity interacts with the family life cycle at every stage" (p. 69). She defines ethnicity and its importance to people in the following:

Ethnicity as used here refers to a concept of a group's "peoplehood" based on a combination of race, religion, and cultural history, whether or not members realize their commonalties with each other. It describes a commonality transmitted by the family over generations and reinforced by the surrounding community. But it is more than race, religion or national and geographic origin, which is not to minimize the significance of race or the special problems of racism. *It involves conscious and unconscious processes that fulfill a deep psychological need for identity and historical continuity.* It unites those who conceive of themselves as alike by virtue of their common ancestry, real or fictitious, and who are so regarded by others (emphasis added) (p.69).

Given this, it would stand to reason that the experience of marriage for the participants of this study would also be intimately influenced by their ethnicity and their identity as Chinese Canadian women. By understanding the changing roles of Chinese women within the Chinese family in North America, a better understanding of these differences and their effect on intermarriage may be understood. The following is a brief review of literature on this evolution.

Confucian doctrine clearly stated that the function of women was to obey. The three obediences were "obedience to the father when yet unmarried, obedience to the husband when married, and obedience to the sons when widowed." (Tsai, 1986, p. 157). Chinese men on the other hand occupied a more privileged position

because of the belief that sons were more valuable than daughters. This was based on the importance of continuation of the family line and expectations that they fulfill economic, religious and care taking duties of their aging parents (Levy, 1969; Chen, 1992). During economic hardship, closer observation of sex differences often determined who survived. Levy (1969) observed that in cases where infanticide was practiced, it was inevitable that it was the female child who suffered this fate (p.67). Chen (1992) also noted that the sale of female children was not an uncommon practice in traditional Chinese society. Since the communist revolution of China in 1949, the Chinese government has worked to equalize the privileges of all its citizens and to abolish traditional values and customs. Despite this, male children are still preferred in China (Chen, 1992).

With the increase in immigration to North America in the 1960's this brought about increased status for Chinese women. By the 1970's Chinese women were attending colleges and universities and more than half were working outside of the home (Tsai, 1986). This acculturated younger generation of Chinese women began to demonstrate increased independence, demand freedom of choice for career and marriage and challenged parental authority. She had become "more aggressive, assertive, and self-confident and dared to challenge masculine authority" (Tsai, 1986, p. 158). This is also reflected to some degree in mainstream media as well. The New York Times (2000) recently explored the evolution of the media image of Asian women since the early 1970's. We have moved from the "submissive sex nymph speaking in breathy, broken English" and the "ancient Chinese secret"

Calgon commercials to what the Times describes as an Asian population explosion in the pop culture landscape. Today Asian women can be seen occupying the field of television, movies, fashion runways and society pages. The article explains further that it's not the rest of the world who has shifted in their thinking but the Asian women themselves who have changed. "We are the crop of daughters who finally had choices ... We didn't have the same sense of duty and boundness of our mothers, so we took our own paths ..." (section 9, p. 1).

All of the women in this study shared at some point during their interview some of their life experiences as a Chinese Canadian woman before they embarked upon the journey of intermarriage. It is these experiences in addition to the collective cultural history which contributes to the different ways in which these women experience marriage in general and more specifically, intermarriage. Their experiences reflected upon the influences of culture, family, the role of women and racism on them. The descriptions of 'feeling stuck in the middle', 'seeking balance', 'interpreter and negotiator' and 'feeling different but the same' provide a reflection of the overall experience of these women which is unique because of their intermarriage relationship.

These women bring into marriage the ability to be both Canadian and Chinese. Most of the women spoke about the supportive and open nature of their spouses particularly in relationship to their Chinese culture and how this made it easier for them. While the practice of balancing the cultures within the relationship appears

to be a part of the tasks which is entailed in intermarriage, it is also a necessary step for these women in being able to revisit and redefine the role of their ethnicity in their life. This is one of the crucial developmental differences which needs to be addressed in intermarriage because failure to do so may impede the development of this integral understanding of themselves and the concomitant influence on their marriage.

Freeman (1992) explained that "we look for a spouse to help complete emotionally what hasn't been completed in our own family of origin" (p.9). All the women in this study described varying degrees of racism and stereotypes from both cultures which led to a sense of feeling like an outsider in some sense in their own community. With these experiences, even if these women's families were able to foster a sense of belonging and safety within their own nuclear family, there remains the experience outside of the home which they could not protect them from. As was discussed earlier, the need for acceptance can be a strong motivator. For women in intermarriage, this acceptance may have taken the form of seeking entrance into the dominant culture through marriage which until then was denied in subtle ways. This is a unique difference in how Chinese Canadian women experience intermarriage. Seeking acceptance in marriage may not be startling information but seeking acceptance of one's ethnicity as well may not be as well understood. Linda describes the assumptions that can be made in a relationship due to the acculturated presentation of Chinese Canadian women:

He just assumed that, you know, I'm quite white, Canadian, but then after I had been to his house, he hadn't been to mine yet, I was like, oh my gosh ... this is such a foreign world to me.

Such assumptions are the kindling for misinterpretation in a relationship. It speaks to the seemingly effortless which most of these women seem to move between their two cultures but in reality has likely been fostered over years of learning to live in this bicultural manner. These experiences influence how Chinese women in intermarriage view relationships differently from their counterparts.

The above history of the acculturation of Chinese women provides a beginning understanding of some of the influences of culture on these women today. It is these experiences along with those identified by the women in this study which contributes to the different ways in which these women experience intermarriage. The categories discussed above provide only a beginning understanding into some of the developmental differences in which Chinese Canadian women bring to intermarriage. By ignoring the unique differences which Chinese Canadian women may bring into intermarriage, these relationships run the risk of misinterpretation, confusion and ultimately impeding the development of intimacy.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to this study. The first one is that this study only provides a voice to the Chinese Canadian women's experience. Over and over again throughout the research process I felt limited by the fact that I was unable to hear the stories from their Caucasian partners. However it was decided that providing a voice for the women in this study would contribute to a beginning understanding into this phenomenon of intermarriage. The stories which these women shared were rich with details exploring their experiences in intermarriage. Integral to this is their relationship with their spouses. I believe these men have stories which would complete this understanding of intermarriage. Questions of what their experiences have been, their understanding of culture and ethnicity in marriage and what were their influences and reasons for choosing to intermarry are questions to ask the Caucasian spouses which remain to be explored. Along the same line, this study also does not address the male counterparts of this study. The experiences of Chinese Canadian men are even less understood. What little research which is available indicate that they too have unique areas which would also be of interest in understanding the larger picture of intermarriage experiences.

Secondly, only one interview was conducted with each of the participants of this study. Attempts to verify the data post interview was complicated by the delay in

analyzing the data by almost 12 months. The reasons for this were addressed in the methodology section of this paper. Consequently the ability to return to each of the participants to review the results was not possible. It was felt that the time which had elapsed would make the follow up interview difficult as circumstances and experiences would have changed and evolved over time for each of these women. Hence, the results of this study are limited by the one snapshot which was captured in the interview. While rich and full of important descriptions, these stories are based on the experiences of these women at this one moment in their lives. I believe much more can be learned from their experiences, particularly as each of these relationships move through different stages of the family life cycle. Because of the relative new phenomenon of intermarriage in this century, there are few role models for these couples to call upon for experience and advice. As these couples age, they will be breaking new ground in their experiences.

Thirdly, sample size was limited to only four participants. The sample size was small and purposeful in nature but from a research perspective, this could limit the generalizability of the results. Maxwell (1996) explains that relying on a small number of informants even if they have been purposefully selected and the data appears valid, there is no guarantee that these informants' views are typical. Thus the stories of the women in this study are to be read with the view that their thoughts and experiences may not necessarily represent the experiences of all Chinese Canadian women who are intermarried.

The last limitation of the study is related to the biases of the researcher which is manifested in the theoretical / conceptual orientation that I have chosen. These influences will have affected not only the type of research I have chosen to engage in but also how I have chosen to conduct and analyze the research. Another person with a different orientation may have chosen to conduct the research in a different manner or would find a different way to read and analyze the data, thus altering the findings.

Implications for the Future

There has been several discussions regarding the bicultural nature of the women in this study. It is this dual culture and the feeling of having one foot in each, which I believe is often the experience of young Chinese Canadian women. While our parent's often expect us to conform to a more idealistic view of how the proper young Asian woman should conduct herself (quiet, studious and obedient) this is often difficult to achieve due to personality traits and more often than not it is at odds with Western style expectations. We spend most of our socialization and development in school but return home to a more traditional Asian culture. This often leads to conflict between parent and child. It is here, the role of cultural interpreter and mediator develops as the young person learns to balance both cultures in her life. While school and being successful in school is often a strong expectation within Asian families, statistical research has shown that Asian women with a higher level of education (eg. post secondary) tend to out marry more often than women who do not move further in their education (Sung, 1990). So while

there is an expectation to complete an education often for practical purposes (being able to support one self and also to increase one's personal value) there is the unexpected risk of meeting and marrying somebody outside of Chinese culture.

It is in marriage that the women in this study sought to find a way to balance the cultural experience of the Chinese Canadian woman who feels divided between cultures. When they are able to find a way to bridge their Chinese and Canadian culture in marriage, a center is achieved where both Eastern and Western influences in the relationship can be safely explored and celebrated. By intermarrying and achieving this middle ground, the Chinese Canadian woman can complement aspects of her world, which was up till then, separate from each other. Achieving this also provides her with the freedom to revisit and explore her culture of origin. By clarifying, re-framing and re-evaluating her culture, she has an opportunity to find new ways to understand, integrate and celebrate this part of her identity.

Finding the way to strike that balance requires a commitment by both partners and an understanding that the task is important and necessary. The balancing can be a very conscious task initially but can evolve over time until it becomes integrated into the day to day life of the couple and their families.

Children appear to embody this balancing and bridging of cultures both physically and socially as one woman in the study explained. For her, her child represented

the wave of the future where globalization will bring people from different parts of the world together and inevitably relationships and marriages will result. By demonstrating that intermarrying not only works but can prosper, it is hoped that it can be an example to other people of what our future holds and its potential.

On the other hand, it is the future of intermarriage relationships which holds the questions which are most difficult to answer. The rate in which we see intermarriage occurring is a relatively new phenomenon which was increased by the removal of American antimiscegenation laws in 1968. Prior to this, intermarriage was occurring in smaller numbers. Consequently the number of people who have experienced the family life cycle as an intermarried couple is limited. There are very few media representations of intermarried couples and there are no role models for these couples to learn from. What sort of unique tasks and obstacles will an intermarried couple have to overcome through the different life cycles of a family? The women interviewed for this study have been married between 12 months to 13 years. They capture a fairly busy time in their lives that include career and raising children. What could not be observed are the developmental transitions that they will need to make in their relationships as they age together. Questions such as how they will they incorporate culture into their children's lives, launching their children, caring for aging parents and grief rituals are ones that could be affected.

McGoldrick (1989) noted that ethnic groups differ in the importance given to different life cycle transitions. She goes on to describe the various ways different cultures meet these transitions such as the transition to parenthood, families with adolescents, launching and families in later life. In each, different cultures celebrate, acknowledge and mourn these transitions in their own way. However it is her description of the life stage of 'families in later life' which is thought provoking when considered in the context of its meaning to couples who are intermarried.

It is well known that the meaning of cultural traditions increases as we age, so that as we lose other faculties, the traditions and rituals of our cultural background take on increasing importance: foods, ways of celebrating holidays, language and music (McGoldrick, 1989, p.79).

What are the implications for the aging of these relationships? McGoldrick (1989) speaks of an increasing need for connection with our cultural traditions as we grow older. Certainly this can already be seen with the women in this study as they describe revisiting their Chinese culture and finding ways to incorporate Chinese culture into their lives. This is particularly obvious in the women who also have children. Of the 3 women I interviewed who had children, all identified a desire for their children to learn Chinese and to be exposed to Chinese culture as much as possible. The one participant who did not have children yet also expressed a desire to instill certain Chinese values when the time came. The women in this

study were found to be seeking a balance in their lives, one that reflected their bicultural nature. For those who seemed to make this transition more successfully, a balance was struck in the relationship that allowed, understood and celebrated these differences. But the question is if this desire for connection with our cultural heritage increase with age, how will this impact these relationships where balancing cultures is already a practiced task? What will happen when one partner expresses a need to become closer to his/her cultural heritage?

Looking at some related research may provide some beginning answers to this question. In the study by Fong & Yung (1996) one of the women they interviewed was a third generation Japanese American woman who was in her 50's at the time of the interview. Mimi explained that when she married her first husband that she was seeking to have a half - white child because of the values she had been raised with which reflected that white culture was better, beautiful and more powerful. However after her marriage she described herself as becoming politicized in 1968 after students of color at San Francisco State University, inspired by the civil rights movement, went on strike to demand the establishment of an autonomous Ethnic Studies program. After this, she reassessed her motivations for marriage and the marriage ended in divorce. Calvin, a Chinese American male who was married to a white Jewish woman, was also inspired by the San Francisco State strike but explained that he did not abandon his marriage as a result due to the support and encouragement of his wife in his political activism. While these experiences are not directly related with aging, it does illustrate the stresses which a intermarriage

relationship can undergo in regards to the minority partner's search for ethnic identity. Where this need to be closer to one's ethnicity will come up will likely be during times of transition and as identified by McGoldrick (1989), in later life. The above experiences of Mimi and Calvin bring to light the possible destabilizing nature of this search for ethnic pride and solidarity in the context of intermarriage. While I am not suggesting that these experiences will lead to divorce, it does point out the importance of these transitions and the compelling need for the minority spouses to be able to explore their ethnicity safely and in a supportive environment.

In practice, for those who find themselves working with intermarried couples, there is a need to become culturally conscious of the unique experiences that the couple and the individuals in these relationships are involved in. When exploring the life history of these people it needs to include not only their multigenerational family history but also their culture of origin and the influences this may have regarding what they seek and bring into the marriage. Furthermore, these experiences may not necessarily be obvious to the individual as evidenced by the almost invisible ease which the women in this study incorporated their bicultural nature. And lastly, the role of racism, media and the history of the Chinese in Canada needs to be acknowledged as having an impact on the development and self image of Chinese Canadians. The findings in this study does support the power which these particular elements have on self image and development. What remains unclear though is the direct influence that these components have on the

individual choosing to intermarry and on intermarriage itself. This is an area which remains to be explored.

As social workers, family therapists and cross - cultural practitioners, intermarriage relationships represent a growing trend in Canada and in North America which will likely be reflected in the population which we provide service to. However I am conscious in trying to avoid separating the experiences of the women in this study from other experiences of marriage as being problematic or especially vulnerable. I see that the insights these women have provided serve not only to increase our understanding of intermarriage but they enrich our understanding of marriage in general. What I believe is that intermarriage relationships like other marriages will under go transitions and stressors which may lead some of the couples to seek help. These young couples which are busy with children and career at this time, may find that as they age, there are few role models for them to turn to for advice and for direction with regards to transitions unique to them as couples. Their path remains as a fairly new and unknown journey and as such we need to be mindful of what the future holds for them.

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Appendix A

A Discussion on the Relationships in Labor, Trade and Education between the Chinese and Dominant Community in Vancouver (1871 – 1923)

Introduction

In 1858, the first Chinese immigrants came from California to the mining regions of British Columbia in pursuit of the Gold Rush. Subsequently other Chinese mainly from the southern provinces of China followed. The Chinese who came to Canada quickly became a useful and necessary labor force used to help industrialize the nation and to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, a symbol of national unity. However, following the then popular Darwinist belief of racial superiority, the Chinese were designated as 'least desirable' immigrants for a British Canada. Negative stereotypes of the Chinese were abundant and there are many examples of their use to create and maintain the belief of the Chinese as 'other' or 'alien' and therefore unassimiable, undesirable and contrary to the development of a Anglo Saxon nation. There were mixed views of the Chinese and their usefulness to the then undeveloped nation of Canada. While the general public disapproved of the Chinese and waged against further immigration and integration, the federal government realized the importance of Chinese labor for the completion of the railway and development of the western economy. In the end as many as 17,000 Chinese laborers where brought to British Columbia during the construction of the C.P.R. and many of them stayed after its completion. It is well documented that the Chinese in British Columbia between 1858 to 1923 experienced social and institutionalized discrimination at almost all levels of interaction with the dominant society. The most obvious and notorious example being of course the implementation of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923.

This paper will examine the relationships between the early Chinese immigrants and the dominant Anglo Saxon society of Canada between the period of 1858 to 1923. The areas of labor, trade and education were some of the main activities which brought the Chinese into frequent contact with the dominant society. Given this background, the following will be discussed:

1. The stereotypes and its use by the dominant society to discriminate, subordinate and maintain the Chinese as 'other' in the area of labor, trade and education;
2. The impact of these stereotypes on the Chinese and the community's response to the subsequent discrimination and;
3. The types of relationship and interactions which were used by the dominant society to interact with the Chinese.

Discussion

Tactics used by the dominant society in Canada to discriminate, subordinate and marginalize the Chinese began even before the major migration of Chinese laborers to North America after 1858 (Tan & Roy, 1985). Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, China had been an autonomous state under the imperial rule of the Ch'ing dynasty since 1644. In 1838, China fought unsuccessfully against Britain in the Opium War (1839-42). Her defeat marked the beginning of a

legacy of foreign domination and unequal treaties which slowly consumed upon her territorial and economic integrity (Li, 1988)

Between 1838 and 1900, China's internal structure became further weakened through a series of wars waged against several European countries and the United States of America, all seeking to secure trading and other rights from the Chinese government. A population explosion, declining productivity in farm yields and frequent natural disasters all contributed to China being ripe for exploitation by these Western powers. Seen as a source of raw materials, cheap labor and an untapped market the Chinese economy fell prey to Western capitalist production. (Li, 1988)

Mao Tse Tsung analyzed the disintegration of the Chinese economy as having been induced by foreign capitalism:

... it undermined the foundations of her self sufficient natural economy and wrecked the handicraft industries both in the cities and in the peasant's homes and on the other, it hastened the growth of a commodity economy in town and country ... The destruction of the natural economy created a commodity market for capitalism, while the bankruptcy of large numbers of peasants and handicraftsmen provided it with a labor market. (Li, 1988, p.14)

The poor economic conditions in China and her unstable political climate eventually led many to venture abroad to seek a better living.

Pushing many peasants to the brink of starvation, these natural and social calamities made them vulnerable to recruitment for the overseas labor market (Li, 1988, p. 15).

Escaping economic hardship and searching for better employment opportunities, many borrowed money to finance the trip while others were recruited to Canada and the United States as indentured laborers. While there were a small number of Chinese who entered the country as independent miners, merchants and domestic servants (Li, 1988) it is believed that the majority of these early Chinese emigrants used this 'credit ticket' system to enter the country (Tan & Roy, 1985).

A commercial company would advance the passage ticket and a small sum of money to the Chinese, who in return would accept employment arranged by the company, with a portion of their monthly wage being deducted to repay the creditor (Li, 1988, p.16).

While there is no evidence to suggest that any Chinese were brought in as slaves, those arriving as indentured laborers were at the mercy of the company whom they had contracted themselves to. Many were indentured to their company for 5 or 10 years without pay and forced to work and live under less than ideal conditions (Li,

1988). It is estimated that approximately 1,500 Chinese men died of disease or accidents between 1881 and 1884 alone (Tan & Roy, 1985).

Once in Canada, most of the men were engaged in menial work in areas where it was difficult to employ white laborers. Employment patterns of the Chinese between 1885 to 1903 show that an overwhelming majority (72.5%) were employed in labor intensive industries such as coal mining, land clearing, salmon canneries, road construction, laundry operations and saw mills (Li., 1988, p.19).

Canadian attitudes towards the early Chinese emigrants were mixed. While anti - Chinese sentiments may not have been as obvious in the early years, the use of stereotypes was already in place. James Morton (1974) concluded that in British Columbia the Chinese were not treated with overt hostility initially however negative stereotyping about them were abound. Amor de Cosmos, the editor of the British Colonist in 1860 wrote about the Chinese:

They may be inferior to Europeans and Americans in energy and ability; hostile to us in race, language and habits and may remain among us a Pariah race; still they are patient, easily governed and invariable industrious and their presence at this juncture would benefit trade everywhere in the two colonies ... Our Prediction is that while British Columbia profits directly by their labor, indirectly our commercial prosperity is assured. (Morton, 1974, p.10)

Chinese labor was also recognized as necessary for the labor intensive work of establishing British Columbia's economic base. They were usually paid one half to two thirds the wage of other workers and were known to endure long hours and seasonal work. Dr. John Hamilton Gray declared in his 1885 report on the "Chinese Question":

It may safely be said that there are several industries that would not have succeeded - perhaps it might be said undertaken - if it had not been for the opportunity of obtaining their labor ... preponderating testimony as to the sobriety, industry and frugality of the Chinese as manual laborers ... and up to this time their presence in the province has been most useful if not indispensable. (Anderson, 1991, p. 36)

It was also noted that the Chinese brought not only commerce to the city but was also an available source of cheap and reliable labor for employers (Tan & Roy, 1985, p. 7). Households who could afford a Chinese servant benefited greatly, "... life in the colony had been rugged before the arrival of the Chinese." (Morton, 1974, p.13). However Jin Tan (1987) argues that the notion that British Columbia was relatively free of anti - Chinese feelings before 1880 as misleading. She identified that the Chinese were prevented from mining the best creeks, experienced physical violence, were imposed hefty licenses for selling opium and as early as 1860 were hearing calls for a Chinese head tax. Peter Ward (1978) also

provided several examples in which hostility towards the Chinese by white miners resulted in harassment, threats and violence.

It was not until British Columbia took an economic down turn near the end of the Gold Rush that anti - oriental sentiments began to take hold in a more systematic manner, culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923 (Li, 1988; Baureiss, 1987).

The use of negative stereotypes became widely employed by the dominant society to legitimize their discriminatory attitudes and policies that served to maintain the subordinate status of the Chinese.

Stereotypes are useful to justify individual and institutional discrimination. They emphasize differences between an in-and out-group, while ignoring the similarities between them. (Baureiss, 1987, p.22).

Capitalizing on the stereotypes of the Chinese as an 'out group', claims were repeatedly made to their inability to assimilate, their 'unfair' competition in the workplace and the concern of maintaining the Anglo Saxon and British nature of the country.

Early concerns that the Chinese were 'taking over' and perceived to be a threat to white competition can be seen in this report by the Gold Commissioner in November 1866 regarding the sale of mining claims:

The Celestials, however, bid high for claims and one after another sold out to them, receiving as high as \$1,000 for claims which white men would not have paid one half of that sum for. Thus a large portion of the claims soon changed hands, and a Chinese population rapidly took the places of Europeans; we are told that next season will scarcely find a white man there, as the Chinese are not only monopolizing the mine, but trade and commerce also. (Morton, 1974, p. 19)

However it was the disenfranchisement of the Chinese that seemed to open the gates to the slippery slopes of institutionalized racism. When the colony of British Columbia became a province in 1871 the Chinese were still able to vote. However the members of the first provincial Legislative Assembly wasted no time in putting forth an act to amend the qualifications to vote which effectively disenfranchised the Chinese, even if they were British subjects. For the Chinese, the implications of this act went beyond being able to vote - disenfranchisement would result in restriction from entering certain professions, exclusion from serving as jurors in all courts of law and most importantly, "...officially sealed the alien or non-settler status of the category 'Chinese' " (Anderson, 1991, p.47). Emphasizing the 'alien'

aspect, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald justified the disenfranchisement of the Chinese in 1885 on the grounds that,

... the Chinese have no 'British instinct' and their mind was not suited for democracy (Tan, 1987, p.23)

By 1872, several motions had been placed before the Legislative Assembly to impose a per capita tax of \$50 per annum upon the Chinese in the province. The per capita tax was based on the belief that the Chinese did not contribute their fair share towards public revenue. The use of the alien stereotype was in full force by this time as evidenced by this editorial in the *The Colonist*:

The habits and modes of life [of the Chinese] are essentially different and they must be exceptionally dealt with ... The Caucasian laborer keeps a house, raises a family and does his part toward maintaining all institutions of a civilized Christian community. The Mongolian laborer emerges from his sardine box in the morning, consumes his pound of rice and puts in his days of work, baiting naught from his earnings, save the veriest pittance he subsists on. No wife and children to feed and clothe and educate, no church to maintain, no Sunday clothes to buy, he saves nearly all he earns, is a useless member of society and finally carries with him all his hoardings home to China . (Morton, 1974, p. 37)

Obviously, nobody felt the need to acknowledge the reality that many Chinese could not afford to bring their wives and children to Canada or that after expenses, laborer's were left usually with a meager \$45 annually to send back to China. They also chose to ignore that the Chinese were not the only immigrants remitting some of their earnings back home (Baureiss, 1987). In any case the motion was not passed as the British North America Act rendered it unconstitutional. Other attempts to enact legislation followed between 1872 to 1875 in an effort to curb the growing 'Chinese Menace' and to assert the marginal status of the 'Chinese' (Anderson, 1991; Baureiss, 1987). These included motions to prevent employment of the Chinese in public works, calls for a Queue (pigtail) tax, and a immigration head tax. All were unsuccessful based on the doubt regarding the legal competence of the province to enact such measures (Anderson, 1991) rather than for the concern of the constitutional rights of the Chinese or the moral justification of such endeavors.

By 1878, use of negative stereotypes to justify the exclusion of the Chinese from most areas of commercial competition and social intermingling was growing. These were most apparent in labor, trade and education. The tactic of using stereotypes in these areas to discriminate and marginalize and the Chinese community's response to them will now be discussed in turn:

a. Labor

For many BC laborers, the Chinese came to be viewed as the enemy rather than their employers. For White workers, the Chinese were seen as the group which could undersell their labor, be used as strike breakers and cause 'unfair competition' (Anderson, 1991). Again stereotypes were used to justify these beliefs and to agitate for discriminatory legislation. The Colonist in 1875 printed several editorials complaining of, "The Chinese Evil" and "Mongolian Slave Labor", presumably fanning the 'truth' about how the Chinese were unfairly advantaged in labor. It pointed out that over \$800,000 a year was sent back to China and that while there were 2,500 white families in the province with an average of 4 per family, none of the over 3,000 Chinese laborers even had a wife (Morton, 1974). While it was true that the Chinese charged less for their labor, what was not widely acknowledged was that this was not because they were willing to work for less but that they didn't have a choice.

Chinese workers knew the value of their labor. They also knew they were worth more than what they were paid. The problem was that they had very little say in the matter (Tan, 1987, p.77).

As far as their role as strikebreakers, the employers themselves were quite open about their willingness to use the Chinese for this purpose. The irony is that the Chinese had a history of resistance and had on several occasions struck over job and pay discrimination (Anderson, 1991).

The legislature's chief concern was over the prospect of, "the province being over-run with a Chinese population, to the injury of the settled population of the country" (Anderson, 1991, p.48). Fearing an influx of Chinese laborers which would be needed to complete the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the British Columbia legislature in 1878 implemented a policy which disallowed any Chinese from being employed on provincial public works. Perhaps most revealing about the government's purpose was in their request to the dominion government for a,

...liberal scheme of white immigration to British Columbia ... white population alone, we can hope to build up our country and render it fit for the Anglo-Saxon race (Anderson, 1991, p. 50).

However, the contractor for the CPR had already secured permission from the government of Sir John A. Macdonald to import Chinese workers. Between 1881 to 1884, it is estimated between 15,000 to 17,000 Chinese came to British Columbia (Tan & Roy, 1985; Anderson, 1991).

The Chinese did not accept their inferior position in labor and society passively. Tan (1987) states that the Chinese community would engage in open acts of resistance and protest against unfair treatment but that these events were rare. Instead they preferred to maintain amiable relations with the members of the dominant society. The Chinese in Barkerville once proclaimed allegiance to the

Queen - in their deference to authority the Chinese expected fair and equal treatment. Unfortunately, discrimination and stereotypes precluded this from happening. The Chinese were indifferent about electoral politics not out of ignorance but as a result of understanding the limitations of this avenue for them since they were unable to vote and they knew too well that general public opinion would be against them. Instead the Chinese resisted using methods available to them such as petitioning, walkouts and letter writing campaigns (Tan, 1987). Thus, while the resistance by the Chinese was not directed solely at breaking down the stereotypes about them, their labor activism was one way in which the workers demanded equality in the workplace, simultaneously resisting racial discrimination imposed by the dominant society (Creese, 1987).

b. Trade

Given the on going discrimination and restrictive legislation imposed upon the Chinese laborer, many were confined to work in the few industries open to them. These were mainly in agriculture, retail and service trades and some parts of lumbering and fishing. Disenfranchisement precluded any Chinese from practicing in certain professions and the larger department stores or banks would not employ them. Given this hostile climate of social and legal discrimination many of the Chinese retreated into the, " ... ethnic business sector, largely the service industry where they found refuge by avoiding competition with white employers and workers" (Li, 1988, p.43). The Chinese became prominent as small businessmen providing services as grocers, laundrymen, pedlars, shopkeepers and

restaurateurs to either the white community or exclusively to a Chinese clientele (Ward, 1978; McDonald, 1986). However turning inwards to their own community did not necessarily provide protection from the stereotypes imposed by the dominant society. White women were not allowed to be employed in Chinese businesses due to concerns of corruption of their virtue, concerns regarding unsanitary conditions were ongoing despite repeated investigations which turned up nothing and the Chinese living behind the shop was a threat because his 'lower standard of living' allowed him to undercut prices. The Asiatic Exclusion League in co-operation with the Boards of Trade, took it upon themselves to educate the rest of Canada about the seriousness of this 'menace' (Baureiss, 1987).

Of interest is Paul Yee's (1986) study of the Sam Kee Company of British Columbia. One of the most successful Chinese businesses at the turn of the century, Yee (1986) revealed that there were relationships between the dominant and Chinese community which operated prior to the Chinese Exclusion Act seemingly without concern for race or color. These were mainly limited to an elite class of Chinese merchants whose small firms allowed the white community to see them as non-threatening operations worthy of trade. Sam Kee found that when it came down to trade, "... race did not interfere with business as the industrial interests of Vancouver and Sam Kee seemed to share mutual needs " (Yee, 1986, p.94). The Sam Kee Company demonstrated impressive success and in this provided the hope to other Chinese that, " in the business arena that host society

acceptance of the Chinese was the greatest " (Yee, 1986, p.96). It might be added that it was likely the only area in which the Chinese could be accepted as an equal.

c. Education

One of the most visible forms of racial discrimination and the most virulent use of stereotypes to reinforce the 'other', was in the segregation of Chinese students in schools. Up until the 1940's, Chinese children in Victoria, British Columbia attended segregated schools through their primary grades (Lai, 1987). Stereotypes of the Chinese students were used to implement segregation policies and to reinforce concerns regarding the political and economic problems posed by this group as a whole to the province (Lai, 1987; Stanley, 1990; Sandiford & Kerr, 1926).

Calls for school segregation can be found as early as 1901 by a few white parents in the Rock Bay Elementary School. Petitioning the school board these parents requested that the Chinese children be put in a separate school because they were, " ... unclean, untidy, depraved and ill-mannered, and had a demoralizing influence on the white children" (Lai, 1987, p.49). The supposed physical and moral threat posed by the Chinese children to their white counterparts appeared to be an extension of the longstanding stereotype of the Chinatown's being, "... the moral opposite of white society and a breeding ground for depravity and disease " (Stanley, 1990, p.289). The best example of this conversion of a stereotype to

'truth' of the Chinese can be found in a call by the Vancouver City Council in 1914 for school segregation:

By being indiscriminately thrown into association with Orientals many years their senior, our children are wantonly exposed to Oriental vices at an age when revolting incidents may be indelibly stamped upon their minds. Furthermore the health of our children is endangered by such close association with Oriental children, many of whom hail from habitations where reasonable sanitation and cleanliness are not only despised but utterly disregarded (Stanley, 1990, p.289).

The reality was that Chinese students had more to fear from white students than would be surmised from the above denunciation. A number of incidents involving violence by white students towards Chinese students were documented in newspapers in both Vancouver and Victoria. In 1904 a Victoria Chinese youth was hit by a streetcar following an assault by a group of white boys, a Chinese school girl was stoned by a group of white boys and seriously injured in 1915 and in 1908 a group of white boys were making an organized attempt to prevent the Chinese from attending their schools (Stanley, 1990; Lai, 1987).

Despite the fact that the Chinese student's received praise by the teachers for their good behavior and diligence and the fact that the school board would be violating the school act by introducing a segregated system, white parents persisted to force

the issue of segregation. Eventually enlisting the Trades and Labor Council for support the parents succeeded in placing Chinese students in a separate classroom. In 1907, the concern of Chinese students in the schools was raised again but this time by the school trustees themselves. They charged that the students were not genuine and were only attending the school as a method of reclaiming the cost of the head tax. When the federal government refused to prevent the Chinese children from collecting their refund, the provincial Department of Education proposed a number of different measures all aimed at preventing Chinese children from attending their schools. Chinese children were expected to understand English and to have entered Victoria before April 1, 1907. These measures prevented newly arrived children from China to attend public school and thus, could not collect their tax refund. In 1908 further restrictions were imposed - only native born Chinese students would be permitted to attend public school. Under this ruling, a considerable number of Chinese children already in the school system would not be permitted to attend (Lai,1987).

The vehemence with which the white parent's and dominant community pursued segregation seemed to have less to do with protecting their children from the listed 'Chinese evils' and more to do with reflecting the ongoing anti - Chinese sentiments of the day.

School segregation can be seen as a particular instance of white supremacy the political and social system predicated on the supposed existence and

natural dominance of a white 'race'. For some whites, school segregation was merely reflecting what was already going in all other areas of society (Stanley, 1990, p. 287).

The Chinese community responded to school segregation with a great deal of resistance, demonstrating a high degree of solidarity and clarity of the long term impact of school segregation on the future of the Chinese in Canada (Stanley, 1990, p. 287):

We ask ourselves this question: What can be the purpose behind this movement ? Can it be the intention to prevent us securing an English education so that our children can be permanently ignorant, so that they must remain laborers to be exploited? Being ignorant of the language we will be unable to take out part by the side of other Canadians, and we will then be pointed out as those who refuse to learn the customs or social life of the country - in fact, refuse to assimilate. It will have been forgotten by then that it was not because we did not want to learn but because certain narrow minded autocrats have taken upon themselves the responsibility of preventing our learning. (Stanley, 1990, p.293-294)

Unable to use the conventional means of voting to influence the government, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was enlisted to help organize a response. The Chinese community expressed their grievances through

legal suits, letter writing campaigns, petitions and strikes (Lai, 1987; Stanley, 1990). The Chinese students withdrew from the segregated school between 1922 - 23 and attended a Chinese free school organized and funded by the CCBA. Letter writing campaigns to inform other Chinese communities across Canada and in China about the segregation made the issue into a national and international concern (Lai, 1987). The fight against school segregation in effect united the Chinese community. Prior to this the population tended to be fractioned around county origins.

.. the Chinese community used Chinese nationalism instrumentally to challenge white hegemony. Indeed the Chinese community had invented a common identity as Chinese, largely in response to the threat of white supremacist exclusion (Stanley, 1990, p.295).

The issue of school segregation is a good example of the Chinese response to discriminatory measures and treatment. Unable to vote, the Chinese sought out various unconventional avenues in which to express their grievances. Rather than submitting to the stereotypes imposed upon them by the dominant society, the Chinese clearly demonstrated resistance and objection to attempts at further marginalization and discrimination. Interestingly enough, while not discussed in this paper, the stereotype of the Chinese laborer as being a 'sojourner' was often put forth as one of the reasons why they were unassimiable and did not contribute to Canadian society. The sojourner image was one who insisted on taking their

civilization with them, keeping their customs and institutional structure with the hope of eventually returning to China (Baureiss, 1987, p.23). The response of the Chinese community to school segregation was seen as a direct threat to their future in Canada. This clearly refutes the sojourner stereotype.

Conclusion

The stereotypes employed by the dominant society to create and maintain the sense of 'other' and 'alien' with the early Chinese immigrants clearly demonstrated the power of such tactics. The social and institutionalized racism which quickly followed allowed the dominant society to discriminate against the Chinese and for them to believe in their own inordinate superiority.

In the areas of labor, trade and education which brought the Chinese invariably into contact with the dominant community, stereotypes were widely used to justify their exclusion and to impose discriminatory legislation and practices. The dominant community when threatened with competition in labor or social intermingling imposed a relationship based on the assumption that the Chinese were inferior and were to be subjugated. The use of stereotypes afforded the dominant community a sense of security and swelled sense of morality as they were protecting the dominion from being over run by the undesirable and unassimiable Chinese.

Even when there were opportunities for positive relationships to form as in the case of the striking laborers, the dominant community chose to overlook the common interest of labor activism which the Chinese had demonstrated an understanding of.

The Chinese though should not be viewed as hapless victims, passively accepting their 'bottom of the barrel' status. There is documented evidence suggesting that the early Chinese immigrants clearly understood the value of their labor and that even after being disenfranchised, found rather creative avenues to agitate against unfair practices and legislation. Given the discriminatory climate in which they existed in, the Chinese tried to limit their interaction with the dominant community. However even limited interaction in some cases were too much as evidenced by the virulent calls for segregated schooling for the Chinese. The only area which seemed to afford some protection from the elements of discrimination was in trade. The acceptance of this small elite merchant class of Chinese was a rare act of discretion permitted by the dominant community due to the transcending nature of commerce which can be understood by all cultures.

The relationships in labor, trade and education between the early Chinese and the dominant community in Vancouver were fraught with stereotypes and discrimination. While the Chinese struggled for equality and fairness in this relationship, in the end they were ultimately betrayed with their disenfranchisement in 1871 and finally with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923.

Appendix B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Appendix C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

Part One

I am interested in the story of how you met your husband memories you have of dating. In particular, I am interested in any experiences you may have had which you perceive as being unique to interracial couples.

1. The story of how you met your husband and memories you have of dating.
2. Tell me about any concerns you may have had regarding culture or racial differences and how did you deal with this ?
3. Tell me about your respective family's reception to your relationship.

Part Two

Tell me about your experiences with being married. In particular concerns or experiences which you feel are unique to being an interracial couple in Vancouver today.

1. Tell me about your experiences of getting married.
2. What are some concerns you may have encountered in your marriage which you perceive as being unique to interracial couples and how did you resolve them.
3. Tell me about the role the extended family plays in your relationship and your experiences with them.
4. Tell me about your experiences with the Chinese and dominant community regarding your relationship.

Part 3

As a Chinese Canadian woman who has chosen to marry outside of her ethnic group, what adjustments, if any, have you had to make?

1. Tell me about the gains and losses, if any, you have experienced as a result of your intermarriage.
2. Tell me about what you anticipate for yourself and your relationship in the future as an interracial couple and any concerns you may have.