Exploring Multiracial/cultural Identities through Mothers’ Voices

Catherine L. Slaney, B.A.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

© June, 2001
Abstract

This study explored the experiences of mothers of multiracial/cultural children within the context of family, school, and community. Three categories of mothers of multiracial/cultural children were interviewed privately and then invited to meet as a group to explore some of their reflections and experiences. The categories consisted of 4 mothers with multiracial/cultural children presently attending elementary school, 2 mothers of multiracial/cultural children who are now adults and 3 mothers from my own multiracial/cultural family. The study explored the researcher's personal quest for a multiracial/cultural identity and combined interviews with her daughter, her sister, and her mother to reveal the multiracial/cultural experience from a personal perspective.

Content analysis of the narratives revealed that multiracial/cultural children produce their own culture and establish new and personally relevant priorities as they develop their self-identities. Findings further indicated that present-day, mainstream mothers from the dominant majority group of Canadians, tell a different story than similar mothers of previous cohorts, and that although sociopolitical and economic changes have influenced the experiences of these women, their stories remain remarkably similar across racial and cultural lines.

The findings from this study may promote the development of multicultural programs in Canada as they offer both prospects and challenges to multiracial/cultural children and multicultural educators. It is hoped that this study will provide a better understanding of multiculturalism and encourage educators to heighten their racial and cultural awareness as they strive to critically examine their own cultural stories and realign their praxis within the evolving Canadian mosaic.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous support and contributions of my esteemed Thesis Advisory Committee. Sandra Bosacki, my Thesis Advisor, provided the backbone and sustenance to keep me on track throughout the writing process. It was her diligent attention to detail and discerning eye that helped me to create a project that met stringent academic and professional standards. It was through her gentle, but persistent demand for nothing but my best that encouraged me to strive to complete this creation from the heart. Thank you Sandra.

Susan Drake lent her personal brand of wisdom and knowledge to my endeavours and provided me with the opportunity to truly explore my own stories. Sharon Abbey pushed me to “peel back the layers” and seek a deeper awareness of my work. They were invaluable mentors for me, and I offer my sincere appreciation for their efforts.

Lynn Duhaime, the Administrative Assistant in the Faculty of Education office, kept me informed, and directed me through a myriad of technicalities. She was a beacon of light throughout the process.

My deepest gratitude to my family who saw me through the last two years, for their unconditional support, even when it conflicted with their own agendas. Although I can never make up the times when my work took me away from my family, I do hope to be able to offer a new dimension to our special moments still to come. I would like to add a special thank you to my mother, sister and daughter, who so patiently endured my persistent prodding and poking into their most intimate thoughts and feelings. I hope that others will benefit from their contributions as much as I have. My deepest appreciation to all.
Dedication to all mothers

We may not speak the same language or eat the same food. Our skin may be
different colours; our clothing worlds apart. Your home may be a tent through which the
desert sand swirls, while my house is made of bricks, sturdy and secure. You work with
your hands, your back breaking each day while my work is at a computer, mind-numbingly
intense. I shiver in winter while you are glad that the sun burns you a little less. You have
experienced things I have only seen on television and even then, turned away. I have more
possessions than you can imagine, although in some ways I have less.

But none of those differences matter at all. None of what divides us can keep us
apart. We are both mothers, and that changes everything for you and me and the way we
see the world. I held you as you wept for a lost child. I cried tears of joy seeing your
daughter learn to write her own name. We traded stories in sign language; made gestures
that every mother understands. I showed you photos of my boys. You gathered your
children so I could admire every one. You took my hand and walked me to the place where
you buried a baby, digging her grave with your own hands. Language and skin colour
mean little when hearts ache together. A mother’s pride is the same whether you are rich
or poor. Identity the world over is lost to cries of “Mama.”

Mothers of the world are more alike than different, more united by love of children
than divided by borders or ethnicity. We touch each other in wordless ways and share
smiles of understanding. Mothers pray for the same things: peace and safety and a better
life for their children. We pray because we know our children are not our own (Bourke,
2001, p.13).
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ............................................................................................................. I
Acknowledgements ...................................................................................... ii
Dedication to all mothers ............................................................................... iii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ................................................................ 1
  Operational Definitions ............................................................................... 4
  Background ................................................................................................ 8
  Description of the Phenomenon .................................................................. 13
  Sociological and Pedagogical Significance ................................................ 17
  Purpose and Objectives of the Study ......................................................... 19
  Limitations of the Study ............................................................................ 22
  Outline of Subsequent Chapters ................................................................ 26

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ........................................ 28
  Introduction ............................................................................................... 28
  Multiracial/Cultural Images ......................................................................... 28
  Mothering the Multiracial/cultural Child ..................................................... 33
  The Self as a Sociocultural Co-construction ............................................. 41
  Constructing a Multiracial/cultural Identity ............................................... 47
  Educating the Multiracial/cultural Child .................................................... 52
  Summary of Literature ............................................................................... 56
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Family History Questionnaire.</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Mother’s History/Father’s History Questionnaire.</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Scripts.</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Interview Schedule.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion Interview Schedule.</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>Support Resources for Participants.</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>Participant Demographics.</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix N</td>
<td>Participant Inter-groupings.</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

*We all touch upon each other's lives in ways we can't begin to imagine.* (A. Walker, 1990, p. 351)

As I begin this journey I find myself beleaguered with many recurring self-doubts and moments of anxiety, but I am determined to relentlessly pursue a most important quest that comes from deep within my heart. Putting this into words is not an easy task, and yet bits and pieces of it have persistently bubbled up into my existence. As a white woman with black ancestors, I have been living an undefined racial identity, and this study became a quest for personal enlightenment, understanding, awareness, and sharing. I chose to put my quest forward to others who dared to share some of their own experiences in a collaborative effort to seek meaning within our cultural self-stories (Drake, Elliott, & Castle, 1993; Minister, 1991).

This study will be of interest to Canadians who find themselves challenged in an effort to acknowledge more than one race or culture while living within or alongside the mainstream of Canadian society. As a mother of multiracial/cultural children, I wondered about my own role in the development of my children's racial and cultural identities and chose to interview a variety of other mothers whose children had multiracial and/or multicultural heritages. I believed that my own experiences and insight as a mother would assist me in gathering narratives of racial and cultural experiences of other mothers in a meaningful way.

The investigation compared the experiences of mothers and their children to some of the literature that addresses such issues as constructing multiracial/cultural identities, mothering multiracial/cultural children, educating the multiracial/cultural child and
creating a sense of self. Through narrative discourse the study explored the perspectives of mothers and how they and their own mothers contributed to the construction of their children’s racial and cultural identities. Although this study focuses on mothers, it is acknowledged that other family members and certain factors outside the home such as peers, school experiences, the influence of the media, and physical appearance all contribute to this process (Golden, 2000; Kilbride, 2000; Mahtani, 2000; Phinney, 2000).

Historically, the approach to multiculturalism in Canadian schools has offered both prospects and challenges to children who embraced more than one race and/or culture. For example, Dien (2000) and Schwartz (1998b) have suggested that some of these children feel caught between various social and political barriers and may find it difficult to establish a viable racial and cultural identity for themselves within the Canadian Diaspora. The Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education (1999) declares that Canadian human rights policy must ensure that all Canadians feel free to nurture their ethnicity and integrate a personal blend of all of their cultures into their own lives and those of their children.

Mothers’ perceptions of the effectiveness and relevance of the multicultural curriculum employed in their children’s schools were explored in this study. Their narratives served to reveal insight into the unique position of multiracial/cultural individuals. “Since having a multiple ethnic heritage has a different, perhaps more problematic effect on a child’s development, it is important to actively help multiracial children acquire a positive self-concept” (Schwartz, 1998b, p. 4). Schwartz suggests that these children need to be exposed to all parts of their ethnicity so that they can better
understand what it means to be multiracial and to develop culturally linked coping skills
to combat racism and discrimination (Wardle, 1989).

“Experience is … the starting point and key term for all social sciences inquiry”
(Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 4). My dual role as the researcher and the researched
encouraged me to reflect upon my own racial and cultural experiences. As I undertook the
present study, I employed some of my own experiences to help me map the way and
applied my intuition to the experience of interacting with my participants. I spoke from
the voice and listened with the heart of a mother, a grandmother, a wife, a daughter, and
an educator, and incorporated these perspectives into my analyses, interpretations, and
reflections. As a college professor teaching within a multicultural environment, I
continually seek to reconstruct my praxis by opening my mind and embracing the racial
and cultural diversity of all of my students.

In sum, this study explored the experience of mothers of multiracial/cultural
children in the context of the family, school, and the larger community. It is hoped that a
deeper understanding of the construction of racial and cultural identity may lead to ways
in which multiracial/cultural educational policies can be developed that truly facilitate all
forms of acceptance, tolerance, and respect. “Because there are few integrated, stable,
and tension-free racially mixed communities…that can facilitate positive identity
formation in interracial children, families and schools must work hard to provide a
supportive community that affirms multiracialism” (Schwartz, 1998b, p. 4). Hence it is
highly relevant that these mothers were willing to come forward and reveal their personal
experiences to offer their most thoughtful opinions and suggestions in an attempt to
relieve the racial and cultural quandaries of other parents and educators in today's Canadian society and schools.

Operational Definitions

Confusion in the terminology is an inevitable challenge. In the case of racially based terminology, researchers face particular difficulties as the "language of equity has become subverted" (Rees & Shelton, 2000, p. 5). In some cases it has been necessary to reconstruct certain terms used in this study in order to develop "overarching terms that incorporate the language of inclusiveness" (Rees & Shelton, 2000, p.14) in the interpretation process. For example, in the minds of some people, multiculturalism means "social divisiveness" rather than inclusion, and employment equity represents "reverse discrimination."

Operational definitions for complex terms such as race, culture, ethnicity, multiracial/cultural, racial awareness, racial sensitivity, mainstream, passing, acculturation, and assimilation have been established for the purposes of discussion, but are by no means intended to represent universal definitions. For the purposes of this study, race and culture have been defined separately. A brief operational definition of "Self" is offered in this section, and further concepts are elaborated and discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two.

Race, culture, and ethnicity have traditional meanings, but I have attempted to encompass all of them into the term multiracial/cultural.

The term race is a socially constructed term and traditionally refers to a specific heritage that classified people according to genetically transmitted physical similarities
such as skin color, shape of eyes, and hair texture, deriving from their common descent. They may or may not have shared common cultural and social traits but usually share a common ethnic community (Backhouse, 1999; Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education [CCMIE], 1999).

The term culture generally refers to a specific heritage that depicted such aspects as religion, dress, food, surnames, language, customs, rituals, traditions, forms of expression, and place of origin (Brayboy, 2000). Bruner (1996) states that “culture shapes the mind, that it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds, but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (p. x).

The term ethnicity means something similar, but specifically relates to how people are defined, differentiated, organized and entitled to group membership based on shared physical or cultural characteristics. (Backhouse, 1999; CCMIE, 1999; Phinney & Rotheram, 1986). Much of the seminal literature uses this term rather than the term multiracial or multicultural.

Currently the literature (Root, 1992a; Schwartz, 1998a) refers to racial and/or cultural definitions, with the term multiracial or multicultural. For purposes of this study, I have selected the term multiracial/cultural to encompass a wide diversity of racial and cultural differences in relation to the Canadian mainstream. I feel that this term can be accurately applied to designate people of multiple variations of race, culture, religion, creed, and language without any evaluative implications. Schwartz (1998b) asserts that even “monoracial individuals of mixed ethnicity, language and culture” (p.1) can be described as multiracial.
In this study, the focus is on the perception of the mothers’ personal racial and/or cultural multiplicity and therefore should be considered in the spirit that the participants identified either themselves or their children. For example, in this study I have included a Ukrainian participant who was born in Belgium and raised in Canada. Since her husband is Greek, she considers her son to be multicultural and offered to voice her concerns regarding her perceptions of his cultural identity.

_Racism_ is a broad term but generally refers to an act or behaviour that denies a person or group humane treatment or a fair opportunity because of a belief in the natural superiority of one racial group over another (Backhouse, 1999; Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000; Reddy, 1997). McTair (1995) sees racism as an attitude that is “thus anchored in material structures and embedded in historical relations of power” (p. 32). F. Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees (1995) maintain that this _systemic racism_ is particularly detrimental because it is unconscious and remains embedded in the structures of organizational policies. Thus these terms can be considered two distinct acts.

_Racial awareness_ refers to the ability to recognize that race exists and that it does shape reality in equitable/inequitable and just/unjust ways, as a social construction (Backhouse, 1999; Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000, p. 36). _Racial sensitivity_ is the cognitive understanding of the existence of race and racism and how they shape reality. Part of the intent of this study is to provide a focus on the levels of racial awareness and sensitivity within Canadian society. Through a deeper understanding of these issues it is hoped that more racially sensitive people will be able to translate their awareness into action to challenge attitudes, behaviours, and conditions that have created or reinforced racial
injustice (Backhouse, 1999; Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000, p. 37). Racial sensitivity in this study refers specifically to the ability of an individual to recognize racial bias. It does not mean emotional sensitivity in terms of "hurt feelings."

For purposes of this study, the word *mainstream* is an all-encompassing term and presently in Canada refers to those who identify with the Eurocentric, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (WASP) population, but are not necessarily genetically derived from such stock. The term implies the dominant, majority race and/or culture and could refer to other races or cultures in different settings (Backhouse, 1999; Graham, 2000; Lazarre, 1996; Reddy, 1997; Root, 1992a, 1992b).

*Assimilation* refers to the adaptation of an individual in physical, social, and psychological terms into the dominant social group. As the individual or group becomes absorbed into the dominant culture(s), the original identity is replaced with that of the dominant group. Berry ( ) notes that individuals will assimilate into the dominant culture if it is more important to the individual than their personal culture. This term has negative connotations and is associated with the notion of loss and/or renunciation of one's original culture (CCMIE, p. 2).

Closely related to this word is the concept of *passing* which refers to an overt or covert behaviour that implies one is a member of the so-called white, mainstream society when in reality, they are not (Backhouse, 1999; Hare, 1991; Schuyler, 1998; Wilson, 1983).

*Acculturation or accommodation* refers to the behavioural adaptation of an individual into the dominant social group and to the degree that certain values and norms.
such as attitudes, traditions, language, and religion, are learned and adopted (Pires & Stanton, 2000). In this case, Berry ( ) notes that an individual can be considered acculturated if they grant equal importance to both the dominant culture and their own.

Multiculturalism is supposed to refer to the ideology or policy or ethnic composition of a society that acknowledges and promotes the acceptance, tolerance, and celebration of all races and cultures within a nation (CCMIE, 1999, p. 6). The intent is to articulate recognition of all cultures within a society (Mahalingam & McCarthy, 2000).

In the course of growing up, children begin to initiate a sense of self as they contrast their ideals, values, and standards with that of their parents, peers, and culture of reference (Chodorow, 1978; Lazarre, 1996; Lock, 2000; Reddy, 1997). In this study the definition of the concept of a “self” is limited to the extent to which individuals describe their personal identity. The participants in this study were asked about their racial and cultural identity and how that affected their personal sense of self. Thus the use of the term identity refers to the perceptions of the participants and has not been interpreted in a strictly academic sense by the participants. The terms self and identity are used interchangeably throughout this document and refer to a self-imposed descriptive definition of self and do not imply any evaluative interpretation on the part of this researcher. The concept of self is examined more fully in the literature review in Chapter Two.

Background

To trace what you can recognize in yourself back to them; to find the connection of spirit and heart you share with them, who are, after all, your United Front (A.
Over the last several years I have developed a personal interest in the phenomenon of racial and cultural identity. I have had the unique experience of living the first half of my life as a white woman and the second half of my life as a “woman of colour.” The extent of my mother’s black ancestry was revealed to my family only through an innocent inquiry by Dr. Daniel Hill (1981) when he was researching some history of the original black settlers in Ontario. Although the discovery of our black roots did not impact our family at the time, a subsequent search for the whole story proved to become a journey of self-discovery for me. Now as I reflect, I can trace some of my ambivalence to my racial identity to the discovery of my grandparents’ choice to pass as white. My grandfather was born a black man but died a white man. His children had no knowledge of the deed—until well after his death. The present study offered me an opportunity to examine some of the deeper aspects of this revelation to both myself and other members of my family. Through the writing process, I was able to “re-create my family and my self from a new perspective” (Jago, 1996, p. 507).

The question of race, and particularly that of colour, has been pervasive throughout subsequent generations of my family. My own mother does not remember ever hearing the issue of race discussed with respect to her family, but now she suspects that this was how she was shielded from specific knowledge of her black ethnicity. Of course, after studying family photos, I have since badgered her many times, “Mom, how could you not have noticed?” However, she always shrugged it off with statements such as, “They all looked perfectly normal to me,” or “Our skin was the same colour,” or
"Most of them were old with white hair," or "No one ever mentioned it!"

On one occasion a black cousin came to Toronto for a visit with her family. It was then that my mother remembers first noticing that they looked different, for her cousin’s husband and their children were obviously black. When another white cousin voiced his observations, he was shushed with a simple explanation, "They went out in the sun a lot!" Was this not a blatant form of denial or was it just simply racial etiquette? As Imber-Black (1999) has suggested, perhaps my mother sensed a secret, but without adequate confirmation doubted her own perceptions. With this in mind, I have to wonder if, in fact, my mother “organized her entire life in response to all that had gone underground in her family” (Imber-Black. p. 6).

It was from this point of knowledge that I first began to delve into my family history, researching my black ancestors. As they began to mail me their family photographs, I was intrigued to observe great variations in their appearances and that indeed, some of the cousins were very black, some rather dark, and others quite fair. Surprisingly, their skin colour did not necessarily appear to reflect their choice of racial identity. In one case, I received a photo from a black cousin who so strongly resembled my white uncle, that they could pass as brothers. Each considered himself a typical representative of their chosen race, although I suspect they have both since given this some further consideration. Subsequent discussion revealed that their choice of race did not depend so much on the colour of their skin, but rather on the culture with which they identified. My black cousin wrote,

Although for the past few decades I’ve cast my identity with the Afro-American
community, there was an ambivalence I had during my young adulthood. My birth certificate identifies my parents as black. My physical appearance is otherwise. I now realize my ties to family would not allow me to break away to a totally white identity. Additionally, I could not live comfortably trying to keep one foot in a white camp and another in a black camp. Events of the sixties, Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement actually made it more exciting to be black than white [Blauner, 1990; Talbot, 1984]. The choice becomes more difficult for my children. Their mother is white, so they do feel they have a foot in both camps. Now in their late twenties, they are going through a search for identity.

Unfortunately our society has not progressed beyond that mind-set where one does not have to choose a racial identity. (A. Sayre, personal communication, January 23, 1993)

Although I have lived my entire life as white, I would be hard pressed to claim to be quite so “pure” today. After all these years, even though I am aware of the circumstances my grandparents faced, I harbour some ambivalent feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, inadequacy, and unworthiness. Avery Gordon (1997), a sociologist, proposes the concept of a “haunting” as a “recognition that a profound social phenomenon is persistently addressing itself to you, distracting and disturbing your daily life, often messing it up and leaving in its wake an uneasy feeling” (p. 63). I am proud of my grandparents, and I assume that they chose to pass as white for the sake of their children and other loved ones. Daniel (1992b) proposes that superficially, the act of passing may be seen as “a form of individual strategy resistance and may be interpreted as
a form of opportunism, selling out, or a full acceptance of the racial status quo” (p. 92).

But I prefer to interpret the act of passing as “an underground tactic... a form of racial alchemy that seeks to beat oppression at its own game by subverting both the comportment line between dominant and subordinate and the arbitrary line between White and Black” (Daniel, 1992b, p. 92).

Vague references found in fictional literature validate such attitudes and indicate that those who participated in the act of passing did so surreptitiously with deliberate secrecy, often denying contact to extended family members in the process (Griffin, 1960; Johnson, 1995; Larson, 1998; T. Morrison, 1970; Schreier, 1994; Talbot, 1984). Reading these stories, I am led to believe that my grandparents were forced to live out similar experiences.

Through dialogues with my participants, we reviewed some of the experiences of their ancestors and reflected on the repercussions that presently affected their own lives and those of their children. According to Imber-Black (1999), many family narratives comprise “stories of migration, war, sexism, and racism; tangled webs of relationships with institutions – work, schools, hospitals, churches, and synagogues; and an embeddedness in a wider culture that shaped their beliefs about secrecy and openness” (p. xiv). Through the use of personal narratives, this study aimed to explore how the process of miscegenation has reverberated throughout subsequent generations of descendants, including my own, as our predecessors buffeted some of the early policies of Canadian multiculturalism.

The process of racial/cultural self-exploration is an important step in developing
an effective racial sensitivity. Laszloffy and Hardy (2000) contend that the deep sense of anxiety that some white people feel may be due to their fear of being perceived as racist. Certainly this was a fear of mine as I strove to discover more about myself. Mehta and Favreau (2000) propose that such fears are normal and should be expected “if people are to transform their beliefs and practices to truly become anti-racist” (p. 6).

Today, the word “passing” continues to evoke some of those same curious feelings I felt when I first heard about it. Imber-Black, notes that “skin color may underpin painful family secrets, including scapegoating family members whose skin color is most different from the rest; ‘passing for white,’ living a double life, or cutting oneself off totally from one’s family” (p. 61). Banking on Jago’s (1996) assurance that “revised stories...reflect new found beliefs in personal agency and control.” (p. 507) I was eager to share my experiences and exchange my thoughts with others who were also seeking some reconciliation with their racial and cultural heritage. Once the myth was identified, the process of deconstruction could begin as new stories emerged out of old ones.

Description of the Phenomenon

Helped are those who are enemies of their own racism: they shall live in harmony with the citizens of this world, and not with those of the world of their ancestors, which has passed away, and which they shall never see again (A. Walker. 1990, p. 287).

Before we as a society can liberate ourselves from the grip of racism, we have to acknowledge that it exists, and that it is not something which has been blown out of proportion; neither is it the figment of some people’s imagination (Adrienne

The fact that racism is an integral part of Canadian life is repeatedly verified by the media, according to F. Henry and Tator (2000) whose findings demonstrate that "media practitioners regularly socially reconstruct reality based on professional and personal ideologies, corporate interests, organizational norms, values, priorities and news schema formats" (p. 1). Further studies have validated these observations (Foster, 1996; Jones, 2000; F. Henry & Tator, 2000; K.S. Henry, 1981; Kilbride, 2000; Rees & Shelton, 2000). Historically,

the presence of racism in Ontario is acknowledged in the series of anti-discrimination laws passed beginning with the Racial Discrimination Act of 1944 and culminating in the establishment, by 1961, of a Human Rights Commission with investigative and adjudicative powers. (Henry, 1981)

In many cases, Canadians are not sensitive to the fact that racism exists in Canada today. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation suggests that one of the reasons for this denial is that few Canadians are aware of any specific racist events in the history of their nation, but the Canadian Race Relations Foundation denotes that what we fail to recognize are the daily examples of racism that made these events possible...and the tendency to assume both that these problems are in the past and that they do not occur in Canada. (2000, p.1) Discrimination takes a somewhat different form for multiracial individuals for it can be deceptively benign, and often racist acts are committed unintentionally and unconsciously (Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000). Sometimes this occurs when the physical
appearance of multiracial individuals does not reflect their cultural practices and beliefs from a mainstream perspective (Golden, 2000). In other words, multiracial individuals may look to be of one race but behave according to the cultural rules, expectations, and assumptions of another. Nakashima (1992) notes that many multiracial people feel defined by others and “have internalized many of the images of themselves as torn and confused and as fitting in nowhere” (p. 174). They feel that “their existence is denied (Nakashima, p. 174). Consequently these individuals may feel pressure to simply slip into the mainstream of the majority population and abandon or deny their familial ethnicity (Imber-Black, 1999; Schreier, 1994).

As the minority population of Toronto approaches 52%, these concerns become crucial to the development of a racial and cultural identity in many of our multiracial/cultural children (Rees & Shelton, 2000). Over the last few decades some multiracial/cultural families have increasingly voiced their need for recognition in an effort to portray their concerns as special and separate from other racial and ethnic minorities (Wardle, 1989). On February 6, 2001, The Toronto Star reported that $115.7 million was spent by Canadian Heritage on programs intended to promote the concept of a Canadian identity (p. A19). Surely this would be an opportune time to instill recognition of the complexity of multiracial/cultural issues that contribute to our national identity.

Physical traits and appearances do matter to children, even if they do not show signs of acknowledgement (Lazarre, 1996; Reddy, 1997; Root, 1996). Studies indicate that physical attractiveness and acceptance by peers become very high priorities during
adolescence (Purkey, 2000; Root, 1996). As a mother shuddering at the thought of my fourteen-year-old daughter leaving for school with her fake lip ring secretly wedged in her hip pocket, I am reminded of those days when I too wanted to “fit in” with everyone else. In terms of race and culture, I now look back at class pictures of myself and remember that acute awareness I had that I was so much darker than my classmates. Yet at the time I had no ready explanation and coped by trying to enjoy my outstanding ability to tan well, despite the fact that the golden tans of the Seventeen magazine models were distinctly different than mine. Only when my mother suggested that I had a Spanish great-grandmother, did I finally feel somewhat redeemed, for at least I could claim some “exotic” reason for the difference in my physical appearance from my “white” family.

Sometimes being black and looking white can present a different enigma (Daniel, 1992b). One of my American black cousins, a light-skinned woman, described a longstanding desire to justify her right to belong within her own black family. Not until she became acquainted with other multiracial cousins was she then able to reconcile her physical appearance with her heritage and return home “with a sense of pride and wholeness” (K. Curry, Personal communication, May 5, 1990).

A blonde and fair-skinned cousin was profoundly affected when she recently learned about her black ancestry.

This new knowledge has definitely changed my feelings of identity. I don’t know how to explain it other than to say I never really thought I fit. I was kind of a round peg trying to fit into a square hole. I have always felt there was something missing. (B. Grosnick, Personal communication, April 3, 1990)
how to explain it other than to say I never really thought I fit. I was kind of a round peg trying to fit into a square hole. I have always felt there was something missing. (B. Grosnick, Personal communication, April 3, 1990)

Listening to the stories of others has since propelled me into the present investigation and rendered new perspectives for me. Without a specific cultural backdrop, children of mixed race, like my cousins and me, might well be left without a landscape for personal orientation. Further dialogue with parents and educators who have already established their own personal, social salience could offer new insight for those who impact the lives of multiracial/cultural children (Lock, 2000).

Sociopolitical and Pedagogical Significance

A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find an identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, cease taking it for granted (Bruner, 1996, p.42).

In 1982, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the former Canadian Prime Minister, confirmed that the Canadian Charter of Rights, "for the first time gives all of us an identity rooted in the Constitution that no government can destroy" (2000, A belief in, people, p. J1). Prior to this, Trudeau had endorsed the "multicultural hypothesis" and stated his belief that pride in one's own identity made one more rather than less tolerant of others. This made Canada one of the few countries, (and one of the earliest), to endorse an explicitly culturally pluralist ideology (Towson, Personal communication, June 18, 2001). In
Canada, issues of assimilation, acculturation, and ultimately multiculturalism are integral parts of Canadian nationalism and our national identity. The national agenda promotes recognition of all ethnicities, but it has not officially recognized those of multiracial/cultural identities. Recently journalist Yvonne Blackwood reported in The Toronto Star that a Canadian Alliance candidate delivered a particularly stinging, misinformed, and racist diatribe against Asian immigrants, to a gathering of political science students at the University of Winnipeg. Blackwood asserted that we all have likes and dislikes, prejudices and biases, but politicians have responsibilities to live up to the national agenda. This misuse of privilege and authority resulted in this candidate’s resignation as a political representative of the Canadian people (2000b, p. A39).

This study explored the level of satisfaction mothers had regarding the ability of their children’s teachers to address multicultural education issues appropriately and whether multiracial/cultural identities were acknowledged. “It is even more essential for educators and counselors to know how best to serve the special developmental and educational needs of their multiracial students, and to devise the most appropriate means to support their families’ efforts to nurture them” (Schwartz, 1998a, p.2).

Racial awareness and sensitivity in educators must be heightened and maintained so that they might “understand the impact of differences among ethnic groups in their socialization practices, values and norms, and attitudes toward their own and other groups” (Phinney & Rotheram, 1986, p. 7). This message is particularly aimed at members and teachers representative of the dominant or majority culture who so far have been insulated by their numbers and may not have previously given careful consideration
to what it means to be a minority or to be different (Lesko & Bloom, 2000). Toronto School Board statistics indicate that today only 53% of the Toronto District School Board secondary students and 41% of elementary students have English as their first language and that up to 80 different languages are now represented within the schools. Presently more than 24% of elementary students were born outside of Canada in 175 countries (www.tdsb.on.ca). These statistics indicate that significant changes have occurred in the Toronto demographics and that teachers need to prepare for an increasingly multicultural student population and must develop strategies to recognize and embrace all combinations of race and culture in an equitable manner.

Acts of racism occur covertly and unintentionally, even unconsciously; but with increased awareness and sensitivity, parents and teachers can begin to assist children of multiracial/cultural families to deal with the impact of this phenomenon. They will need to acknowledge, validate, and affirm the feelings of all children who are confronted with these challenges every day (Laszloffy & Hardy, 2000).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

_We are all parts of each other and in a way we are all one._ (B. Grosnick, Personal communication, April 5, 1993)

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore how Canadian mothers embrace multiracial/cultural diversity as they face the unique challenge of incorporating strategies of racial and cultural blending into their mothering practices. As both a participant and a researcher, I examined my personal racial and cultural identity in an effort to understand how aspects of racism and multiculturalism impacted several
generations of my own multiracial family. I wanted to give voice and independently offer new insight through my research and develop an inquiry that would "capture the participants' experience and represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text which will speak to, and reflect upon, the audience's voices" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, p. 20).

Together my participants and I experienced the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986, 1990, 1995). Through dialogue, mothers voiced their personal or, to use Conle's (2000) word, "sacred" stories that had deep personal meaning. As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) suggest, "voice is an acknowledgement that they have something to say" (p. 19). The mothers were asked to describe themselves and some of their multiracial/cultural experiences with respect to their mothering practices.

The study also aimed to identify other factors that mothers believed contributed significantly to their children's multiracial/cultural identity and to what extent they thought their children fit into the Canadian multicultural society in the context of family, school, and the community at large.

In a sense, this study drew on the contours of social science portraiture, a genre of inquiry and representation that seeks to join science and art...that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. xv)

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot, as the "artist," I, as researcher, had to be
perceptive to the words of my participants, listening, feeling, and watching as the stories unfolded. Just as a portrait may not perfectly mirror the appearance of a participant, it may yet incorporate an overall image of that individual’s identity. I did not expect the stories that were told to be accurate in a factual sense, but I did hope they would reflect the essence and meaning of the experience that the participant was trying to relay. I tried to be alert to more than the words and capture the message, sometimes even through the unspoken word. Clair (1998) writes extensively about the phenomenon of silence and its capacity to suppress, express, dominate, and empower individuals if only we “listen to the silence and let the voices speak” (p. 200).

This study is unique in that it explored the relationships between mothers of one racial/cultural blend and their children who were of a different racial/cultural blend. The narrative process also allowed insight into the experiences of adult children, as the participants also talked about their own mothers.

The study examined the ways in which multiracial/cultural families cultivate, maintain, and/or alter their own and their children’s racial/cultural identity in both the past and the present. As a mother, I have often concerned myself with the ways in which I encourage my children to construct and assume their racial and cultural identities. I believe that many of my own attitudes and decisions have been significantly affected by perceptions of my race, my early life, and past and present-day family experiences. I suspect that, in turn, I, as a mother, have significantly influenced the development of my own children’s racial and cultural attitudes (Chodorow, 1978; Daggett, O’Brien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000; Reddy, 1997). Schwartz (1998a) asserts that “the role of heritage in a
child's development is affected by history, as well as by social context and immediate environment” (p. 3).

Some studies have indicated that living in a multicultural environment produces “intrapsychic or interpersonal stress” (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1997, p. 63). Yet, other studies have indicated that many multiracial children grow up with a strong sense of identity with more than one heritage and do not appear to struggle with the conflict of their multiracial/cultural identity (Golden, 2000, Young, 1990). By listening to these mothers’ stories, I was able to explore how their children responded to the various factors that influence the construction of their racial and cultural identities.

The process and findings of this study will benefit me both as a researcher and a participant. I also hope that the enlightening experience of sharing these experiences will prove beneficial to the participants in the evolution of their cultural selves.

"Understanding the process by which individuals develop racial and ethnic identities is therefore an important part of understanding the total person” (Miller, 1992, p. 25).

Ultimately it was hoped that this study would elicit further inquiry into how mothers and educators can both teach children to embrace racial and cultural diversity within Canada's cultural mosaic and learn from them as well.

Limitations of the Study

A number of boundaries affected the data collection, findings, and impact of the present study. Since the research approach used in this study was somewhat subjective, I was forewarned to observe the physical cues and body language of the participants while listening to the words in order to accurately interpret their underlying meaning (Minister,
Although the participants may have responded to our prior relationship or lack of relationship, I tried to remain alert to such factors and to consider them when I interpreted the data.

To limit the amount of data, the sample size was kept to a minimum. Therefore the results of this study represent the experiences of these participants, which falls in line with the intent of a qualitative study. Participants offered stories of their unique experiences that gave rise to a personal knowledge that was meaningful to them. I selected the participants from my own acquaintances based on their racial and cultural mixtures, and they responded eagerly and readily came forward to share their thoughts with me.

As a researcher I was aware that I stepped into the research experience with my own personal bias or "conceptual baggage" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989), and in this case, my conception of the white mainstream as my "norm." I acknowledged that this "norm" was a socially constructed concept and I attempted use this awareness constructively, allowing it to inform me as I interacted with my participants. Razack (1999) noted that this concept of a social norm arises when we attempt to "interpret the words and acts of others, and that we do so subconsciously but always in conformity with the way in which our culture has taught us is the 'proper' way" (p. 8).

As a mother myself, I felt that I could relate to many of their experiences with respect to raising multiracial/cultural children. As a daughter of a multiracial mother, I also thought I could identify with some of the discourse. As a woman who adjusted her racial/cultural identity in midlife, I believed I could relate to some alternative perspectives
of race and culture. And finally, as a product of a multiracial family, I thought that I could offer a new perspective to the investigation and the interpretation of these stories. By noting my personal ambiguity I attempted to acknowledge the existence of any bias that might have affected the way in which the study was conducted and the findings were interpreted.

This study examined the thoughts and perspectives of mothers. The data do not attempt to replicate universal reality, but do reflect the perceptions of these mothers. Bruner (1990) pointed out the discrepancy between what people say they do, what they perceive they do, and what they actually do, as well as what people say others do. perceive what others do, and interpret what others do. The interviews and personal stories of participants may be subject to other forms of bias as they are based on selective memories, one-sided interpretations, and perhaps, in some cases, misinformation. The silences, or what the participants did not say or what they were not told, are also important aspects that could be examined further in future studies.

The study examined what mothers said they did and what they said their parents did. To some extent the integration of the personal concepts of race and culture may have influenced the data collection, as participants may have harboured differing interpretations of the terminology used in the study. However, these multiple layers may have served to enhance the authenticity of the themes that are present in everyday discourse.

This particular study focused on the experiences and cultural location of the mothers rather than the fathers or the children and therefore could be considered feminist
in nature as it aimed to portray an accurate representation of mothers’ experiences and perceptions (Alcoff, 1994). Although Adrienne Rich (1995) described the traditional role of motherhood as one defined by a patriarchal institution, she allowed that mothers can still be feminists. The feminist stance on motherhood will be more fully examined within other literature in Chapter Two.

The role that fathers play in the development of racial and cultural identities cannot be underestimated and demands further intensive study in its own right. Numerous studies indicate that the father’s role is unique and extensive (Castle, 2000; Epp & Cook, 2000a, 2000b). However, to remain within the scope of this study, the role of the father, the husband and the mother of the participants will be referenced only in relation to the stories that are shared at this time (Bassoff, 1992, Introduction). This study addressed only the experiences of mothers and their perceptions about race, culture, and identity.

The criteria for the study sample were simply that the mothers and/or their children had to have parents of diverse races and/or cultures. Other variables, although noted, were not measured in this study were the degree of race or ethnicity, religion, marital status, gender, age and number of children, birth order, age of mother, socioeconomic status, or sexual preference.

The perception of multiple races and cultures and the process by which they were actively embraced by multiracial/cultural families were considered to be more important than the actual races and cultures of the participants. Thus the sample was intended to represent the complex nature of multiracial/cultural combinations as individuals are
acculturated and assimilated into Canadian society.

The participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method and were personally selected by the researcher to take part in the study. The time frame available for the completion of the study was limited and thus affected the extent of the recruitment process.

Participants were not selected to be representative of all social economic classes, as the small sample did not allow for significant variation. However, it can be noted that social class changes according to factors such as age, marital status, education, and profession of the participants. Most of the participants indicated that their socioeconomic status has varied over their lifetimes. That being said, I would generally categorize the majority of these participants as middle class at the time of the study.

Marital status was not chosen as a specific criterion in this study. As a result, 1 participant was divorced, 1 was widowed and 7 were married and still in their first marriage. The gender, birth order, and age differences of the children were also noted as uncontrolled variables in this study.

I was the only researcher who interviewed the participants and interpreted the data. During the interview process I made every effort to bracket or hold back my preconceptions and set aside my “taken-for-granted orientation” toward the study so that the “experience of the phenomenon” could become a part of my consciousness (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 316).

Outline of Subsequent Chapters

Chapter One presented the research rationale and personal background for the
present study. The operational definitions clarified terms used throughout the study and served to minimize potential confusion to the reader.

The subsequent chapters serve to develop the premises put forward in Chapter One. Chapter Two presents an overview of the sociocultural research literature that pertains to multiracial/cultural identities in mothers and their children. Chapter Three describes the methodology and procedures employed in the study. Chapter Four presents the interview data, interpretations, and my personal reflections. Chapter Five addresses the implications of these findings with respect to families, schools and communities. In conclusion, I offer my personal reflections on my own transformation as a result of this study.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter outlines academic literature that is relevant to how mothers play a role in the construction of their children's multiracial/cultural identity. Theories of Self will be traced briefly to demonstrate the changes that have occurred in the current schools of thought. The importance of physical characteristics that traditionally depict racial and cultural stereotypes will offer a format for discussions as the literature pertaining to mothers and their roles is examined in the following review.

Multiracial/cultural Images

_The irony of the logic of identity is that by seeking to reduce the differently similar to the same, it turns the merely different into the absolutely other._ (Young, 1990, p. 99)

From a historical perspective, physical characteristics have been the critical factor in identifying members of a race, and many legal definitions in the United States have been based on unreasonable and irrational criteria. In the recent past, the One Drop Rule declared that one drop of black blood identified one as irrevocably black (Miller, 1992; Reddy, 1997) and the American federal government used the Blood Quantum category to determine whether a Native American qualified for certain benefits (Reddy, 1997; Wilson, 1992). It should be noted that neither view is based on physical characteristics but rather economic and political power considerations. Indeed they provide two contradictory definitions of race (Towson, Personal communication, June 18, 2001). Although Canada did not officially define race in this way, most people were well aware
of the American code, and its influence permeated Canadian social constructs (Backhouse, 1999; Valverde, 1992).

In Canada, the censuses directed persons of multiracial/cultural origins to choose a single category that most closely reflected the way they were recognized by their community, until 1996 when new categories were instituted. Previously multiracial/cultural people were classified according to the way they looked (Daniel, 1992a; Wilson, 1992). In some parts of the United States, miscegenation, or the mixing of races, remained an illegal offence until 1967 when the U.S. Supreme Court finally repealed such laws (Backhouse, 1999; Winks, 2000). Although Canada experienced similar incidents, the courts did not support them and consequently Canadians developed a different approach to racism than Americans (Backhouse, 1999; Hill, 1981; Razack, 1991).

Over the last several decades, research has explored the relation between body image and racial/cultural identity (Carlson, Uppal, & Prosser, 2000). Physical characteristics influence the cultural/racial self, especially in multiracial/cultural children. For example multiracial/cultural children may measure their self-worth in comparison to a white model (Bradshaw, 1992; Golden, 2000; Kilbride, 2000; Mahtani, 2000; Reddy, 1997). “These are the variables that white researchers often do not consider when they measure the self-esteem...with a yardstick that was designed based on values emerging from white experience” (hooks, 1996, p. xiii).

Today, some parents are making an effort to resist the traditional stereotyping, but it is not easy. “Look at TV and magazines and the standard of beauty they portray....It’s
basically white. The majority of models are Anglo” (Gardner, 1998, p. 2). Gardner highlights a sensitive point. “This whole issue of light versus dark skin still confronts blacks – that light skin is better, or that dark skin is more authentic than light skin. This is very damaging to our children’s development, so we really have to confront it” (p. 2).

Recently Sharlene Azam (2001) pointed out in the Toronto Star the “desire for an extremely fair complexion has created a $250 million industry in lightening products” (p. D2).

Several authors (Foster, 1996; Mannette, 2000; Razack, 1999) have explained how their concept of the white or mainstream norm affected them. Fales-Hill (2000), a daughter of a black father and white mother, described her surprise when she entered the halls of Harvard and felt judged by the colour of her skin rather than her character. “I didn’t know I was supposed to sit at the Freshman Black Table to prove what I already knew: that I was not and never would be white” (p. 84).

Carol Talbot (1984) offered a frank rendition of her personal experiences as a young black woman and explained how sociopolitical events changed her attitudes and behaviour. As a young girl she wanted to fit into the mainstream, but as civil rights outbursts in the ‘60s culminated in an atmosphere of Black Power, she changed her attitude. “My Afro was a public statement of my identity and the knowledge and courage it took to make that statement were the first small steps toward evolving towards a really ‘black’ me” (p. 51).

Toni Morrison, in her novel, The Bluest Eve (1970), portrayed a black, 11 year old Pecola who prayed for her eyes to be turned blue so that she would be loved and
cherished as much as the blonde, blue-eyed children that she had observed. Azam (2000) reported in The Toronto Star that young, Asian girls and boys are beyond imagining such miraculous changes and are presently opting for cosmetic surgery to make their eyes look rounder and, therefore, more Western.

In all of these cases, the individuals were expressing reactions to the way the mainstream of society denoted their variation from the white norm. They felt that physical differences created barriers for them even if they exhibited only subtle variations in their features, such as Fales-Hill (2000) who was multiracial. In each situation, attention was focused on characteristics that denoted racial, not cultural, variations.

The prospect of racial integration has presented a conundrum to many racial and cultural minorities. Blauner's (1990) longitudinal study investigated both male and female, light-skinned blacks who recognized that in order to enjoy their fair share of society's benefits they had to become part of the mainstream, which according to Blauner, was “the only game in town” (p.16). But for those of a darker hue, like Talbot, Black Power offered a tantalizing means of retaliation “in terms of the assimilation bargain” (Blauner, 1990, p.16) and ironically, it became hard to be white during the militant years of the 1960's (Sayre,1990; Blauner, 1990). Steinhorn and Diggs-Brown’s study (1999) offered a striking insight into the lives of a white man and a black woman working in the same profession in the same office. Repeatedly, they found themselves forced into separate worlds outside of work, due to the colour of their skin, despite their active efforts to do otherwise.

But multiracial/cultural children face a different situation. Often they do not
display the physical characteristics that would indicate their personal perception of their racial/cultural identity. Confronted with the question, “What are you?” multiracial/cultural children become exasperated (Bradshaw, 1992).

Of course saying “biracial” isn’t good enough for most people. They want to know the whole bizarre set of circumstances that resulted in me. I feel that it is an invasion of my privacy, but I still don’t know how to respond without sounding unpleasant or making it a big deal. (Fisher, 1998, citing Suzanne)

Children can be very astute, even if they do not vocalize their observations. As Kilbride (2000) pointed out recently, “It’s not that kids don’t see differences in skin colour...they also see differences in hair and eyes” (p. A20).

In contrast to the sparse research material on multiracial assimilation, many novels published in the early 20th century acknowledged the situation through characters who finagled a way to successfully pretend to be white. For example, Nella Larson (1998) wrote two such volumes, Quicksand in 1928 and Passing in 1929. Both epitomized the tragic fate of the beautiful mulatto heroine who was forced to decide whether to pass as white and live a life plagued by guilt and fear of discovery or to return home to the more fitting fold of her black heritage. This has been a stereotype that multiracial women have had to live down for decades (Brown, 2000; Mahtani, 2000). If they were not portrayed as the tragic heroine, they were depicted as exotic and mysterious. Other novels depicted black-looking, multiracial, male characters as rather crafty at turning the circumstances in their favour, passing as white when it seemed most advantageous, but never relinquishing their true black identity (Schuyler, 1998; Wilson, 1983). Although both images present
somewhat embellished and dramatized characters, they may well actually represent a true-to-life impression of multiracial people at the time of the writings.

In brief, it would appear that the literature has not adequately represented the extent of this problem within the Canadian Diaspora. Although it can be readily acknowledged that "fitting in" and being included into a cultural group is extremely important to individuals, the reality that variation in physical characteristics has played such a powerful defining role has been consistently and publicly overlooked in recent years.

Mothering the Multiracial/cultural Child

In this section the literature is explored to reveal "the mother's experience of her child and the child's experience of its mother" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 77) within a multiracial/cultural context. Since the present study is concerned with mothers, a predominantly feminist stance may be detected in the following review.

Mothers of multiracial/cultural children face a troubling conundrum. Although they may want their children to benefit from the opportunities available in mainstream society, they must take into consideration the overt and covert systems of oppression that their children will confront. In some instances, they may recognize that if they teach their children to challenge and resist these types of oppression, their children may not survive the battle and may suffer further oppression, including physical deprivation and abuse (Collins, 1990; Foster, 1996; Lazarre, 1996; Reddy, 1997). Collins (1990) found that Black mothers felt they had a dual role as they sought to teach their children more than one way to live their lives. Multiracial/cultural children may face similar struggles as
they attempt to etch a special place for themselves in the mainstream of life (Lazare, 1996; Reddy, 1997).

Mothers of multiracial/cultural children are often particularly concerned about how others view their children. For example, Lazarre (1996) and Reddy (1997), both white mothers of multiracial children, believed their children would be identified black based on their appearance, and their sense of protection compelled them to socialize their children as members of that race and to teach them appropriate coping skills. Maureen Reddy (1997) has personally lived with such fears. As a white mother of a black son, she faces questions of race every day. She provides the following scenario to consider.

Your nine-year-old son likes to play hide-and-seek ... One afternoon, you look out the kitchen window and see him crouching behind a neighbour’s hedge, with his dark jacket pulled up over the back of his head for camouflage. Suddenly realizing your child is now tall enough to be mistaken for a teenager, you call him into the house, away from the game...you know that he is at risk of being shot by someone who sees not a child playing, but the urban predator of television-fueled nightmares, ready to spring from the bushes. You know that you have waited too long to warn him about this danger... He has to be told to keep his hands out of his pockets when he is in stores... He also must learn how to talk to the police who will surely stop him. (p. ix)

Journalist Fales-Hill (2000) recalls,

My father was also far from naive about the challenges my brother and I would face. He didn’t treat us like white children with a tan. Our parents explained that
though we had a claim to both our heritages, America would classify us as black.

And that was just fine, because whether or not Americans realized it, black was
deeriful, varied, rich, and noble. (p. 84)

Lazarre, Reddy, and Fales-Hill voiced the concerns of mothers around the world
as they universally endeavoured to plant the seeds of wisdom, self-confidence, and
strength of character in their children in hopes of inoculating them against any negative
forces that might afflict their happiness and well-being. However, all of these women are
American. Does this make a difference? Do Canadian mothers of multiracial/cultural
children suffer the same agonies? The present study addresses these questions in Chapter
Three.

The female perspective on the question of raising children and influencing their
thoughts and attitudes at various stages of their lives is frequently acknowledged in
mother narratives (Abbey & O'Reilly, 1998; Harvey, Reid, Moffat, & McDonald, 2000).
The significance and variance of mother-daughter bonding has been specifically related to
differences in race, ethnicity, age, religion, and nationality. However it is acknowledged
that since mothers raise both daughters and sons largely within a male-oriented
environment, gender roles become significant factors. When multiple races and cultures
are stirred into the pot, the brew becomes a superb potpourri.

Although the present study focused on the perspectives of mothers, other studies
exploring the nature of the bond between fathers and their children are numerous, and
would clearly influence and counterinfluence the effect of the mother on the children's
racial/cultural identity (Harvey et al., 2000; Epp & Cook, 2000b).
Historically, women have been defined in terms of their relationship to others, that of wife, daughter, mother, teacher, while men are more often thought of in terms of “self.” Caplan’s (2000) study revealed that daughters of today’s generation find it easier to question the traditional roles their own mothers were expected to fulfil. Certainly young women of today enjoy a very different climate of equity, opportunity, and accessibility than women of previous generations, but has it changed enough? Susan Hammer’s (1975) findings indicated that today’s mothers tend to encourage their children to explore new and different alternatives to the traditional stereotypes. However, her study also noted that some mothers still continue to endure the ritual of self-denial, unwittingly perpetuating a martyred image of motherhood to their children.

Chodorow (1978) claimed that many mothers confronted unrealistic expectations set by both themselves and others on a daily basis, as they attempted to live up to their images of super mom, devoted wife, doting daughter and competent career woman, all with a flair for glamour, ease, and succinct bliss. More than 20 years ago, Nancy Chodorow (1978) observed that

Women today are expected to be full-time mothers and to work in the paid labor force, are considered unmotherly if they demand day-care centers, greedy and unreasonable if they expect help from husbands, and lazy if they are single mothers who want to receive adequate welfare payments in order to be able to stay home for their children. (p. 213)

It would seem that today’s mothers continue to face similar situations. In 1995, Adrienne Rich declared that women were still caught up in the patriarchal definition of
womanhood and if they dared to enter the professional work force would face the cutthroat, relentless, too competitive world of men and might discover that “there was more autonomy, more real freedom in full-time motherhood” (p. xiv). In 1998, Christiane Northrup, author of the popular book, Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom, and a mother and physician, repeated the scenario.

As a good daughter of patriarchy, I worshipped at the altar of efficiency and productivity…my life became unglued when I was a doctor and a mother living in a society that suggests that a woman has to choose between these two roles if she wants to do at least one of them well. Nothing had prepared me for this. Superwoman was dying.” (pp. xxvii-xxviii)

There are many factors to consider when constructing a racial/cultural identity. Jones (2000) described a comparative study of black and white women conducted by Harris in 1998 at the University of Rhode Island, which demonstrated that the cultural background of the individual contributed to the self in different ways. Harris concluded that “what is considered ideal within one racial or ethnic group can be quite different from the ideal of another group” (p. E6). Thus one might find that they can assimilate well into one group or community but not so readily into another. Perhaps this may be why ethnic communities arise as immigration increases.

Grumet (1988) noted a gender difference in mothers’ relationships to sons and daughters. Her study suggested that daughters developed a certain attachment and identification with their mothers, whereas sons developed a sense of separateness or otherness. In this study the participants’ stories of their own mothers reveal how their
identities were related to each other as daughters. Although the present study does not specifically focus on racial/cultural gender variations, these factors are acknowledged as significant in the co-construction of self in children.

The role that mothers play in the development of their daughters' sense of self is considered to be complex and essential. Carlson (1990) wrote specifically about the mother-daughter relationship, which she felt to be the source of self for mothers, the birthplace of a woman's ego identity, her sense of security in the world, her feelings about herself, her body, and other women. From her mother, a woman receives her first impression of how to be a woman and what being a woman means. (p. xi)

One might presume that if mothers modeled a positive role for their daughters they could nurture their daughters' self by affirming and celebrating themselves and their daughters as women, allowing them to "claim power and gain self-worth in and through their female identity" (p. 3).

The literature shows that although mothers are particularly resistant to altering their role and their image of themselves, the environment around them is beginning to shift. As these authors suggest, many women valiantly attempt to live the super mom scenario, but since equity and opportunity are becoming more prominent in girls' lives, new alternative roles seem possible for the women of tomorrow.

Bassoff (1992) noted that one of the most important roles of the mother was to "resonate" with their child's feelings during the early stages of development. In my opinion, many caring mothers try to do this. "A mother must recognize happiness, fear,
confusion, frustration — the whole range of human emotion — to understand and respond to her child with empathy and genuine love. Every child needs to be mirrored — to have her inner experiences acknowledged” (pp. 4-5). If mirroring experiences and feelings back to one’s child is so important, then mothers of multiracial/cultural children must overcome some of the barriers imposed by their physical differences. Bassoff explained that the failure of a mother to adequately mirror her child could result in a sense of difference and separation on the part of the child and the mother.

In the case of daughters, Bassoff (1990) also explained that they observed their mothers “with passionate, sustained interest, and what they see profoundly affects who these daughters become” (p. 20). Furthermore, she observed that it was the fortunate ones who encountered a nonjudgmental mother who could reflect her daughters’ assertions as separate entities and who granted them permission to embody their own thoughts, feelings, and ambitions. Such traits, I suggest, would be particularly desirable in the case of multiracial/cultural children who might not readily identify with either of their parents but still have a sense of confidence and pride as individuals.

As children venture out of the folds of the family they encounter other influential factors. Aschenbrenner (1976) warned that when children first go out into the public arena, they are exposed to “an alien system of values,” (p. 344) and often feel out of place. Feelings of rejection suffered in the public forum may then be redirected against the family at home, thus weakening their racial/cultural bonds. She suggested that such multiracial/cultural children might be predisposed to simply pass into the dominant society and limit their participation in their family or culture. Certainly this would
present an easy solution to the child who wants to simulate their peers, but surely it would set in motion feelings of conflict and resentment that would affect the individual well into adulthood.

Okun (1996) also noted the same phenomenon in adolescents who chose to reconstruct their racial identity despite the conflict that might result between family and friends. Schwartz (1998a) suggests that "frequently, they choose a single minority racial identification publicly, believing it is politically correct to do so, while privately still cherishing their multicultural heritage" (p. 5).

Jean Golden (2000), herself a white mother of a multiracial child, studied the different attitudes of parents who raised children from different generations. Parents of children raised in the 1970s and 1980s appeared to retain a very binary view of race. Younger parents who raised their children over the last decade observed changes in the racial composition of their communities and realigned their lessons with the new multicultural programs. These findings indicated that many multiracial/cultural children today have much more opportunity to interact with other multiracial/cultural families. In the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) the recent increase in the minority population has made this a reality for school children today.

Studies further indicate that the racial experiences of multiracial/cultural adults who grew up in all-white, mainstream neighbourhoods and attended almost all-white schools contrasted sharply with those of today's multiracial/cultural children who live in diversified communities and attend racially integrated schools and day care institutions (Golden, 2000; Mannette, 2000). Although Golden's research shows that both parents
assumed responsibility to expose their children to their multiple heritages, white mothers in particular, tended to be the culture bearers (Golden. 2000; Kilbride. 2000; McBride. 1996). Golden found that these mothers made an extra effort to expose their multiracial/cultural children to all of their ethnic heritages through such aids as food, clothing, religion, music, traditions, and language.

In conclusion, the present study looks at several generations of mothers and therefore follows the premise that the mothers of the participants were raised in an era where the mother image was different than their own in many ways. In the 1950s the mothers of nuclear families depicted an ideal image that stay-at-home mothers of that day were obliged to live up to (Kaplan. 1992. p. 4). Television illuminated this image on shows that portrayed mothers who were beautiful, competent, smiling, and content.

For years, if not forever, a mother will question whether or not she made the right decisions, whether or not she did her best in her efforts to be the ideal mother—that is, in fulfilling her personal image of what a mother should be. It is with this challenge, or perhaps burden, that mothers enter the realm of maternity, where they may find themselves encapsulated within their mother-image. The present study seeks to shed some light on the place of today’s mothers who still strive to fulfill strenuous demands but are beginning to enjoy more acceptance and tolerance for their alternative roles.

The Self as a Sociocultural Co-construction

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the very extensive literature compiled over the last century on research related to the concept of self and how it relates to the formation of a racial and cultural identity. The present study focuses on
the role that the mother plays in the construction of a sense of self in the child.

Bagley (1979) and Harter (1999) offer overviews of a few of the seminal theories of self that arose from the work of early social psychologists including William James, Charles Cooley, Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud and George Mead.

James advocated a philosophy that distinguished between the "I-self as the subject or knower and the me-self as the object or known." (Harter, 1999, p. 15). He divided the me-self into three further dimensions: the material self, the social self, and the spiritual self. This theoretical base proved to be instrumental in the development of current multidimensional, hierarchical perspectives on the concept of self.

Cooley (1902), cited in Bagley (1979) proposed that the self constituted what one thought to be the opinions of others. Thus the self would then attempt to live out these imaginations and experience either success or failure, which would ultimately lead to feelings of pride or shame. This theory could be readily applied to the experiences of many multiracial individuals seeking to define themselves through the eyes of others.

In the field of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (cited in Bagley, 1979) appears to have instigated some foundational research that led to the development of subsequent theories of self. His early studies suggested that the personality comprised three basic elements: the Id, which was instinctually driven, the Ego, which integrated the inner self with external reality, and the Super-Ego, which operated within the socially constructed context of morality. His daughter, Anna Freud (1937) expanded upon these studies and posed her own theories on the use of defence mechanisms such as projection, introjection, and rationalization. Decades later, Ackerman and Jahoda (1950, cited in Bagley, 1979)
proposed that the ego-defence mechanism manifested in acts of racism.

Meadian theory stated that the self emerged when an individual internalized the perceptions of others. "The individual's notion of himself, and especially his evaluation of himself, derives from his perception of the ways others assess him" (Bagley, 1979, p.129). This dependency on the evaluation of others suggested a socially interactionist concept that implied the self was "relational and specific" (p. 129). Combs (1963, cited in Bagley, 1979), a sociologist from the phenomenological school of thought, believed that the self was definitive of "the conscious feelings, cognitions, and perceptions the individual has of himself and his world" (p.128).

All of these former theories propose the self as being multifaceted, multilayered and highly influenced by others. More recently, Bagley (1979) suggested that children internalize a concept of themselves from their parents at an early age. They then behave according to that image outside of the home, unconsciously eliciting reactions from their peers, teachers, and coworkers, ultimately leading to a relative self-concept. Fales-Hill, a journalist, credited her mother with her current self-concept. "My mother's refusal to bow to someone else's standard of 'correctness' taught me that I didn't have to spend my life seeking other people's acceptance or approval. that 'fitting in.' like virginity, was a highly overrated virtue" (Fales-Hill, 2000, p. 84).

A number of research studies indicate that racial identity has a significant impact on self-esteem or self-worth, particularly if discrimination is perceived (W. Cross, 1991; Gilbert, 1998; Helms, 1990; Seligman, 1990). Neisser and Jopling's (1997) theory of extended or remembered self states that self-concept can be defined as those beliefs
people have of themselves. Polkinghorne (2000) agrees that these beliefs are reflected in the narrative constructs of "personal memories and imagined futures and integrates and configures the remembered aspects of the ecological and interpersonal experiences" (p. 271). Journalist John Karastamatis (2000) poignantly reflected on his early memories of his homeland in Greece but was disappointed when he returned to Greece for a vacation, having lived most of his life in Canada. "I should feel right at home, but somehow I don't. I feel different because I am different. I have lived somewhere else for most of my life. I may look like them, but I'm not really like them" (p. F1).

Poston (1990) proposed that personal identity (which includes constructs such as self-esteem, self-worth, and interpersonal competence) is meshed with reference group orientation (constructs such as racial/cultural identity, racial/cultural esteem, and racial/cultural ideology) in the process of defining the development of a racial/cultural identity. He concludes that most multiracial/cultural individuals will eventually form a sense of self that comfortably combines their multiple heritages. Schwartz (1998b) claimed that although this model worked well for multiracial children who openly claimed more than one race, it could not always work for those who claimed a monoracial or monocultural identity and chose to acknowledge only one race. In these cases, they have chosen to deny one race in preference for another.

Stephan (1992) tied these concepts together in her study of college students by proposing that the self acquired meaningful identities through social interaction. Therefore racial/cultural identity "is particularly important to the self because it is a master status, an identity that overrides all others in others' judgements of the self...[and
as such, is] ...basic to the establishment of self-meaning” (p. 51). Therefore according to Stephan racial/cultural identity is dependent on social relations and interactions with peers.

More recently, Kilbride (2000) and Golden (2000) both conducted studies that indicated that some multiracial/cultural children developed negative perceptions of their self-worth due to an ambiguous racial and/or cultural identity. Tiedt and Tiedt’s research (1990, cited in Reed, 1992) reflected these findings and was supported by a study conducted by Gosine (2000), that indicated that low and middle-class multiracial/cultural students who began school with similar levels of self-esteem, developed lower self-esteem within a 3-year period. All of these studies indicated that children do not have a problem with their racial/cultural self until they are exposed to the outside world, where they are suddenly held up against a different norm than they experienced in the home.

Bagley (1979) concluded that “positions in the social structure are associated with differing degrees of anxiety, self-confidence, and self-esteem, which in turn influence how individuals perceive and behave toward members of different ethnic groups” (p.127). If self-worth is based on the value that one awards both their inherited as well as learned attributes, then it must reflect how individuals appraise themselves and others. This aspect would relate closely to the experiences of multiracial/cultural individuals who choose to build on their inheritance and develop a new identity based on their own life experiences and personal preferences.

Bruner (1996) supported these views and suggested the self could be defined on both an individual and cultural basis. He claimed it could incorporate a sense of agency
and temporality that regulated qualities such as "aspiration, confidence, optimism, and their opposites" (p. 36). Bruner supported Spence's (1984) premise that the self or ego becomes the storyteller and constructs "narratives about life" (cited in Bruner, 1990, p. 111) and went on to suggest that an individual's narrative memoir is partly a recovered past and partly a newly created story. The stories in the present study were collectively based on the recognition that "people narrativize their experience of the world and their own role in it" (Bruner, 1990, p. 115).

Bruner (1990) presented a cultural model that posited the concept of folk psychology, representing a cultural or historical way of interpreting human behaviour as a reflection of experiences within a specific environment over an extended period of time. He suggested that individuals construct or frame their narrative according to the concept of the self they have construed when they talk about themselves. Cross and Madson (1997) supported Bruner's concept of self-construal and defined the self as "a dynamic, cultural creation: individuals' self-views, emotions, and motivations take shape and form within a framework provided by cultural values, ideals, structures and practices (p. 6).

More recently, Harter (1999) provided some clarification of the terminology found in the literature and defined a basic framework in which to employ the various terms. She considered many of these terms to be contradictory, both conceptually and operationally and contends that their arbitrary usage has contributed to considerable confusion in the literature. Variation in the self-descriptions that address the "what I am" versus the self-evaluative terms that address the "how good I am" have led to wide variation in research methodology. Harter used the term self-concept to define evaluative judgments of
attributes within discrete frames such as intelligence, social acceptance, and physical appearance. She used the terms self-worth or self-esteem to refer to a more overall evaluation of one's worth or value as a person, and the terms self-image or body image in a descriptive manner to refer to physical or external states, particularly with respect to how one perceives others see them. These definitions reflected those posed by Bagley (1979) who also viewed self-esteem as a subjective and emotional, evaluative variable. theorizing that although self-concept could be subclassified under the definition of self-esteem, it could also be considered as a separate entity.

In summary, my observations have led me to conclude that a shift in schools of thought has occurred over the last several decades. Early concepts originally denoted the self as a “product” that was unidimensional, static, and constructed by the individual. Current approaches view self as a socially co-constructed, multidimensional “process.” It is this plastic, mouldable quality of self that provides the framework for the present study that explores some of the ways in which mothers are capable of influencing and contributing in a collaborative fashion to the construction of a multiracial/cultural identity in their children.

Constructing a Multiracial/cultural Identity

...if you are too unlike us, you are inferior, and if you are too like us, you are a ridiculous mimic.... (McTair, 1995, p.34)

This section continues to build upon theories of self and integrates more specific concepts of racial and cultural identity. The present study incorporates all of these interpretations into the term multiracial/cultural.
null
According to Phinney and Rotheram (1986), much of the early research on racial/cultural identity focused only on adult populations within entire cultures rather than on children or individuals. In their studies they made a distinction between the terms "ethnic identity," which relates to "one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings and behaviour that is due to ethnic group membership" (p. 13) and "ethnicity," which relates to group patterns of behaviour. They also coined the term "ethnic socialization," to refer to "the developmental processes by which children acquire the behaviors, perceptions, values, and attitudes of an ethnic group, and come to see themselves and others as members of such groups" (p. 11).

Phinney and Rotheram's (1986) findings confirmed the early theories of Mead (1934), who observed that children do begin to understand the meaning of cultural practices at a relatively early age. Phinney and Rotheram claimed that children initially learn about their ethnicity from others and gradually become aware of differences between various ethnic groups within and outside of their families as they grow older. The emergence of the ego, which is dependent on new experiences, new information, and developing cognitive abilities, contributes to the awareness of ethnicity and allows the child to identify with an ethnic group.

Controversy arises as research suggests that the "models of minority identity development are not appropriate for multiracial individuals and that models based on deficits in development seriously short change multiracial individuals" (Schwartz, 1998a, p. 2). It is very difficult to assess such propositions because so little research is currently available. It would seem that mothers of multiracial/cultural children have assumed the
responsibility for their children's ethnic socialization and may indeed fulfil the role of the culture bearer.

Racial/cultural identity has been closely linked to a feeling of similarity to one's parents on a physical, emotional, and psychological level. Thornton's 1996 study suggested that multiracial/cultural children may even exhibit "an enhanced sense of self and identity [and] greater intergroup tolerance, language facility, appreciation of minority group cultures, and ties to single-heritage groups than do monoracial people" (Schwartz, 1998a, p. 1). On the other hand, other studies suggest that multiracial individuals may experience racial prejudice from all sides, finding no harbour in any racial identity (Miller & Rotheram-Borus, 1994; Pinderhughes, 1995). However, these tendencies could be dependent on personal feelings and socialization practices that were generated within the family. A strong familial identity might assist children by providing a source of racial/cultural affinity, pride, and acceptance.

A developmental study conducted in Britain by Barbara Tizard and Ann Phoenix (1993) presented a significant collection of narratives of young people of black/white mixed race that demonstrated a wide variation in their racial/cultural identities. Most of the participants in this study considered themselves to be multiracial but some did identify as black and a few, if they looked white, identified as such. Overall, the study did not show conclusive evidence that racial/cultural identity affected their sense of self. Rotheram and Phinney's (1986) study claimed children raised in two cultures do tend to be more flexible, adaptable, and to some extent more creative, depending on factors under favourable circumstances.
Wardle (1992) warned that multiracial/cultural children bear unique societal pressures and that it is crucial they be encouraged to embrace their special heritage. Secure in the knowledge that it is acknowledged and accepted by their families, peers, and educators. As they assume a positive self-image, they will learn to resolve their ambivalence with their ethnic identity, cope with labels imposed by others, and articulate a racial/cultural description of themselves. Success in this endeavour is exemplified by Jennifer Khurana (2000) who expressed appreciation for her multiracial heritage in a letter to The Toronto Star Editor.

Rather than feeling trapped between two polarized worlds, as a child I took for granted this richness of diversity of language, culture, tradition and perspective. The mixed heritage of my family has formed my perspective on belonging, tolerance, community and nationhood, and has fostered my appreciation for the fluidity and changing face of tradition and culture. (E3)

The goal of multiculturalism is the unification of humankind. Today a significant influx of immigrants from all parts of the world has elicited new dynamics, and parents of multiracial/cultural children are presently voicing a strong appeal to researchers to focus studies on multiracial/cultural children (Herring, 1992; Root, 1996; Schwartz, 1998b; Wardle, 1989). Even Sesame Street is getting into the act with its new character, the multiracial bird, Whimzie. Parents, like Lazarre (1996) and Reddy (1997) have noted that, although there are plenty of parenting books available, very few pertain to racial and cultural issues. Furthermore, as multiracial/cultural children become adults, they too will be demanding a place for themselves. The Bill of Rights for Racially Mixed People has
received great acclaim among its advocates, who clearly do not want to be slotted into traditional definitions of identity.

I have the right: not to justify my existence in this world, not to keep the races separate within me, not to be responsible for people’s discomfort with my physical ambiguity, not to justify my ethnic legitimacy. I have the right to identify myself differently than strangers expect me to identify, differently than how my parents identify me, differently than my brothers and sisters and differently in different situations. I have the right to create a vocabulary to communicate about being multiracial, to change my identity over my lifetime – and more than once, to have loyalties and identification with more than one group of people and to freely choose whom I befriend and love. (Root, 2000. March 31, retrieved from www.geocities.com)


From a mainstream perspective, whites do not consider race and racism to be pressing realities in their everyday lives. For the most part, they view themselves as equity minded and do not readily acknowledge that they live a life of privilege (Blauner. 1990). Recently Blackwood (2000a) reported that racism isn’t a policy set by company executives. In fact, executives are the first to
endorse policies to eliminate it. But such policies haven’t always been successful, because individuals, whose duty it is to ensure they are followed, harbour this evil. (p. A27)

The present study attempted to bring forward new questions that provoked higher levels of self-consciousness within the mainstream mentality as it explored multiculturalism through the voices of mothers of multiracial/cultural children.

Educating the Multiracial/cultural Child

This section provides an overview of the need for consistent and diligent attention to the development of curriculum and teacher education. Findings from this study may further academic discourse and offer new considerations in the creation of healthy environments that facilitate methods of effective intervention (Miller, 1992).

Mahalingam and McCarthy (2000) claims that, so far, efforts to institute a multicultural curriculum have mainly focused on “articulating the need for the recognition and the legitimation of cultures” (p. 5). These authors argue that multiculturalism has become homogenized and monocultural in itself as it continues to create a “foil for the naturalization of the European intellectual legacy” (p. 5). Studies like this demand that to truly promote equality and equity, a shift to embrace all kinds of racial and cultural diversity is in order.

The present study considered the suggestion made by the Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education (1999) that a hidden curriculum exists that promotes implicit hidden messages embedded within content materials, policies, language, and teaching practices, reinforcing ethnic, gender, and social class inequalities
(Depass, Wang, Lemisko, & Bradford, 2000). The Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education aims to alter the messages of the hidden curriculum and validate the racial/cultural identity of all students (CCMIE, 1999).

Phinney (2000) asserts that some parents may project an image to their multiracial/cultural children that conflicts with the ones presented by well-intentioned teachers with a limited working knowledge and awareness of a culture or race. The multicultural programs that have been developed over recent years may not yet truly reflect the culturally centred perspectives of multiracial/cultural families. Indeed, Sue and Sue (1990) found that dominant cultural images did not necessarily match those of multiracial/cultural minorities and even affected them adversely in some cases. Cultural and racial attitudes in people of all races and cultures have been both consciously and unconsciously transmitted from generation to generation, particularly within segregated communities. Reed (1992) proposes that sometimes the intentions of these forces may not be consistent with messages conveyed within the school environment, and this may create a discordance that ultimately affects the child's self-esteem.

Thus it would seem that some multiracial/cultural children may feel that their heritage has not actually been acknowledged in school, despite the great effort of the boards to develop a multicultural curriculum. Wason-Ellam and Li (1999) noted that in 'squeezing' children into prescribed curricula, school can be both a site of liberation and of domination. Some children confront a mismatch between a school culture that rewards competition and individual achievement and a community culture that values co-operation and group advancement....Too often.
communities of ‘otherness’ rather than communities of affinity remain the patterns of cross-cultural classrooms. (p. 23)

However, it should be noted that the mismatch between underlying cultural values is a somewhat different issue from the failure to acknowledge multiracial/cultural heritage.

Formal research has been sparse in the field of biracial/cultural studies, particularly from a Canadian perspective (Golden. 2000; Kilbride. 2000; Mahtani. 2000). Although numerous American studies examined aspects of race and culture, they could not be readily applied to the Canadian psyche because the sociopolitical landscape of the countries remains so fundamentally different (Jones. 2000; Mahtani. 2000). However, some effort has been made to compile a bank of references by some nongovernmental agencies such as CCMIE and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF).

Efforts are presently under way to develop antiracist materials and, indeed. Mehta and Favreau (2000) have compiled an extensive annotated bibliography of Canadian antiracist resources, but have found few formal publications. “It would seem that a national scope for anti-racism training does not exist in Canada” (Mehta & Favreau. p.2). However, these authors have noted that both employers and employees are beginning to voice their needs for workshops and awareness seminars. In recent years, enlightened corporations and school boards have attempted to combat racism by running “consciousness-raising” workshops.

Programs could be created to assist students to develop a deeper awareness of how, why, and where their racial and cultural attitudes have been formed. Some student behaviour may be misinterpreted by teachers who struggle to find meaning in conflicting
verbal and nonverbal messages. It is important that teachers develop an insightful awareness. Bruner (1996) reiterates, "It is no less important in the classroom: teachers understanding what their pupils are thinking and vice versa" (p. 101). Studies repeatedly demand that schools and educators must assume responsibility for creating an environment that encourages respect for all individuals within the classroom (Purkey, 2000; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1990, cited in Reed, 1992). This is a tall order to fill, but many gains have been made. It behooves the education system to continue to actively delve into new areas of research to break the tide of racism.

Racial and cultural differences present tremendous barriers to teaching and learning within the school environment (CCMIE, 1999). Racial awareness and racial sensitivity to all racial and cultural identities needs to expand within the teacher population. Young (1990) warned that "differential privilege of members of different racial groups is perpetuated in part by the process of schooling...many if not most teachers unconsciously behave differently toward Blacks or Latino than they behave towards whites" (p. 154). Changes in social justice can only happen when the scales are equalized and all parties recognize their own location within the dimensions under scrutiny and "shake up received stereotypes" (Young, 1999, p.155). McLaren, Leonardo and Allen (2000) suggested that a revolutionary multicultural education would entail teaching students and teachers about the productive basis of schools and social life. It would call for white teachers to pay attention to how they manifest their whiteness through their territorial control over production and expenditure. (p. 121)
In short, the multicultural curriculum has clearly made some significant strides, and some impressive resources and literature have been developed to support the programs. However, studies demonstrate how important it is for educators and parents to develop a higher level of self-awareness that will encourage a conscientious effort on the part of both children and adults to openly acknowledge all aspects of their own multiracial/cultural heritage as well as those of others.

Summary of Literature

In light of the aforementioned research, the present study explored the stories of mothers of multiracial/cultural children and the contribution of these stories to the understanding of the co-construction of the cultural self within the mother-child relationship. Chodorow (1978) maintained that the importance of passing on stories contributes significantly to the strength of the parent-child bond. The process of reflecting on and conveying personal thoughts and feelings was intended to provoke new insight for both the participants and the researcher in this study. In particular, this study explored Golden's (2000) premise that mothers tended to be the culture bearers in multiracial/cultural families and in general made a significant effort to socialize their children to aspects of all their ethnicities. Perhaps attending to the stories of these mothers will serve to heighten respect for multiple combinations of racial/cultural heritages.

Multiracial/cultural issues have now become dramatic legal realities. On March 9, 2000, the British Columbia Court of Appeal ruled that the son of a Black pro basketball player and a white high-school dropout should be turned over to his Black
father based on the following reasons.

If it is correct that Elijah will be seen by the world at large as 'being black,' it would obviously be in his interests to live with a parent or family who can nurture his identity as a person of colour and who can appreciate and understand the day-to-day realities that black people face in North American society - including racism and discrimination in various forms. (Infantry, 2000a)

The verdict raised a number of red flags regarding the criteria used to decide the case. Kilbride (2000), a sociologist who has studied Black, multiracial youth and their relationships with their parents, declared that this decision equated the state of Canadian racism to that in the United States. It would seem that the legal custody of children is subject to the arbitrary definitions of race and social class. The outcome of such cases will be of particular interest to these mothers if racial/cultural rights are defined by the courts.

The present study continues to build on the foregoing research literature and attempts to address some of the sociocultural dynamics families, schools, and communities may presently face in the Canadian Diaspora.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Rationale

...and whereas the Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians. (CCMIE citing Multiculturalism Act, p. 1)

This narrative inquiry studied the experiences of mothers of multiracial/cultural children within the context of family, school, and community. It employed a feminist approach according to Creswell (1998), who states, “feminist research goals are to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative” (p. 83). I chose to conduct my interviews in an interactive, dialogical manner that allowed for self-disclosure on my part, and at the same time fostered a sense of collaboration (Creswell, 1998).

As a study of mothers of multiracial/cultural children by a mother of multiracial/cultural children, the feminist thrust became apparent in this study as women gave voice to thoughts and beliefs pertaining to their lives. These women engaged in a collaborative process to develop a message that embodied a strong, collective voice (Adams et al., 1998; Castle, Abbey, & Reynolds, 1998; Minister, 1991).

The autobiographical style provided a central focus, and the data collection
consisted of conversations or stories that reconstructed life experiences and, along with participant observations, provided an interpretive biographical form of study (Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989). “We create the persons we write about, just as they create themselves when they engage in storytelling practices (Denzin, 1989, p. 82).

I chose an auto/biographical narrative, which is a typical form of phenomenological inquiry that can be employed to probe the meaning of childhood memories and “reveal the extent to which our personal histories shape whatever it is we (as individuals) are trying to achieve” (Gough, 1999, p. 2). However, Gough warned that what one remembers and thus reveals in a narrative inquiry may merely be a desired fantasy and “wishful thinking” (p. 4). Through the telling of my own story, I was able to re-live some past experiences and re-examine the events that led to those experiences along with my reactions at the time. I considered the possibility that my own identity could be affected by the manner in which those experiences unfolded. The process of re-storying my own story allowed me, according to Miller’s (1993) philosophy of abundance, assume that “each person is constantly in the process of constructing meanings based on his or her own life experience” (p.56). The opportunity to reconstruct my interpretation of my mother’s story attracted my interest in this auto/biographical approach. As Simonson (1994) so eloquently observes,

I have looked back, identified awakenings and am no longer confined to the cultural story to which I had become accustomed. I am free to reconstruct within an ever expanding world (p.121).

As I conducted my study I was also aware of how I had previously identified
myself and how my participants were to perceive me in my roles, both as a participant and as a researcher (Brayboy, 2000; Greene, 1994). I felt that the autobiographical approach offered a “springboard for recovering meaning in the broader context of my life experience” (Shields, 1995).

Johnson and Christensen (2000) propose that phenomenological research provides a means of viewing another’s life, allowing the researcher to insert herself/himself into the phenomenon and live the experience that is under investigation. They assert that phenomenology refers to an individual’s inner world of immediate experience, their unconsciousness, and their personal experience of a particular phenomenon.

I sought to create meaning from my own experiences as they related to those of my participants (Wiersman, 2000). In the process of collecting meaningful narratives, I attempted to conduct a persuasive study that promoted trust and confidence in my participants (Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000; Minister, 1991). The intent was to encourage a connected relationship between me as researcher and the participant within an environment that promoted equality, caring, respect, and mutual purpose. The intent was to learn from each other through a collaborative process. This study demanded a very personal and sensitive approach to elicit candid, authentic, and meaningful responses from participants (Minister, 1991). Our personal stories contributed to a larger cultural and universal story that affected us all, and our chapters became inextricably interwoven and layered upon each other as we uncovered common ground. This “commonality of experience” is considered to be “an essence, or invariant structure, of the experience” (B. Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 317). Therefore, this approach allowed me to insert
myself into the phenomenon and to live the experience that was under investigation. Such an approach allowed me to play the role of both researcher/observer and the researched/participant. Another important aspect of this approach was that it offered a means whereby all of the participants could personally experience and interact with a subject that was very dear to our hearts.

The dialogues offered me a privileged point of access into the study of racial/cultural identity as it evoked an experiential narrative that encompassed aspects of motivation (Brayboy, 2000; Conle, 2000; Gone, Miller & Rappaport, 1999). They provided "resonance" to metaphorical relationships that converted stories into respective inquiries. Bruner (1996) suggested that the impetus, the motivation, and the justification for narrative inquiry is "trouble." Conle (2000) called it "tension," in that "there is a solution to be sought," and cited Verene (1991) on the premise that self-inquiry into identity issues is an ancient practice. Based on these theories this study integrated the stories of the participants into an interpretation of the present research inquiry.

Throughout history, mothers have often found solace in their relationships with other women, and those friendships have allowed them to give voice to a myriad of concerns surrounding family relationships within the confines of a close, understanding community. "As mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends to one another," women provide affirmation to one another (Collins, 1990, p. 96). During these periods of intimacy, women can afford the time to challenge stereotypes and faulty definitions of their being and establish strong definitions of self-valuation and respect (Minister, 1991). Through these kinds of experiences, these mothers were able to gather some degree of fortitude to
validate their teachings to their children (Collins, 1990). Anticipating that participants would voice some commonalities during their individual interviews and the time to collect information was limited, I chose to incorporate a focus group discussion into the study.

Caplan (2000) found discussion groups to be particularly helpful to women given the opportunity to describe personal experiences and listen to others who expressed similar feelings. The group process allowed the participants to comment on, question, or validate those feelings expressed by others and act as a sounding board. This process was intended to encourage the women to develop a more constructive voicing of their inner thoughts and feelings about how they have incorporated aspects of their multiracial/cultural identity into the lives and experiences of their children.

Prior to the commencement of the formal study, I conducted a pilot study and interviewed myself. Although the prospect of baring my intimate thoughts was intimidating at first, I believed it was a necessary part of the process to allow me to relate to the investigative experience that my participants were experiencing. Thus, I took stock in Clandinin and Connelly (1990), who assured me that the autobiographical aspect of the research story would make the event more meaningful. Through this process I strove to integrate stories of experiences from my personal life as a daughter, a wife, a mother, and a teacher (Jago, 1996).

Research Design

While each of us is the central character in our own stories, we are also characters in the stories of all those others with whom we are connected whether
by marriage, family, friendship, or simply by being an inhabitant of the earth. (Parry, 1991, p. 45)

The present study developed out of an emergent design or a "method in process" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 27) to investigate the experiences of mothers of multiracial/cultural children.

The basic design prescribed 4 mothers of multiracial/cultural children, whom I will refer to as Group A, who were invited to participate in a private, audio-taped interview and focus group discussion. They were individually interviewed, and open-ended dialogues provided the impetus to converse about how they became part of a multiracial/cultural family and how they dealt with the challenges of accommodating more than one race or culture in themselves and/or their children. In the focus group the participants were invited to retell their stories and voice their feelings about the multicultural experiences of their children at home, at school, and in the community.

As each step proceeded, adjustments were made and variations were accommodated. Upon hearing some of the mothers' stories, I noticed how often they included stories about their own mothers. This observation led me to decide to interview more mothers of multiracial/cultural children, but from the previous generation whom I refer to as Group B. One of these women was an acquaintance of mine and one was the mother of a participant in Group A. I felt that these supplemental data would integrate well with stories about my own family.

I also included interviews with my mother, my sister, and my daughter, whom I will refer to as Group C, for further insight into the implications of race and culture on
several generations of my own multiracial family.

Participant Selection

Initially I had anticipated finding multiracial participants representative of Black, Asian, and Caucasian races, but I quickly discovered that they were not to be found so neatly packaged. The emerging design of the study allowed me to open the criteria and access a broad combination of races and cultures, for the focus of the study was based on the perceptions of mothers whose children's racial/cultural makeup was simply different from that of their parents.

I selected the participants from my own acquaintances based on their racial and cultural combinations. Selection of the participants was based on the criteria that they perceived themselves as mothers of multiracial/cultural children who had attended school in the Greater Toronto Area. The mothers were organized into three groups. Refer to Appendix M, Participant Demographics, to examine specific criteria. Refer to Appendix N, Participant Inter-groupings, to observe how some participants overlapped into other groups. For example, Chris (my sister), and I were representative of Group A and well as Group C. Marion (my mother) was representative of Group B as well as Group C.

GROUP A was composed of four mothers who ranged in age from about 35 to 50 years and had children ranging in age from 2 to 12 years. The purpose of this group was to provide a model of mothers who were born between 1950 and 1985 and whose multiracial/cultural children had attended school since 1990 to the present time. Their children represented those students who had been exposed to a multicultural curriculum. One of the mothers was Chinese/English and her husband was Scottish/Canadian; one
was Mexican/Canadian and her husband Taiwanese, one was Canadian and had a Black African ex-husband. One of the mothers was Ukrainian and her husband was Greek. “Canadian” will refer to those born in Canada who consider themselves white for the purpose of this study.

GROUP B was composed of 2 mothers in their 70s, whose children ranged in age from 35 to 50 years. The purpose of this group was to provide a model of mothers who were born around 1930 and whose multiracial/cultural children had attended school between 1950 and 1990. Their children represented students who were not exposed to a multicultural curriculum in school. Their stories were included in the present study to reflect a different experience being multiracial/cultural in Canadian society at a different time. One mother was a white American and her husband Black American, one was Mexican and her husband white Canadian.

GROUP C consisted of my mother, my sister, my daughter and me. The purpose of this group was to provide a model of an intergenerational, multiracial/cultural family (Conle, 2000) and demonstrate the variation in the school experiences of their children. My mother is Afro-Canadian/English, my sister is Afro-Canadian/Scottish, and my adopted daughter is Metis. For discussion purposes, the dialogues from this group are intertwined with those of the others, with my mother representative of Group B and my sister and me representative of Group A. My daughter’s views were intended to be indicative of new mothers, as she is presently considering future schools and programs for her young children.
Participant Profiles

All interviews were private and participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of the participants. **Group A**

Sue is a university graduate who works as a liaison between a book company and the Toronto Board of Education. Her father is Chinese, from Hong Kong and her mother is Caucasian, from England. She is married to a Caucasian Canadian who is a university graduate and they live in an upper-middle class neighbourhood in Toronto. They have three children, a son 11, a daughter 10, and a daughter 6, all of whom attend elite private schools.

Mary is presently completing her university degree. She has been a professional actor and dancer for most of her life, although she did teach English as a second language (ESL) in Japan for a period of time. Her parents are both Ukrainian and her husband is Greek-Czechoslovakian. They live in an upper-middle class, multicultural neighbourhood and their son is now 7 and attends a private, co-ed school in downtown Toronto.

Jan is a university professor teaching in the Education faculty of a Toronto university and was trained as a sociologist. She is a white, single mother, originally from working class, Acadian stock from Nova Scotia. She is divorced from her ex-husband, a Black freedom fighter, who is Sesotho from South Africa. She met him in Canada while he attended university at a time when he lived in exile from South Africa. When apartheid ended, they moved to South Africa to live and she remained there for a year
after the birth of their son. He is now 9 years old and attends an inner-city, public school in the centre of downtown Toronto. Jan and her son return to South Africa annually to visit her ex-husband and his family.

Lisa is of Mexican-Canadian descent and her husband is Taiwanese. Presently she is completing her doctorate in Toronto, while her husband has remained in Taiwan. She lives with her widowed mother in a suburb of Toronto with her two sons and two nieces, who are temporarily staying with their grandmother. Her older son is 7 and attends the local public school and her younger son is 3 and spends time at a neighbour’s day-care.

**Group B**

Anna, a university graduate, is the mother of Lisa. She is of Mexican descent and was married to a white Canadian, also a university graduate, who is now deceased. She has four daughters, all of whom are married and have children. One married a Ukrainian, one a Taiwanese, one a man from Nova Scotia, and one an American.

Dinah, a university graduate, is a white American married to a Black American who is a highly respected sociologist. They were both very active in the Canadian civil rights movement during the ‘60s and ‘70s. They have three children, two sons who married white women and one daughter who married a black man. All of their children have children of their own.

**Group C**

Tina is Metis (French-Canadian and Iroquois) and I adopted her when she was 13 years old. Her husband is Jewish and they have two children, a daughter aged 3 and a son
aged 1. They live in a small town outside of Toronto. She has a college diploma and is working on her undergraduate degree and her husband has his MBA. Presently she is staying at home with her children and providing day care for others.

Chris, my younger sister, a university graduate, is married to a man of Italian ancestry who has some university education. They have three children, one son 12, and two daughters aged 15 and 19 who all attend elite private schools. She is a university graduate and has taught at a community college. They live in an upper-middle class area of Toronto.

Marion is my mother and a university graduate. Her father was Afro-Canadian and her mother was English Caucasian. She is married to my father, a university graduate, who is of Scottish ancestry. They have five children, three daughters and two sons, all attended public schools, all are now grown and married.

The participants have a number of things in common: they are all English-speaking, middle-class, highly educated, have multiracial/cultural school children and tend to socially identify with the white, mainstream population of Toronto.

Procedure

Approval was received from the Ethics Board at Brock University before the participants were invited to commence the study. (See Appendix A).

Information Letter

Three groups of mothers of multiracial/cultural children were invited to participate through a letter of invitation that explained the intent and format of the study (Appendix B). The consent form was forwarded with the letter and they were asked to
sign and return the form prior to the first interview. All participants were telephoned to confirm their intention to participate in the study.

Demographics Form

Participants were asked to sign a consent form that indicated that they could refuse to answer any questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time. They were informed that their names would not appear in any presentations and/or written material based on this study. Pseudonyms were used instead. Once each of the participants had confirmed their willingness to participate, they were asked to complete a brief form to document details of their demographics. A number of questions pertaining to their parents' race, culture, and immigration were submitted to the participants. At this time, each participant was invited to consider any concerns or expectations that could be addressed before or during the interview.

Personal Interviews

A narrative dialogue was pursued through the use of conversations between participants and me (Semmler & Williams, 2000). Crites (1971) as cited in Semmler and Williams (2000) observes that it is the “sacred stories that...shape in the most profound way the inner story of experience” (p. 304). Participants were interviewed once at a mutually convenient time and place, which turned out to be in their own homes. Every effort was made to ensure that the environment was comfortable, private and inviting. The interviews were audio taped and lasted from 1 to 3 hours depending on the individual participant and what they had to say. During the interview the inquiry was directed to the participant in the form of an open-ended dialogue focusing on her perceptions of
racial/cultural identity and experiences as they related to her family. Generally, the initial probe was, "Tell me about your multiracial/cultural family."

Interview transcripts, field notes, and interpretations were subsequently returned to each participant shortly after each interview in order to validate and clarify responses. Those participants who chose to make additions or changes responded in writing or by email and I made the appropriate changes to the data. It was this version of the data that I used for the data analyses. All information and data were kept confidential and secure until the completion of the study.

**Focus Group Discussion**

The opportunity to meet together was offered to Group A and my sister at the end of the study. The focus group discussion was conducted in my sister's home, which was centrally located for the rest of the participants. This session was audio-taped. With the permission of the group, my sister, a supplemental participant, was appointed assistant moderator and took notes of the dialogue and operated the tape-recorder during the session, so that I was free to moderate the dialogue.

The purpose of this session was to generate supplementary data that could be used to verify and clarify the stories previously told in the interviews (Morgan, 1997; Oakley, 1981). This format provided the advantage of collecting a large amount of data in a short period of time. My intention was not to control the group discussion except to prompt the dialogue if it ceased. For the most part the members were encouraged to direct the conversation towards their own agendas (Morgan, 1997).

This session was intended to provide an opportunity to "bare witness to the
emergence” of a new awareness (Monk, 1997, p. 21). The process would obviously eliminate certain aspects of anonymity, but the participants had all agreed to meet in a confidential manner. Participants were encouraged to speak freely and informally. Each mother was asked to introduce herself and then converse with the other participants about common concerns and experiences regarding their mothering experiences and their children’s multiracial/cultural identity. I was prepared to be alert to any changes or additions to their stories as they relayed them to the group.

**Debriefing**

The scripts (Appendix I) were used to debrief the participants after the interview and the focus group discussion. A letter thanking the participant was given to them at the conclusion of the interview (Appendix L), along with a list of support and information resources. Participants were assured that they could call my thesis advisor or me at any time if they had any concerns. I also emailed the participants to thank them once again for their participation and to inform them about the focus group discussion within 2 weeks after their interviews. After the focus group session, I gave them each a thank-you note and a small bouquet of flowers as a token of my appreciation.
null
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

When that day dawns which shall find me dead

And all these dreams within me risen higher,

These be the words you place above my head:

"here lies a bit of dust that once was fire!"

(Adams et al., 1998, p. 395)

Introduction

Upon completion of the taped interviews, I personally transcribed the tapes, making myself thoroughly familiar with the data. I replayed the tapes again while I read the transcriptions to ensure that I had recorded the data accurately. This process allowed me to develop meaningful interpretations. I then reformatted the stories to align with relevant themes that had already been introduced in the literature review. Although the literature review served to inform me in the development of the study, it did not lead me to develop specific questions pertaining to those topics. The themes were broadly interpreted so that relevance could be made to former studies.

Once the themes were identified, I added my own reflections. These reflections would have been similar to journal entries, but in this case were built into the interpretations. Both the transcriptions of the tapes and the interpretations/reflections were returned to the participants for them to review and edit if they wished. Very few changes were made, but some of the participants elaborated or clarified details. All were promptly resubmitted to me, whereupon I proceeded to quilt the transcriptions, interpretations, and reflections into a thematic presentation.
The Quilting Process

...the quilt process corresponds to the writing process, on the level of the word, the sentence, the structure of a story or novel, and the images, motifs, or symbols that unify a fictional work...piecing is not a repetitious recycling of design elements, but a series of aesthetic decisions that involve the transformation of conventions (Showalter, 1994, p.200-201).

The emergent design of this study allowed for ongoing changes in the structure and format as the process unfolded. It was important that the mothers of this study told their stories in their own words and conveyed their personal feelings. Ultimately I looked for common themes that emerged from the stories of the experiences of the participants. I tried to remain open minded during the experiential sessions as together we worked towards personal growth and transformation (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990). Each time the stories were reviewed and retold, they were relived through this collaborative experience and, indeed, I feel that we became co-researchers in the process. Anne Minister (1999) confirmed that when women speak together they “encounter one another for the purpose of searching for and collaboratively constructing both personal and female cultural identity” (p. 34). Although I did not want to impose myself into the stories of my participants, I did participate and respond when it seemed appropriate and according to Minister (1991), “interviewer self-disclosure is sanctioned in this environment” (p. 38).

Denzin (1997) suggested a five-step process. First an objective set of experiences in the participant’s life at various life course stages are noted and recorded chronologically. This was accomplished when I asked my participants about their
families. Almost all of them began with their own parents or grandparents and moved chronologically through time to the present, describing their own experiences or those of other family members.

Second, Denzin suggested that the interview establish a set of life experiences in the form of a story or narrative. Again, with the mere suggestion of a word, the participants just naturally turned their conversations into the most fascinating stories. Transcripts were produced from the tape-recorded sessions and coded with descriptive phrases in order to define recurring, self-identified themes, patterns, and other similarities.

Third, following Denzin’s steps, the stories naturally revolved around pivotal events in the lives of the participants. When I analyzed the narratives, I attempted to draw out common themes that portrayed types of drama, characters, and settings from the stories. From there I developed an interpretation that identified and configured more specific themes that were common to each of the stories.

Fourth, I explored the meaning of these stories by adding my own reflections to the interpretations, searching for multiple meanings. “These texts are always dialogical – the site at which the voices of the other, alongside the voice of the author, come alive and interact with one another” (Denzin, 1997, p. xiii). I took this procedure one step further and combined the concepts from two more studies to create an appropriate format for the present study.

Adams et al. (1998) represented their data in a fictionalized script format that dramatized the stories of their participants as a means of conveying “the complexity and
richness of our participants’ lives... without making fixed meaning claims” (p. 383).

Paula Saukko (2001) used a “quilting mode” of overlapping and integrating sensitive data, interpretations, and reflections by “stitching them together” (p. 299). These models suggested an effective and efficient format that allowed me to intertwine the voices of the participants, interpretations of their stories, and my reflections. Using this quilting mode I categorized the stories of each group under common themes and inserted my own reflections as each story and interpretation was presented.

When the transcripts and interpretations were sent back to the participants for member checks, they were given an opportunity to add further clarification to the transcripts and interpretations and were encouraged to comment and expand on the concepts if they felt so inclined. Creswell (1998) defines this form of investigation as feminist because it offers the “potential for deeper probing and reciprocally educative encounters” (p. 83).

The focus group discussion provided elaboration on common themes previously noted in the interviews. This session provided a collaborative opportunity for the group to integrate their stories and revise or confirm the private interpretations they had received from me. In line with Drake, Elliott and Castle’s study (1993) and Squire’s study (2000), the study lent itself to the process of concentric storying. This is the “process of deconstructing personal stories to reveal the core values and beliefs and acting as a catalyst for the reconstruction of the ‘new story’ governed by new beliefs and values” (p. 2). The focus group produced a culmination of stories and gave voice to a rich source of wisdom for these mothers.
Last, I undertook the task of looking for larger structures to explain the meanings, such as social interactions in groups, cultural issues, ideologies, and historical context in order to provide interpretations and cross interpretations for the life experiences of my participants (Creswell, 1998, p. 51). I tried to remain aware of my responsibility to my participants and the privilege I had been granted, as well as alert to their personal intentions. As Denzin warns, “Those we study have their own understandings of how they want to be represented” (p. xiii).

**Common Themes**

Following Saukko’s (2001) quilting format, the words of the participants have been intermingled with my interpretations and reflections to “critically assess the cultural discourses” (p. 299) that form our experiences. The stories have been divided into four categories that group common themes that became apparent upon inspection of the interview and focus group transcripts. These themes were not specifically elicited during the interviews but emerged from the data upon later inspection after all of the interviews were completed and were coded according to Denzin’s criteria.

The themes are listed below.

1. Multiracial/cultural Roots
2. Constructing a Multiracial/cultural Identity
3. Mothering the Multiracial/cultural Child
4. Educating the Multiracial/cultural Child.
Participant Identification

The participants have been assigned pseudonyms and have also been numbered and grouped to assist the reader. The demographics chart (Appendix M) lists particular information pertaining to each of the participants.

All of the participants were interviewed only once and the transcript dates have been provided below instead of following each quoted section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP A</th>
<th>GROUP B</th>
<th>GROUP C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sue (19/1/01)</td>
<td>5. Anna (19/2/01)</td>
<td>7. Tina (12/2//01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lisa (20/1/01)</td>
<td>6. Dinah (7/2/01)</td>
<td>8. Chris (22/1/01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mary (14/2/01)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9. Marion (16/1/01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jan (7/2/01)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10. Cathy (myself; 29/7/00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data are presented in a format that allows the reader to examine and compare the stories from each of the participants with respect to the four common themes. A summary will follow each of the themes and relate the findings in the literature review.

Groups A, B, and C will be presented separately, and then a final summary will include a comparative discussion of the three groups' dialogues.

The quilting format previously identified will be used to integrate the interpretations, reflections, and voices of the participants. The straight text represents my interpretation and the italicized text represents my reflections. All data were reviewed by the participants and revised and edited to confirm that my interpretations and reflections accurately reflected their narratives.
When I first began to interview my participants I was a little apprehensive but I was greatly relieved to discover how warmly my participants welcomed me into their homes to talk about themselves and their families. As we began to converse, I was quite struck by the obvious care and thoughtfulness they were prepared to invest in their storytelling. It is my honour to share their stories with the reader.

**Multiracial/cultural Roots**

Nobody can choose her Motherline or her fate. We are all born into a lineage, family, a historical time filled with difficulties over which we have no control. But we can honour our stories, attend to our ghosts, remember our ancestors, tell their stories to our children and grandchildren. (Lowinsky, 2000, p. 235)

1. Sue:

Sue began the interview by describing her paternal Chinese grandfather from Hong Kong as the interesting one in the family, having had a total of four wives, two of whom had children, both at the same time. He was educated and very wealthy, making his fortune in the rubber trade. Sue implies a sense of mystery and excitement that is attached to the “story” of her grandfather. She is not ashamed of it, but thinks it very interesting and different. She never met the man but knows of him through stories that have been passed down to her by her own father and perhaps some of his other relatives.

Sue’s father was the youngest of five children from his mother, but became orphaned at the age of 13 when both parents died. Subsequently, he was raised by his older siblings and nannies. This aspect makes him different, in that he was not influenced
by his own parents for a significant part of his life. Apparently the family was wealthy enough to provide good care for him, but he was not adopted by anyone else in the family and Sue did not indicate that he had any particular surrogate parents.

Sue tells how her father immigrated to England. When he finished his rudimentary schooling in Hong Kong, he immigrated to England to attend the London School of Economics and became an accountant. "He set off like two of his brothers before him to get a good education and to make his way in life." Sue did not indicate that he was expected to return to Hong Kong, although he has since done so, but only for visits. Nor was he expected to care for the extended family in any way. This may be because he was the youngest or it may be because there was enough wealth to go around.

While in England, he met his wife, a red-haired, fair-complexioned English "belle" and they settled into family life with two children, a boy and a girl. It is interesting that he was attracted to someone so different and makes one wonder why. Did he see this as a means of doing something different with his life? Did he see her as his ticket out of Asian life? Or did he simply fall deeply in love despite their racial and cultural differences? Certainly Sue has the impression that her parents were happy with the arrangement. "So I think it was quite amazing because my grandparents were very accepting of her dating a Chinese boy."

Sue felt that a recession in England influenced a decision to immigrate to Canada, and the family settled in Montreal, which at that time was the business center of Canada. The fact that they moved far from his wife's family despite their close relationship would indicate that it was a significant choice. Sue indicates that she thinks it was to seek better
financial security and prospects. After all, this was presumably why he left Hong Kong and sought a Western education.

2. Lisa:

Lisa described herself as part Mexican. Her mother is Mexican and her father is Canadian. Lisa was born in Canada but spent time in Mexico, the United States, and Canada while she was growing up. Her parents met in the United States when they were attending university, where her mother graduated with a degree in Medical Laboratory Science. Her father was from Nova Scotia and had been granted a scholarship to study at the university, where he graduated with a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. Both of her parents worked professionally in the United States before moving to Mexico, where her father headed a research team in the sulfur fields.

Lisa is well connected with both her Mexican and Canadian heritage and spends time with relatives in various parts of the continent. Her Mexican grandparents were prominent members of the community, as they were wealthy and well educated. All of their children were sent to the United States for professional educations, whereupon they returned to Mexico to work within their community. *Lisa is very proud of both of her parents' achievements and takes great pleasure in her Mexican and Canadian ancestry. She feels great admiration for her grandparents and considers their history something worth passing on to her own children.*

Lisa's sisters all married men of various ethnicities. *It would appear that the family was not intent on maintaining a homogeneous family make-up. Perhaps they had already been influenced by their own ethnicity or by their experiences in other parts of
the world as they were growing up.

Lisa’s husband is Taiwanese and has decided to remain in Taiwan where he has a good teaching and administrative job that provides professional and financial security, although he does visit his family in Canada from time to time. *This normally would seem like an especially great hardship for any family, but the benefits of having a good education appear to adequately offset the personal sacrifice that the family has had to make. One would presume that they must miss each other very much, yet that is the price to pay for future benefits for the whole family.*

3. Mary:

On the other hand, one of my participants began the story with a tinge of sadness or even regret. Mary’s mother was from a small village in the Ukraine but when she was a teenager, she moved to the city to live with an aunt so that she could attend school. This would have been quite a luxury in those days, just prior to World War II, and for all intents and purposes she thought she could look forward to a good life of comfort, intellectual opportunities, exposure to the arts and culture, and generally a pleasant future. However, with the advent of the war, everything changed for Mary’s mother. She returned home to take the place of the younger siblings who were going to be taken to a German labour camp to work.

*Mary’s mother must have felt a great sense of loss when she became irrevocably caught up in the politics of war. For this young girl, who had once had such great visions of comfort, wealth, and a cultured lifestyle, this new prospect of labour camps and poverty must have signified that her life was over already.*
Mary's father came from a poor family but was a happy, go-lucky fellow who always managed to find a way out of the numerous tight situations in which he found himself. But things were tough all over, and eventually he too found himself in a German labour camp. Upon meeting his family many years later, Mary recalls the following.

They were very quiet and stoic. And yet my father had been much more the touchy-feely – yeh come on in everybody type. So it's interesting to me how my mother came from that family and she turned out the way she did and my father the opposite.

Mary described her parents' life after the war. They lived in a little shack on the outskirts of a town in Belgium, where her father worked in a mine and her mother did cleaning and laundry while looking after two small children. When she gave birth a third time, the baby (Mary) failed to thrive and had to be hospitalized. Her mother, poor and tied down with two other small children while her husband worked in the mines, had to borrow a bicycle once a week to make the 20-mile trek to the city to visit her newborn infant. *Such a hard life, with so little to go around, and so little hope for more. Another precious child–how to feed and clothe one more baby in these times of hopelessness. Dashed were those dreams and gone were those who might have provided such things. Everything was different now.*

The family finally left Belgium and got on a boat to Canada. After enduring their official induction through Canadian immigration, they were placed on a train and sent to Toronto with no money, no job, no place to live, and no ability to speak English and communicate. Somehow her father found a place to lodge them and went to find work,
but when the landlady discovered three little children, she turned them out. He returned later that evening to discover his wife, his children and their meager belongings sitting on the curb. Mary recalls her mother’s perspective.

You know it’s interesting, she said to me once. If it wasn’t for me we would never have come to Canada. If it had been up to your father, we would have remained in Europe. And that’s probably when she came and saw how hard she had to work.

They finally got settled in a part of the city where immigrants from all parts of the world were living. Her father worked during the day driving trucks, and when he returned home her mother went off to work cleaning offices in the downtown highrises. Her father would feed, bathe, and read to the children and then tuck them into bed until midnight, when he would bundle them into the car to go fetch their mother at work. When the children left for school her mother would busy herself with cleaning, sewing and cooking. She even swept the streets in order to prove that they were clean, hard-working, and worthwhile citizens. Mary recalls,

So my mother probably resented the fact that she had to work so hard and she probably thought her life was going to be easier and then she came to this country and it was hard for her.

During the post World War II years, Displaced Persons (DPs) who had fled their country of origin were numerous and did not integrate into the mainstream community. Mary remembers a rather insular childhood, eating lard sandwiches, or garlic or onion ones. *DPs had no illusions. It would take a lifetime of hard work to reach their*
aspirations, and most of their hopes would lie within the future of their children.

Assimilation into the mainstream was their best bet.

4. Jan:

Jan introduced herself as an Acadian but did not dwell on her own heritage. Jan said that her childhood was not one she particularly savored. When she married a Black African, most of her family disowned her and although she has recently had some contact with a few relatives, a reunion does not seem imminent. This part of Jan's dialogue appeared to bring great sadness to her for she had hoped that her family would embrace her marriage and not succumb to age-old prejudices that she believed were so prevalent in both her family and community. She feels that she and her son have lost as much as the rest of her family in the present estrangement and retains some hope that it might be different one day. At one point, Jan suggested that her marriage might have been interpreted as a "trophy" for her husband.

Jan spent a year in South Africa after her son was born and has maintained regular and close contact with her husband's family, returning each year to expose her son to his African heritage. Jan noted that she assumes financial responsibility for the family when she is there as all good African women are expected to do. Jan voiced the belief that she considered women to be the working poor in South Africa at the present time. She felt that economically this industrialized nation has suffered greatly since the end of Apartheid and that there will be long-term repercussions for all South Africans for years to come.
Constructing a Multiracial/cultural Self

1. Sue:

After university, Sue followed a strong desire to move to Hong Kong and work there for a year. She left her fiancé, a boyfriend of many years, and her parent’s home and went to live with relatives that she barely knew. Although she felt a bit of an anomaly, being of mixed race, she was well accepted and her extended family made her feel included and like one of them. However, she admits that both her family and acquaintances noted her physical appearance as becoming and somewhat “exotic.” She says she does not see this experience in a negative way. People are curious, and she liked to share information about herself just as they did.

I spent a year in Hong Kong after university and I had wanted to do it for a number of years but my Dad said, “No, you’ll hate the heat, you won’t enjoy it to go as a summer job while you’re in university.” So after I graduated it seemed like a good time to go. It was really nice...I think I was fortunate that I was able to experience a lot of the traditions and to see some of the landmarks. It is enriching just to live in a different place and meet some friends I have there. She sees it as an important phase for her to connect and confirm her place within her extended family and her cultural heritage.

...we had to do the whole family thing ...it’s so different going from a small family to a really large family. And I think actually that was one of the things that was nice for me because in Toronto or in Canada we’re just our family—there’s no extended family, so it’s nice to be a part of a big family. When we
went out for dinner we were taking up tables of 15 people.

She emphatically states that it is very important to her to have had that experience, to feel a part of the culture and to be a part of it all. She very much wants to provide a similar experience for her own children. "This was a pleasant experience, friendly and enlightening." This was something she felt strongly about and indicated that as her children got older, she would begin to make plans for their "cultural" enrichment and take them to Hong Kong to see the places that she saw and meet the people that she knew.

Sue is well aware of her Asian background. She indicates a personal pride in her Asian and English heritage and has independently cultivated an interest in her heritage. She subtly but continually seeks to confirm and acknowledge it through Chinese celebrations, food, artifacts, and items of personal, traditional and sentimental value which are liberally displayed in her lovely home. "We all love Chinese food." The children eagerly partake in these activities. They include their father in little games and enjoy feeding him ethnic food to see if he will eat it. It is a source of pleasure and makes for special moments. However, for the most part, and like her parents, Sue does not really practice the Chinese traditions seriously. "We don't do anything really cultural—like we don't celebrate any of the festival days or anything along those lines."

Although Sue was not given a Chinese name, her nickname was Nuy Nuy, which means "little girl" in Chinese. Her last name was clearly Asian and she remembered with humour that friends and teachers at school used to try to find the Asian face to match the name, often without any success. "I don't look overly Chinese and so people would look at my maiden name and then would look for a Chinese girl in the class and couldn't find
null
her.” Sue did mention that her name evoked this type of expectation because it was so obviously Asian. Perhaps in a way she was able to hide behind her looks and not have to openly identify as Chinese. She offers some humour on the subject. “Well the funny thing is that ... my mother’s maiden name was Watts and if she had hyphenated it with my father’s name, it would have been Watts-Wong.” Sue realizes that her own children do not have to live with a Chinese surname and consequently are not labeled as such.

Sue gave her own children Irish names and did not seek to carry on any Asian cultural traditions in this regard. “I couldn’t give them any Chinese names. My brother... can give his children Chinese names... but not my children... It’s not part of the archival process. The kids go along the father’s lineage.” Was this an attempt to thwart this stereotyped expectation in her own children? The names she chose for her children were clearly Irish and common to children of mainstream society. Yet the names of her children do reflect the ancestry of her husband, and so perhaps the patriarchal lineage has indeed been followed.

During the interview Sue did not indicate that she felt her parents encountered any problems due to their interracial marriage. This is interesting because of the lack of information or stories. She does not appear to be holding back, but rather does not know of anything. It may be perfectly true that they did not encounter problems, but perhaps they just did not let her know. Could this be a form of protection that parents naturally supply their children?

She thought her maternal grandparents were very accepting of her father and did not resent or resist the union. She knew her maternal grandparents quite well, as they...
lived with her family for some time. They did seem to accept the marriage and deeply loved the grandchildren. She says her grandfather did not like the cold Canadian weather and despite his daughter's presence returned to England. Perhaps he also did not like living in an interracial family? Her grandmother did return to Canada to live with them again after his death and presumably did not experience any difficulty.

Sue maintains that her parents did not show any concern about the mixed racial heritage of their children, nor did any of them experience racism during her childhood. This may be only her perception or perhaps the message her parents conveyed to her. They may not have had any difficulties, but they may also have actively avoided them as well, by living in a white neighbourhood, sending their children to racially/culturally integrated or private schools, and mixing with carefully chosen individuals and social groups. Indeed, they may have successfully been able to shield their children from the negative aspects of racism.

However, Sue did note that sociopolitical tensions were high in Quebec at the time that they left Montreal and that her father appeared glad to leave. She felt this was due to the Quebecois mood at the time and not particularly related to his Asian ancestry nor to their multiracial family. This move would suggest that the family had been sensitive to racial and cultural attitudes of that time and place. Their move to a more stable and peaceful city that could ensure safety for the children, financial opportunity and prospects, a good neighbourhood, and the possibility of social class advancement may have also been factors.

Sue says she did not personally experience racist attitudes while growing up in
Montreal or Toronto, although she did sense a difference in the racial climate and felt that Toronto was not as ethnically integrated. She pointed out that Toronto’s ethnic populations tended to live in specific areas such as Chinatown. On a day-to-day basis, Sue generally identifies with mainstream society and tends to mix with those within her socioeconomic class, rather than with any specific culture or race. It would appear that her parents also developed a closer connection to friends within their social class when they immigrated to Canada, rather than with friends of their racial group, as they had in England.

Sue says that her children are well aware of their mixed ancestry, but do not show prominent Asian physical or facial features and so are not publicly faced with the question on a regular basis. However, when assigned cultural projects, they tend to respond with interest to Asian orientations. They also recognize that there are “more” Chinese children in their class and they may acquiesce to those whom they perceive have a more “legitimate” claim to a Chinese ancestry.

For Sue, the experience of racism is generally closely linked to physical characteristics, skin colour, and facial features. Throughout our conversation Sue reiterated that she did not look Chinese, that her features were not particularly obvious. She says even her brother, who is darker, was not readily recognized as part Chinese. In this case Sue does not feel that she looks particularly Asian and does not feel a need to fulfill a stereotyped image. She does note that people recognize a difference in her appearance, but it is always in a positive light and she is not made to feel embarrassed, ashamed, or different.
She describes her children as not looking Chinese either, and they also do not behave according to the stereotype.

They don’t look Chinese in the slightest so there is no physical identification. But there is an Asian stereotype that commonly depicts these individuals as highly motivated in a scholastic sense and consequently highly successful academically (especially in Maths and Sciences) as well as professionally. This is something that is seen as cultivated by the parents who want their children to work hard in order to do well in school and thus in life. It is a highly competitive phenomenon.

Sue implies that she is aware of the image and does not subscribe to it as a parent, nor do her children, nor do they feel any pressure to do so. Could this be because they don’t look obviously Asian?

2. Lisa:

Lisa went to Japan looking for an adventure, and certainly her life evolved from that experience as she encountered her future husband. However, she continually feels drawn back to Mexico and has spent several extended lengths of time living there with her relatives. Her mother and her siblings have indicated that they are all considering retiring in Mexico, and Lisa would be happy to do so as well.

I felt a real need to go to Mexico as a young adult. I had been there and had done part of my elementary schooling there and had gone there on visits, but I felt like a real need because since I look so Canadian and I had to validate it. Whenever I’m down there I do feel, “Oh good, I’m getting more of it in me.”

Lisa yearns for that feeling of belonging of wanting to be part of that culture that
continually draws her and the rest of her family back to the land of their heritage.

Lisa voiced the regret that she did not look particularly Mexican and was not generally recognized as such by the general public. She felt this way when she was in both Canada and Mexico. “At times I wanted to look more Mexican because people didn’t usually think that I was.”

She showed me a picture of her Mexican mother whom she resembles, but who also does not typify the dark “Latin” look that often denotes Spanish ancestry. In this case, Lisa implies that she desires to look more Mexican because that look appeals to her personally. She sometimes feels as if she wants to justify her ethnic ancestry because she does not look Mexican. She feels that her physical appearance does not reflect her ethnicity. She is proud of her ancestry and would like to display it in some way. Lisa’s sense of ethnic pride is very apparent in her voice as she states, “For me, personally, it had been a tremendous source of pride.”

Lisa explained the legalities of being Mexican, Canadian, and Taiwanese for the various members of her family. Lisa appears to have found some solace by authenticating her legal status through her various Canadian and Mexican passports as well as her Taiwanese driver’s license and her alien residence card, which are highly cherished.

Even her children have their own Mexican and Canadian passports, although they are considered to be the sons of a Taiwanese father and will retain all the rights of Taiwanese, including public health and education rights. The new Mexican passports have been a great source of ethnic pride for Lisa and her family.
Lisa was very careful to have her sons born in Canada in order to ensure that they
not be drafted into the Chinese military service when they become older. The problem
does not appear to be so much an issue with the various governments, especially with
Canada, as they would consider them to be Canadian no matter where they were born.

Lisa talked a lot about ‘rights’ both for herself and others who marry a Taiwanese.
Men who marry Taiwanese women are not awarded the same legal status or privileges.
This appears to be of particular importance to Lisa and provides her with the necessary
security to cope with her life in such a foreign country. It sounds as if one cannot take
“rights” for granted. It is very important that precautions are taken to ensure that the
family has legal status elsewhere other than in Taiwan and that they have the means and
education to pursue a livelihood somewhere else if necessary.

Lisa explains in detail the differences between being the Western wife to a
Taiwanese man and being a Taiwanese wife to a Western husband. She says this is very
different, both legally and culturally. Western wives are brought into the Asian culture,
but Western husbands, to some extent, take a Taiwanese woman into their own culture.

Foreign men who marry Taiwanese women don’t get the same rights as women
get because there’s this thinking that Taiwanese women have married outside of
the system and therefore are going to go there or just somehow they are not as
important now that they have left the fatherland...

The Taiwanese government is more apt to recognize the legal status of Western
women, rather than men who marry into the race/culture. Since Taiwan has a
complicated history of ethnicities between China and Japan, the people have resorted to
a Taiwanese nationality. Food, language, and social and traditional customs all are important aspects in a Taiwanese marriage, and both wives and husbands are expected to fulfill traditional roles.

Lisa has retained her maiden name, but her husband did choose a Chinese name—a word that means Rosebell.

I don’t feel petite, feminine, fragile, sweet, like my Chinese name suggests but my husband gave it to me with much love, so the name is gradually through the years growing on me. For example, I do feel more of a connection to roses now—I thought they were pretty before, but now since my name includes the Chinese character for rose, it’s a little bit more of a connection. Now I feel that it’s my flower. But my Western name still feels more like the real me.

It would appear that her maiden name is important to her—some form of personal identity perhaps. The Chinese name awarded by her husband does not feel appropriate to her, but it was necessary to come up with something to put on her driver’s license. It would seem that she did not make any attempt to come up with something more meaningful to herself, nor did she resist her husband’s decision. However, it would also seem that this particular name is not so important to her and does not actually reflect much of her self-identity.

Her children have been given Western names, although she admits that she is waiting for her husband to proclaim Chinese names for the children. These names are supposed to depict a certain image of the person the child is either meant to be or hopes to be or is hoped to be by the parents. Names can be a big deal for these families, and great
care is taken to select the most suitable name that would ensure good fortune for the child. It is interesting that these names are descriptive ones that imply certain abilities or personalities i.e., Tiger. It occurs to me that perhaps the child might make some kind of conscious or unconscious attempt to live up to or into the name that was awarded.

3. Mary:

Mary became an actress. With all her private bedroom dramatics and her lack of inhibition to speak out, she found her voice. She was selected to play Helen Keller in a production of the Miracle Worker—not that she even had to speak but she could certainly demonstrate and embodied so much of those imponderable expressions of frustration and emotion. She became quite a little star and went on to do a regular role in a TV series. Here she met new people—not just other immigrants, but people of mainstream, people of money and influence. And she loved it. She dutifully brought home the money, but it was not really appreciated. The money was fine, but she was not really fulfilling the dignified image that her parents had hoped she would fill. However, she persevered and proved successful in many of her theatrical and dancing endeavors. Most people would have called that a real achievement, but her family did not acknowledge this and eventually she let it drift out of her life. She continued to slip into one situation or another but never really settled on what one could call a career. When she finally married for second time and had a child, she began to focus on this demanding challenge.

When Mary and her mother went back to the Ukraine for a visit a few years ago, Mary was surprised to discover that the family her mother had left behind was so very warm, friendly, even jolly. How could her mother have come from such a lineage?
When I met my mother’s family – they were so different from my mother. Because my mother can be so very stern and difficult sometimes and very stoic and her family was so happy and so loving and my mother’s not very loving or touchy and so warm and I couldn’t believe that my mother came from that family. When she visited her father’s family, she found them to be the opposite, much more staunch and reserved, very unlike the warm and gentle father she had known.

My father’s family...they were so—they should have been my mother’s family. They were very quiet and stoic. And my father was more the touchy, feeling—yeah come on in everybody. So it’s interesting to me how my mother came from that family and she turned out the way she did and my father the opposite.

What can one say? Why do we turn out the way we do? But it is curious that some people can have the same experience and yet internalize it in such a different way.

I think it is interesting that her mother felt drawn back to the old country—to touch base, to reaffirm, to confirm those beginnings from so long ago. And why did Mary go too? Was it not meant that she should discover more about herself and her mother in this way?

Mary is planning another trip to Europe with her sister, this time to Belgium, her place of birth. They are both very excited and anticipate seeing all the places their family frequented while living there.

Mary describes herself as very “Slavic,” with her high cheekbones, thick lips, and slanted eyes, and considers herself readily identified as a visible minority based on her physical appearance. Mary is considered very attractive, but has been misidentified as
many races such as Black, Mongolian, Asian, Latino, and numerous other combinations.

Mary's husband is of Greek/Czechoslovakian ancestry and he also looks very East European. Consequently, their son has inherited features of both his parents and would likely also be identified as something other than mainstream.

Mary has always been very conscious of her appearance, particularly in her profession on stage and screen. She does not fit every role and is often specially selected for certain parts because of her exotic appearance.

When Mary was a child, she says she imagined herself with a name like "Mary" or "Susan" because her own name was so distinctly Ukrainian, so different from everyone else's name. However, as she got older, she acquired an appreciation for her name, although she shortened it so it did not retain the same ethnic flavour. In fact, her entire family Anglicized their names and only her sister has taken back her Ukrainian name today.

When we came to Canada they didn't know how to write our names, and they couldn't say them either, so the immigration officials made up names that they could recognize. Dmitri became Jimmy, Hala became Helen and Jaroslav became Jerry. They called me Mimi for years, then Mary, then Marilyn. I remember hating my name. So what I'm saying is there's a lot more pride to be a little bit different now than there was then. Today it's very hip, very cool. But when I first came here, you hid that — you didn't want anyone to know — you were embarrassed because people made fun of it. Nobody talked about multiculturalism then. I'm sure everyone thought we were very weird kids.
These words of Mary's brought back many acute memories to me as I recalled how different she was and yet how strongly we were drawn together, despite our differences. And yet, when Mary's son was born, she immediately gave him a Ukrainian name by naming him after her father, Dmitri.

She was also very conscious of her surname, and when she married a blond, Caucasian American she kept his last name, and even though she is now remarried, she has not resumed either her present husband's last name which is Greek, nor her maiden name which is Ukrainian. She much prefers the Anglo-Saxon one and does not apologize for this. Although she has a Ukrainian first name, she has Anglicized it as well.

Personally I can recall her angst as a teenager when she was forced to carry her Ukrainian surname like a banner that announced her ethnicity. To her it represented everything she was trying to shirk from her image. Today she reflects on those feelings as typical of youth, but remains dissociated from the name. It would seem that Mary continues to deal with this contradiction. Although she chose a Ukrainian name for her son, and married a man with a very "ethnic" Greek surname, she has modified her first name and retained her Anglo-Saxon surname from a previous marriage.

At this stage of her life Mary says that she does not mind being identified as Ukrainian, but in her earlier life, she felt that it represented something other than the regular, acceptable, mainstream. Today, she describes feelings of conflict as she recalls how she felt about her culture, and yet it is something she is anxious to preserve for her son. She admits that she likely passes some of her ambivalent feelings about this part of her identity on to her son. She says that she tends to leave much of the cultural
transmission to her mother who lives with them and hopes that some of it will simply rub off on her son. She feels that her mother's use of the Ukrainian language, her cooking of Ukrainian meals and her taste in Ukrainian works of art, tapestry and ceramics will help to influence her son's acceptance of his Ukrainian heritage.

Mary's mother continues to cook all the old Ukrainian favourites—perogies, cabbage rolls, borscht, marzipan and pastries. I used to marvel because it all seemed so gloriously ethnic! To Mary, it certainly seems better than the lard, garlic or onion sandwiches of those early years, but she admits that it probably represents the progress that the family made over the years. Still she regards it as "ethnic" food and feels that it continues to label her as Ukrainian, despite the fact that outsiders consider it marvelous. She tries to explain her feelings.

Well maybe they wanted to hand down the pride of the culture but you kept it and maybe that's why certain cultures stayed together because when you went outside of that you were sort of looked on as sort of dirty, disgusting.

When I met Mary she made little effort to withhold her contempt for her mother's culinary achievements. Even today, although she grudgingly admits that she does like some of the foods, she really prefers other types of food and has not learned to make any of the Ukrainian dishes. She says that it's because her mother does not follow recipes and cannot be bothered to show her. But it would seem that it is because of a combination of factors.

Language was a prominent theme in Mary's musings. In fact, she has always felt a calling to the study of language and has finally returned to university to study it. This is
something I remember well about Mary. She was always good at languages in school, and I used to marvel how she could excel at French, Spanish, German, Russian, Polish, Czechoslovakian, and of course, Ukrainian.

Although her parents were able to speak a number of European languages while living in Europe they did not adapt so easily to English. Mary tells an amusing story about her father attempting to order a Western omelet, only to be repeatedly directed to the men’s room. It was with great illumination that the waiter finally grasped the meaning of the request. However, her father caught on fairly quickly as he was able to work with other men who spoke the language well. Her mother never did learn to speak English without a very thick accent, and Mary puts this down to her lack of interaction with English-speaking Canadians when she first came to Canada. Mary recalled teasing her mother by asking her to repeat the work Massachusetts. With great glee she and her sister would laugh at her mispronunciation and consequent frustration and humiliation. This was something I noticed from the beginning. I often wondered if her mother understood what was being said or if she was just annoyed at something else. Sometimes I did have trouble understanding her. I always wanted to get to know her better but sensed impenetrable barriers, the least of which was not language. I felt that her children did not give her much credit for her efforts to learn English, as she diligently attended classes in the beginning. Since I realized how difficult it would be for me to learn Ukrainian, I sympathized. But her children had no difficulty learning English and often displayed contempt at their mother’s heavy accent and mispronunciations. At times I suppose they were embarrassed, but it was the 1960s and at that time, anything was fair
game if it represented parents, so perhaps this situation was exaggerated by the era.

Mary herself did not speak English until she started school. But she was aware of her deficiency and remembers playing with her sister, pretending and experimenting with the strange sounds as they assumed various characters in their role-playing. She laughs now when she remembers her brother's frustration as he retorted to her heart-rending soliloquies and readings with shouts of shutup. She admits that perhaps she just loved to hear her own voice. *Here one can see the workings of the young mind when faced with incomprehensible situations. She tried to make sense of the confusion and built it into a form that she could work with and learn. She seems to have been preparing or schooling herself for what was inevitably to come. The fact that she was able to find power and release in her new language must have seemed like a miracle, for here was her ticket out of this place of foiled plans and shattered aspirations.*

Mary also clearly remembers feeling a need to protect herself, and thus her first English word uttered outside the home was SHUTUP. She remembers uttering the syllables in response to just about everything at first. But once out on the street, her quick ear allowed her to pick up the new language. *She, like her mother, was a survivor and learned what was needed to survive. Also, to shield herself from unkind thrusts she struck out with harshness and the only word she knew that could protect her. Was this not much like what her mother had done in similar situations—a means of survival and self-protection?*

As Mary raises her own son, she is mindful of his response to the Ukrainian language and felt some regret when he began to beg her to not speak Ukrainian. He too
wanted to be like the other kids at school and speak only English. He did not want her or his grandmother to demonstrate their language in public either. It was not until he went on a cruise with his mother and grandmother and they were seated with a family from South America, who were speaking Spanish, that he realized his good fortune. At this point, he was quite eager to have his mother and grandmother converse with him in Ukrainian, even if he had to fake it. *Mary believes it was at this point that he began to see what it was like for others and that it really is a great big world out there. He also seemed to note that speaking a different language did not necessarily mean that one was inferior or deficient—wonder where he got this idea?? In this instance he was able to explore a neat anomaly in his repertoire of heritage gifts.*

There were lots of other examples of Ukrainian culture in Mary's life. When she was in her teens, she and her sister became involved in a Ukrainian dance troop led by a remarkable woman who took these young people under her wing and gave them a reason to be proud of their heritage. *I knew this woman as well. She was able to do this in a nonintrusive manner, and although very outspoken and probably before her time, as they say, she was able to relate to Mary during those tumultuous adolescent years. In support of this endeavour, Mary's mother stitched and embroidered blouses and costumes until the blood ran from her fingers. I don't know why she eventually quit the dancing, but it seemed to have served its purpose at the time.*

The church had been a factor in Mary's life, but she was not particularly religious. However, it did provide a foundation for her ethnic activities and a source of community for her family. She found pleasure in the holiday traditions and the wedding celebrations
and dances. It was a family, community-based form of recreation and appeared to meld the Ukrainian immigrants together. When she moved from that part of the city, she could not find a church that embodied that same sense of family and the tradition of passing something on to the children. She regrets not being able to provide this for her son.

Sometimes I feel sad...we can’t go out to the west end anymore...I think it’s important to go to a church...when we lived in the west end we went to church at Easter time...they have the baskets and the eggs and you make the lamb out of butter and you go and get it christened and it’s a beautiful parade...but we don’t go to that church now because it’s far away and I can’t find a church in the area.

_I can see that Mary would like to be able to include this aspect of her heritage into her life, but as she is married to someone who is not of that religion, it appears to require too great an effort and she finds it hard to become motivated._ Since the religious parts of the tradition are not that important to her, she does not feel the commitment that might come to someone who was a practicing Catholic. Since none of her friends or neighbours are Ukrainian, she does not have anyone else to participate with in this activity and it has been allowed to sink to a lower priority. However, she expresses regret over it.

4. Jan:

Jan had been a teacher and returned for her graduate studies, eventually specializing in cultural studies. She described how she developed an academic interest in Nova Scotian Black history, producing a number of papers on the subject. Although she does not feel that this part of her work was well received by Nova Scotian Blacks, she
attributes this to what she perceived as their resistance and hostility toward whites researching and writing about blacks. Since that time, her work has received acknowledgement, and she feels that this is because her work has since been validated. She also conducted significant research on the Mi'kmaq natives of Nova Scotia. She says it was from her Mi’kmaq friends and acquaintances that she first learned about “unconditional love.”

Despite our human failings, I was always included among these Mi’kmaq who would gently and in their own way and time, ‘set me straight’ about my errors.

They never excluded me.

Jan feels a strong attachment to Nova Scotian history and culture and has made significant effort to develop this part of her inner self. She reveals a certain lack of confidence in her professional accomplishments as a phase or product of her early experiences, but she believes that she did good work, just regrets that it was not acknowledged fairly by her peers. However, she tries to understand and accept the complexity of race politics and greatly values her relationships with Mi’kmaqs, Africans, and other Blacks, who can “see beyond her race.”

Jan has actively pursued a relationship with her ex-husband’s family even though this takes a great deal of time, effort, and money. She did not discuss her own family to any great extent, but does feel a strong admiration for the early Acadians from whom she is descended.

Jan talked about her ex-husband whom she had met in Canada while he attended university when he was living in exile. He had been a freedom fighter during the time of
apartheid in South Africa and had been trained as a covert fighter and had lived a life that demanded a life-or-death philosophy for the sake of freedom. Jan explained that he had been trained to be a killer, and she found that he had been discouraged to share any inner thoughts and feelings. This later contributed to problems in the marriage. Jan believes that her husband turned out to be very different than she had expected. She was disconcerted by his history of political violence and perhaps that explains her present concerns for her son’s peace-oriented education and her promotion of harmony and reconciliation.

Jan explained that as a woman she was taken into her husband’s African family and granted a revered position within the family in her role as the mother of the oldest son. Culturally speaking, in Africa many mothers are honoured and cherished, and Jan says that race and nationality had no bearing on this aspect of her relationship with the family. It would seem that Jan’s husband’s family has replaced her own, as they appear to have embraced her as a daughter and she feels very honoured by this relationship. Jan indicates that a man would likely experience a different reception, as he would be considered a foreigner. In this African culture, people from Africa are not specifically labeled in racial terms, but rather they are classified according to their behaviour and how well they fulfill familial expectations.

When Jan was pregnant with her son, she was told by her mother-in-law that she had had a vision and that Jan’s son was to be called Rakwedi, which means “the man who owns the moon,” after a distant ancestor. Jan explained that this was common—to name a child after an ancestor and to conduct a naming ceremony. Names are passed down
through the father’s line. Her husband had an African name that was handed down through his father’s lineage. Naming appears to be a very important aspect of the African culture. Names mean something. They can be interpreted in words or phrases and in a sense serve to provide an image or model for the child. It is not clear whether or not the child learns to live up to his name or if the name itself, if awarded appropriately through a certain ceremony, releases an element of power or karma over the life of the child. The fact that Jan did not relinquish her own maiden name implies that it remained a part of her personal identity. The fact that her ex-husband also lived by his African name suggests that he too perceived that he was fulfilling some kind of destiny.

Jan took part in other African rituals. When her son was born she respected these traditions, although she found some of them hard to bear. For example, when the baby was born, all of his hair was cut off and offered to the water spirit. In this case, they still lived in Nova Scotia and so offered the hair to the Atlantic Ocean. In another ritual, they buried the umbilical cord in soil that her mother-in-law had sent from Africa.

Jan’s son has been taught some of the African traditions to introduce him to his African heritage. As Jan explained, she feels that the children of this culture are irresistibly attracted to each other, sensing that they have something in common.

Jan has some lovely African pieces of art in her home and displays them in manner that shows they are very cherished items, as they are arranged on specially designated shelves and as wall hangings about the apartment.

Jan does not actively practice through an organized religious denomination, but recently she has encouraged her son to become more involved with the Christian faith.
She is very cognizant that her son be trained to “fit in” and that he have the benefit of learning more about religion so that he can make an informed choice when the time comes for him to seek spiritual support.

Jan speaks English and so does her son. She would like him to be able to speak Sesotho, but as she cannot speak it fluently, she has resigned herself to the shortcoming and hopes he will pick it up as he grows older and spends more time in South Africa.

Mothering the Multiracial/cultural Child

1. Sue:

Sue did not talk a lot about her mothering role. She sees her own mother as having been very competent, loving, and content. She had a happy childhood and respects both of her parents very much. However, she concedes that her parents made certain decisions early in their marriage.

I think they probably would have had to make the decision to hang out with Chinese or Caucasian people—because we don’t look that Chinese. So it would have been up to them how they chose their friends....One thing I find interesting about my parents is how they had this big circle of Chinese friends in England and they don’t have one in Toronto or Montreal. They just made friends in their neighbourhood—it’s like everybody does when you move somewhere new....But when my aunt moved here she made a zillion Chinese friends and my parents sometimes socialize with some of her friends.

*Sue is very comfortable with her Chinese mixture and has not concerned herself very much with her parents’ experiences.* "They never really talked about it. I don’t think
they had any particular issues when they came to Canada." However, she has noted that they did not feel a need to seek out a Chinese connection when they moved to Canada and they did not pursue it with their children. *Basically it would seem that they assimilated into the mainstream of Canadian society and have remained there to this day, although Sue is cautious not to assume that this was their intent.*

I don’t know if that was a conscious thought process. I mean something took him to England to start with, but education was very important to the family.

*Sue appears to be fulfilling the same role as her own mother and can be seen out at the hockey rink cheering her son on as he thwarts those pucks.* Her children do well in school, and she does not appear to have any concerns in that area. She does not question their curriculum and has confidence that their needs are being met. She is very busy with her own interests as well, and appears to have energy and drive to take on several tasks while simultaneously handling motherhood.

Sue commented that she might have felt differently about her mixed race if her mother had been Chinese instead of her father, as she would have felt a stronger influence because of the time her mother would have spent with her.

*I mean you’re talking to your kids all the time so it probably would have made a difference. I guess when you get married you decide what you are going to do with your children and where you are going with this.*

*Sue has lived in the white mainstream all of her life, and because she does not look predominantly Chinese she does not have to deal with issues from that perspective,* at least in public. *Since her children look Caucasian, she is considered to be the same,*
as she is their biological mother.

I don’t anticipate my children will have people asking them what they are. They don’t have the name like I did, so there wouldn’t be any reason except if they brought it up themselves. Like for example, my daughter was doing this project and she said she should choose China, but then she said, there’s a lot more Chinese people in the class and they will probably choose that topic.

*Overall, she finds that their appearances are accepted as the norm and they do not feel any need to “represent” the Chinese race. However, they do acknowledge it openly when it suits their circumstances.*

2. Lisa:

As previously mentioned, Lisa harboured some concern that her body and facial characteristics did not noticeably reflect her Mexican heritage. However, she does believe that her children’s physical characteristics and facial features very clearly denote them as mixed-race Asians and that both Westerners and Asians clearly find them to be very attractive—even more so than if they were one or the other of their ancestral races. She feels that the mixed race appearance of the boys elicits a tremendous amount of positive and doting attention by Taiwanese in Taiwan.

*In Taiwan, it would appear that Western features such as round eyes are*
particularly appealing. The genetic makeup of these children engenders a significant source of pride in both Lisa and her husband's family. "My father-in-law can't keep his eyes off them and makes it very obvious that he's thrilled with their beauty..." It seems as if this is not only considered to be attractive, but also even a sign or a means of social improvement. Perhaps the ability to "cross over" cultures might even be considered to be an advantage.

I would say that because their physical body is being perceived as more beautiful they are given elevated status, but is a very—people would cross the road to take a look at my son. They were curious and wondered what this mixture would look like. It's like if you mix one breed of animal with another—what will it look like? Oh-so good looking....Because when I'm there I get people looking and they're curious and I've never had anyone say anything bad, but the weight of all the attention can get tiring.

In Canada, the children do not provoke the same degree of attention based on their appearance. "So it's two different experiences in Taiwan and Canada...it's a curiosity that I don't experience here. Nobody could care less here. I get no attention. It's much easier."

The boys associate with children of many races and combinations at school and in the community and do not particularly stand out. Although Lisa is proud of her children and accepts the profuse attention in Taiwan as a compliment, she does admit that it is a relief to live in Canada where she does not have to deal with so much attention. As a mother, one would question whether this profuse attention is a potential problem, for the
children would not only respond to such attention, but perhaps may come to expect it.

Also, Lisa does not look Asian, and so even in Canada the appearance of her children might elicit some curiosity. In a way, this would also create a need for the mother to justify her own “rights” as mother and perhaps increase her desire to authenticate her relationship with her children.

Lisa admits that stereotypes are part of Taiwanese tradition. This applies to Japanese, Taiwanese, Chinese, and Western individuals and cultures. Certain personalities and behaviours are associated with the various nationalities. Gender stereotypes are also prevalent, and certain expectations of women are well known and generally accepted. There are many sayings that depict these stereotypes.

I think most people in Taiwan don’t really want to have a western wife because they are considered to be stronger and voice their opinions more. So…there is a saying…ideally…if you want a Chinese man to have good life, you should marry a Japanese woman, because Japanese women are much softer, have an American house because they are bigger, and eat Chinese food because it is the most delicious.

These stereotypes appear to be closely related to historical experiences and references. They are not typical of Canadian stereotypes. Lisa does not mention stereotypes in multiracial children, but does note that Chinese are expected to be good with computers, or at least studious.

Lisa mentions that her children tend to accept their physical appearance as similar to that of their father, but still express a desire to relate to their mother in some special
way too. *This appears to be important to both children and their mother.*

Lisa plans to return to Taiwan with her children, so she is not as worried about promoting that culture at this time.

Since we’re going to go back to Taiwan I don’t need to do a lot of pushing of the Taiwanese culture because [my son] was there and he remembers it and we will still go….So I don’t’ actually push the Taiwanese culture because I know he will grow up with it.

But she expresses some concern about maintaining the Canadian and especially the Mexican, identity.

We will celebrate Christmas and those things. It’s been more of a struggle to pass down the Mexican heritage because we’ve never lived as a family in Mexico…I would love for my children to live for a year there, but at this point the whole logistics of that is beyond me.

3. Mary:

Mary mentions the lack of mother-bond she feels with her mother. “I try to be compassionate, but I don’t think I have a real connection to my mother and I always wondered why I never felt connected to her.” She puts this down to several reasons. In the first place, she was separated from her mother at birth. Although she had been born at home, she developed complications and needed to be hospitalized. She does not know what the problem was. Her mother was left to cope with two small children, aged 1 and 3, and a husband who worked all day long. The hospital was not local and she would have had to find day care for her children and then bicycle into the city to visit her
newborn infant once or twice a week. In fact, she could not nurse this baby, nor had she been able to breast-feed her other children, but this was probably because she was so malnourished herself. Her explanation was that her milk was no good. *This is not like the mother-bonding process that we now advocate for young mothers.* Also, to not be able to feed and look after the well-being of one's children must have been one more blow to this woman's self-esteem. Mary's response is, "I didn't ask to be brought into this world," not that she implies unkindness, but that she wants to express the reality of the repercussions that she endured herself as a result. She has trouble fathoming those years when her mother was giving birth, and to this day is not even sure of her own birth date. *She is not really blaming her mother, but does express some bitterness, for it meant that she had a lot to make up for in her own life.*

When Mary's mother developed rheumatic fever, she had to be hospitalized. In order to bring in enough money, her father had to leave and find work in Quebec, and thus the children had to be sent away to an orphanage. *Surely this would have entrenched staunch feelings of anger and perhaps led to the beginnings of a fighting spirit.* Mary remained very close to her sister, despite their differences in opinion, values, and chosen directions in life. *Mary is probably closer to this sister than to anyone else because of those early, shared experiences.*

It is with great pain and sadness that Mary talks about the lack of bonding she feels with her mother. She says that of course she loves her mother because she is her mother, and indeed she has supported her mother since her father's death and has made a home for her with her family. However, she describes her childhood as one without a mother's
comforting touch, without a soft lap to sit upon, without a breast to snuggle into, without even a hug or a kiss. "I don't ever remember her kissing me." In fact, Mary remembers once returning home from a trip as an adult and giving her mother a hug. She found her arms wrapped around the rigid form of her mother's body. "I remember thinking she can't even hug her own child." She still cannot explain it, but she does see a difference when her mother shows affection to her grandson. This seems to come much more naturally, and she appears to thoroughly enjoy this relationship. However, without the practice that one would normally have experienced during the years of motherhood, it must seem a little strange to her. I feel great sadness when Mary tells me about this part of her life. I, who have had so much love and affection from my parents and find so much in myself to give back to my own children. I can only surmise the terrible sense of pain and loss that her mother must have had to endure.

4. Jan:

Jan was 38 when her son was born, and she considers him a "gift from the ancestors," because doctors had told her she could not bear a child. Jan annually travels back to South Africa, for her own sake as well as for her son. She has found a second family and a home in that country and cannot foresee ever severing that relationship. Jan feels as if she has been adopted by her husband's family. In a sense she has adopted them as well, as her own family.

Jan believes the racial climate is very different in the GTA compared to other parts of Ontario and Canada. She has found that in Nova Scotia the urban centers are mainly composed of a white population but are ringed with black communities,
similar to South Africa. When she took her son to Antigonish, Nova Scotia for a teaching and research session one summer, she found the change to be refreshing, despite the homogeneous population. Her son was often asked, “Are you adopted?” However, she attributes this to several factors; the fact that he was not enrolled in school, it was for a short period of time, and her professional status may have provided a form of protection for him. She does not think that these conditions would have lasted had they remained there longer.

At the moment, her son says he wants to be a basketball player. But Jan is concerned that he is already earmarked as a great athlete and that he is already being pressured to fulfill a stereotype—black, boy, athlete. She finds herself intervening on his behalf and tries to explain it to him, but he does not understand. Jan says she knows that the world sees her son as a black kid.

White people look at black kids—remembering as a teacher, I now realize that black skin appears in different shades on different parts of the body. I used to think that they just had dirty necks, or did not groom themselves well because their hair was messy.

Jan does not want to provide any excuse for others to persecute her son. She keeps his hair short and clean so others won’t misinterpret his appearance. In order to protect any negative responses to his presence, she discourages him from wearing designer labels. She does not want him to display the hip-hop look. She attempts to send a clear message that this is a good, clean kid. She also tries to teach him strategies on how to present himself in a white world so that he will not incur the consequences of any
Jan admits that she has learned that in order to raise up an African-Canadian man-child, she has to do a "great deal of work" on herself. She says she is a product of a neo-colonial racist culture of Canada.

I deliberately surround him with "good black folks," and live "on the margins" in many ways. My son is "the light of my life," and I can only hope that by loving him enough (which to me means preparing him to live in a white world) that that will be enough. His teachers and other adults who know him say that he is "sweet," a pleasure to know and that he has a great deal of confidence and can move easily in and out of different situations.

Jan sounds like a mother with serious concerns about her child's future welfare and safety, especially as he gets older. She is actively trying to train him to live in a manner that will help him avoid confrontations. She encourages him to behave well and to seek success, and hopes that his sweet nature and adaptability will stand him in good stead.

Educating the Multiracial/cultural Child

1. Sue:

When Sue moved to Toronto she was in her last year of high school and found the transition demanded some adjustment. This may have been influenced by other factors such as the move itself, her last year in high school, needing to make new friends or even an academic adjustment owing to a difference in curriculums.

She found the ethnic make-up of the city to be differently constructed than that of
Montreal—various minority groups were segmented throughout the city, although they were free to interact in all mainstream activities. She says that she thought there was more overt racism in Toronto. This comment is interesting as it could define a different racial climate or it could be a young girl’s perception to feeling unfamiliar with a new place and new people—as if one were different or of a different race or culture. In other words, if she had grown up in Toronto, and moved to Montreal, she might have felt the same discomfort.

With respect to her children’s schools, which are private schools and considered elite, she notes that they (no discernment between individual teachers and schools) make an effort to honour all cultures and holidays equally. They take religious education, and in that course visit various religious institutions. The teachers seem to be open to new ideas and generally well informed about the various cultures.

They do a great job of that. They celebrate every single possible race and religion.

My daughter is in grade 5 and just did her religious studies and visited a church, a mosque, a synagogue—exposing them to different things. I think things are very different than when we grew up....In Montreal the private school system is subsidized by the government so the fees were nothing compared to what they are here. So my class would have been much more diverse than what my kids’ classes will ever be here. And just being part of Quebec and the French culture and things like that. I think people were generally a lot more accommodating and understanding—you just worked together and enjoyed it, celebrated it.

She does not think that they have specifically addressed issues of mixed race, but
she wonders if perhaps the question just has not yet arisen.

The racial/cultural make-up of these schools is reflective of the upper middle class of Toronto society. The schools are not co-ed and do include all grades. Well-to-do parents in this neighbourhood do not generally send their children to the public schools for very long. Their children live on a higher social scale and would benefit from the kind of attention and academic accolades that their parents expect from the private schools. In these schools, even those children with limited scholastic ability are offered other advantages in the private schools that are not available in the public schools.

Consequently, the public school population in this neighbourhood tends to be made up of children whose parents cannot afford to send them to private school, and/or who have a propensity for learning and/or behaviour problems.

She does admit that when recognized as having a Chinese background, she feels that her children are put to the stereotype test. "There is this stereotype that people of this regime are very smart—good at math and science." However, it would appear that her children are coping well with this, perhaps because they do not look Asian and therefore do not feel the intensity of the competition with the other "pure" Asians. Overall she sees things in a positive light. "I would say everything for me was very positive" although she admits, "I think things are very different than when we grew up,"

Sue has noticed some difference between the experiences of her own two children. Her older son appears to be more aware of his ethnic ancestry and has many Chinese friends and acquaintances at school. Her daughter shows signs of being aware of her Chinese ancestry but has encountered less reason to publicly acknowledge it. It should be
noted that Sue’s son attends a school that has a high Asian population and the daughter’s school’s population, although more multicultural, is predominantly mainstream and Caucasian.

2. Lisa:

Education is very important to Lisa’s husband—his own, his wife’s, and his children’s education have priority over almost everything else, including their home and personal lives. Lisa has left the bosom of his family and taken her children to Canada for purposes of education. He has remained behind to continue teaching as he has a good, secure administrative position. They plan to come together once Lisa’s education is completed, when they feel they can reside with more security in Taiwan.

When we first got married, I kept hoping and wanting him to be a teacher here, but now I think maybe it’s easier for me to be an English teacher in Taiwan than it is for him to learn a new way to teach in a Western culture that has different standards of teacher success and student success, and totally different approaches to learning...If he wanted to live and work here, I would be very happy. But since he doesn’t want to, and he has a good job in Taiwan, I have come to terms with that now and have accepted it.

Taiwan’s future is somewhat insecure due to the political changes that have recently occurred, now that it has become part of China once again. It is not a situation that has been easily accepted by all Taiwanese, and some history of persecution and dominance may preside over the people still. Lisa’s concern over her children’s citizenship can be appreciated in light of the changing political and national landscape.
A good education would better enable the family to survive no matter what the future holds. Lisa’s husband’s refusal to immigrate to Canada is curious. She feels that he is not confident about his English and that he would not easily find acceptance in Canadian society, especially as a teacher in the school system. This interpretation may be his own, it may be hers, or it may have been conveyed to them through overt or covert messages of others.

Lisa’s husband did not grow up in a home of privilege. He had to earn the money to pay for his education—the only child allowed to do so. His parents did not make him quit school to help support the family, as he seemed to be the one deemed “worthy” to go to school instead. “He was actually deemed the only worthy one to send off to school. So his brother and his two sisters didn’t actually get to go....Everyone in the family criticizes the parents for that decision but at that time things were tough.” Since school was free, this was not a matter of tuition fees, but a loss of wages perhaps. This may be one reason why the educations of Lisa and his children are so important to him.

Lisa and her husband have endured this long separation for the sake of her graduate schooling, because they both think that it is important.

I am actually very grateful to him, because there’s very great emphasis on education in Asia. I actually know two other couples who have done something similar to this. So it’s not quite as weird down there....My mother-in-law phoned me...just to chat...so actually they don’t feel antagonism for me doing this. If I were doing this with antagonism I would probably just give up because it wouldn’t be worth it...it’s hard enough and if I also had the emotional baggage
that everyone was angry at me I would just give up.

3. Mary:

Mary attended Ukrainian school with her sister and brother for 7 years when they were growing up in Toronto. They also belonged to a Ukrainian organization and had to dress in uniforms and wear a shirt and tie and of course, march. Although Mary did not talk much about her experiences at Ukrainian school, they must have had some kind of impact. I know her sister sent her own children, who were Mexican/Ukrainian, to Ukrainian school in their early years and Mary followed the same pattern, sending her son to a Ukrainian nursery school.

Today, Mary wonders what to do with her own son.

When he was little he spoke Ukrainian at home and went to Svitlichka where they spoke only Ukrainian and then when we moved he didn’t want to speak it any more and he used to get mad at me and say, “Mom don’t talk like that. I don’t like it when you speak like that,” and I know where that came from. He didn’t want to be different from the kids because I remember that feeling. As a kid you never want to be different, you always want to blend in. So he was adamant about not speaking and not understanding—although he did.

Now she sends him to a mainstream private school in urban Toronto. She has tried in various ways to opt out of the norm, by resisting sending him to some of the more elite clubs and organizations that she could now well afford. One summer she sent him down to an inner-city camp, and both she and he were delighted with the experience. She says now that he is getting older it gets harder, as they both feel the pressure to fit in. But
her biggest concern is making decisions for him that will provide him with a happy and better life. Sometimes, when he displays characteristics and responses to situations similar to her own, she wonders if it really matters at all or maybe they "might as well be living in a shack" like she once did. *This is a huge but common dilemma faced by many parents today as they enjoy the fruits of their labours now and can easily afford some of the better things in life. They tend to particularly dote on their children preparing them as well as possible for their future life, which they hope will provide something of everything. In some respects, one has to wonder what the purpose of all this is. Why do we want so much more for our children? Is more better? Of course not, well, not necessarily. But for many of these parents, whose own parents struggled just to put food in their stomachs, who suffered unmentionable hardships, who grew up with only a longing for something better, it is. It makes sense that these parents would want more for their children, as well as possibly the security that they will never have to suffer as their parents did.*

5. Jan:

Jan voiced some concerns about racial segregation, although she sees some benefits. She does not necessarily think that integration guarantees equality—quite the contrary. She feels that institutionalized schooling and racial streaming pose great concerns for her. She ponders the numbers of white OAC students in relation to minority representation. She feels that the dynamics of integrated schooling do not make these children full players.

The race theory trips us up—it is a theory based on abstraction based on reality,
but not reality. Everything is about race and nothing is about race. The reality of race is that those of colour live it day to day.

Jan is closely involved with her son’s teachers. She considers herself a teacher’s worst nightmare—being a professor in education—despite the fact that she is not professionally involved in that kind of teaching. Although all of her son’s day care providers were women of colour, all of his teachers have been white. She admits that they are very kind and considerate, but she does not believe that they have a clue about race. Jan’s son attends a smaller public school that has a culturally diverse population as many of its students live with their families in the International student family residences at the University of Toronto. His best friends are Chinese, but a few Blacks also attend the school also.

Jan hates the multicultural curriculum, for she feels that it is just add-ons.

The pioneer unit emphasized the Anglo-Celtic settlers in Ontario—a kind of Black Creek pioneer village image—not widely used in the Canadian or American concept. Such a mentality suggests this is the authentic past. There is no effort to include other concepts such as newcomers like the Acadians or South Africans. Lots of alternative definitions of pioneer. Nothing in it for the extraordinary kid’s experience. In my opinion, most children in the Greater Toronto Area are “extraordinary.”

She is also worried about the pressure to perform in school—she is afraid that expectations may be conveyed along race and culture lines. She feels that the teachers will not be able to acknowledge an appropriate sense of difference through that kind of
curriculum, despite their good intentions.

For the most part, she feels that the multicultural education is episodic and not pervasive enough throughout the curriculum. She recites examples, “Black History is covered in February-Black History month, Chinese heritage is covered during the Chinese New Year.” She would much prefer that they ask the students to think about such questions as, “What contributions did the Chinese make to the development of mathematics?”

Quilted Voices

The four participants from Group A, who had raised their children in the 1990s were invited to take part in a focus group discussion.

After the initial introductions, each of the participants was asked to reflect on the stories they would like to share with the group. In all cases, they chose to retell the stories that they had told me. This time, as I listened to their retold stories, I sensed a change in their delivery. Their voices were stronger, they had re-organized their words and thoughts, and were basically retelling an edited version of the first story told to me during the initial interview. I felt that they had used the interim time period between our interview and the focus group, to re-examine their stories and put them into a coherent perspective that would bear repeating to a group of strangers. During our interview, they had tended to meander through their thoughts and memories and their answers appeared to be quite spontaneous. As they brought forward their stories to the group, they included more of their own interpretations and clarifications and did not merely recite the story.

At this time, they all began to intermingle their stories with each other’s and were
able to compare some of their personal interpretations. They started on one topic and each shared a part of themselves, moving on to new topics as the conversation waxed and waned. Many of their stories developed out of a “kernel...a brief reference to a phrase in a longer story told previously...further cementing the group’s feelings and relationships” (Minister, 1991, p. 34). I found it to be a remarkable process, “collaborative, participatory and inclusive,” (Minister, p. 34) and I hardly seemed to be present, except when they would turn to me for what Minister calls “verbal intersupport” to clarify, to interpret specific details or to offer nonverbal collaboration (Minister, 1991).

Overall, they conversed amongst themselves, and I was able to withdraw to the role of observer as their own questions and answers kept the dialogue going. In this way, they revisited and reconfirmed the points made during the initial interviews. As Minister (1991) observed, “listening to their colleagues stimulates their own recall of events long dormant or never before considered worthy of being spoken” (p. 39). This was particularly noted by several of the participants. Occasionally I, too, felt the urge to participate in the conversation, offering some self-disclosure and increasing the intimacy of the exchange.

**Multiracial/cultural roots.**

Everyone gave a brief overview of their ancestry and some of the immigration story that had been recorded in the first interview. However, I sensed that they did this to locate themselves within the stories they wanted to tell that evening. I cannot say whether they felt they were too personal to share or whether they wanted to talk more about themselves at this time. However, there was never a lag in the conversation and they
appeared to be able to converse freely with much cooing, laughing, nodding and other forms of affirmation as each participant politely took their turn.

All of the participants seemed to accept each other as mothers of multiracial/cultural children and were very interested in comparing their experiences. For instance the Mexican/Canadian mother married to a Chinese man, appeared eager to exchange stories with the Chinese/English mother. All were very interested in the experiences of the Ukrainian mother, whose racial and cultural concerns for her child were so similar to those of the other mothers.

As mentioned during the interviews, all of the mothers had travelled to parts of the world that reflected their racial or cultural heritage. They agreed that these pilgrimages were important in a personal fulfilment of their sense of self. It was personal, private and something that all of them did alone. These were not necessarily family trips, nor vacations. They were meaningful and spiritual and all of them wanted to provide an opportunity for their children to experience the people and places that were so important to them as mothers.

**Mothering the multiracial/cultural child.** Mothering was first on everyone’s mind. It was obvious that their children were big priorities for them at this stage of their lives. They took the job seriously and three out of four of them mothered full time and were not employed outside of the home on a regular basis. Since the birth of their children, they had developed an intense interest in anything that enriched or hindered the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual welfare of their children. They were all extremely well informed and made a point of knowing what their children were doing and how they were
feeling. These were things that they talked about on a regular basis. They did not simply assume that their children would grow up to be fine, but felt instrumental in the process of raising their children and assisting them in constructing a personal, racial, and cultural identity. In this group, all of the mothers had sons, but one of them also had two daughters. The one who had girls did not acknowledge that they had raised them differently with respect to race or culture. They recognized that their children comprised a different racial or cultural heritage than either of their parents and made a sincere effort to develop an affinity for their child's personal heritage as well as to instil an appreciation for the heritage of others.

The process of naming children appears to be one way in which these mothers have promoted their children's ethnicity. In all cases, the children were named or will be named according to their personal heritage. Again, this varies from the experiences of their own parents, who Anglicized their children's names instead. Even nicknames are more prominent in the mothers' names, as these mothers did not tend to give their children nicknames or shortened versions of their full names. They felt their children took pride in the uniqueness of their names and were very accepting of name variances amongst their peers. In fact, they even tried to find unique spellings of Anglicized names in order to be different. In the case where one of the children expressed reservations about his name, his mother made a point of explaining the traditional significance of the name and found present-day celebrities that had the same name. Some families have attributed certain noble or spiritual characteristics to the names. These children might then attach an image to the name. In some cases, the names are passed down in a
patriarchal manner that relates to the actual lineage and therefore can be explained logically to some extent. Of course, the surname of the children usually reflected the father's heritage. If the children resemble that race or culture, then they readily identify with it. But those who do not, gradually tend to develop an affinity for it because outsiders perceive them to be representative of that race/culture. "I always thought my blond children identified more with their English grandmother, but recently my daughter informed me that she considers herself Italian, partly because she has an Italian name."

All of these mothers had noted differences with respect to their own physical characteristics while they were growing up, despite the fact that they were all able to self-identify as white. Some had wanted to look more ethnic, while some had wanted to look more "white." Mary made the following observation.

I just hated the fact that I looked very ethnic. Now it's very cool and chic to look different and to have mixed blood. But I remember looking very different, having a different name, and speaking a different language. I was always very embarrassed, and we were called names. And yet I find it interesting that you wanted to be more Mexican looking and not looking so Canadian. I wanted to be named Susan and eat white bread instead of rye bread.

Today, although their own children's physical appearance tends to present a mixed racial/cultural identity, neither the children nor their mothers are concerned. They overwhelmingly agreed that the differences are well received and accepted within their social groups and that their children report positive experiences related to their appearances. In some cases, their unique physical characteristics are considered to be
more desirable than not. The mothers were alert to the possibility of "some years of angst" to come as their children approach adolescence. They did not feel that their children were concerned with "blending" but appreciated themselves as individuals. In some cases, their experience with their own teenaged relatives is that ethnicity is actively promoted and they were able to assume whichever identity served their purposes at the time. For instance, Mary's blond, Ukrainian/Mexican niece identified as Ukrainian as a child and teenager, but has chosen to emphasize her "Latino" identity by dying her hair dark and dressing in Latino fashions as a young woman. She feels this is very chic. The general consensus of the group was that the media representation of different races and cultures has made some of the ethnicities very appealing and alluring, so that their children will want to strive to display their own ethnicity. The mothers believed their children did not perceive it as inferior. However, all of the mothers do feel that this sense of freedom has a lot to do with where one lives, and they think they and their children would probably adjust their identities to the racial/cultural climate of the community.

They admitted that some of this reticence could be related to the immigrant experience. At the time of Mary's immigration, there were no special ethnic areas of the city, such as Little Italy. In this case, this mother felt that her neighbourhood was totally integrated with immigrants from all over the world. At that time she felt that people in Toronto were rather narrow minded and did not appreciate the differences that such immigrants offered this country. She did not define this experience as racist, but still she sensed their difference, and of course there were no multicultural programs and ethnic cultures were not supported by the government or in the school programs. Nothing was
free, and they were not aware of any programs that they could have accessed. In contrast, today things are very different for her and they do not feel this way any more. Sue’s only real experience with racism occurred during the Quebecois movement as she perceived an anti-English and anti-immigrant climate. However, she defined that more as a “nationalistic attitude.”

Lisa said she did not feel un-Canadian. She would have preferred to look more obviously Mexican and was definitely not concerned about racism. However, it should be noted that Lisa is somewhat younger than the other participants and grew up in New Brunswick during the 1960s.

None of these three have been particularly affected by racism on a personal level, although all indicated that they were well aware of the potential. They appear to be teaching their children to be proud of their heritage and all that it encompasses so that they will not feel compelled to abandon their racial/cultural identity. All of these women are presently living within the upper-middle brackets of society, and so they do not necessarily reflect the position of all other multiracial/cultural mothers. However, they have made some distinct changes to the way they live their lives in comparison to their own parents, who may or may not have been so well off. Lisa recalled, “My mother talked a lot about her country and her family, but she never actually asked me how I felt about being mixed....I do ask my children how they feel about their race or how they look.” These mothers are actively trying to focus on their children’s inner strengths as they encourage them to become independent and confident within themselves. Sue added, “We’re so much into our kids.”
As far as their mother images were concerned, these women have honoured their own mothers but rejected their ways and means. Today, as in every generation, mothers have extremely high expectations of themselves and each other, but they, like their own mothers, are intent on providing the best lessons and opportunities they can find for their children. Lisa said, "It's very important to me. If I don't have my children comfortable in their cultures I will feel a sense of loss, an opportunity lost." Although they feel that their husbands are interested in the welfare and education of their children, these mothers have shouldered the responsibility of teaching their children about race, culture, and ethnicity from both sides of the family. Sue noted, "It requires a lot of effort…"

These mothers have not only sought out the original sources of ethnic culture, but they make a point of finding Canadianized versions of the culture in terms of food, tokens, and traditions. All of the mothers have encouraged their own parents to foster a very close relationship with their grandchildren and sometimes, in this way, they have been better able to retain a sense of ethnic culture. Mary suggested, "Perhaps they will then be able to pass it on amongst each other in this way."

In terms of language, all were adamant that they and their children retain, maintain, and pass on any other language that contributed to their cultural heritage. Of all the themes, this is the one that stood out as the most accessible for the mothers to pass on to their children. All of the mothers agreed that the ability to speak another language would offer their children a unique advantage and an opportunity to appreciate life from a different perspective. Even if they were not fluent in their ethnic language, they had all taken steps to learn more, had attended an ethnic school, had sent their children to an
ethnic school, or their children had chosen to specifically study language in their higher education. All regretted not knowing their languages better and thought of their past as a lost opportunity to learn that language. Lisa said, “I asked my mother why she didn’t speak to us in her language.” Sometimes, they implied that their parents had not pursued their ethnic language when they had immigrated to Canada and had instead concerned themselves with assimilating into the mainstream. Some felt that even their own parents had lost their own fluency to some extent over the years, and they expressed this with regret. “The language is the first thing to go,” Sue reiterated. These mothers say they would choose differently for their own children, and they are presently making every effort to enhance their own children’s exposure to other languages.

Religion was another aspect that entered into the cultural picture. All but one of the mothers attended church, but not on a regular basis. Those who were Catholic were the most diligent, and for the most part they had been raised to stringently adhere to the Catholic requirements. However, they now feel free to partake according to their personal needs but they do feel that the traditional rituals were one way of training the children about the process. Most of them felt that it was important to expose their children to spiritual, philosophical, and moral lessons. Their experience with other relatives indicates that the interest of the children fluctuates with various stages.

In terms of food and other cultural celebrations, all of the mothers now make an effort to partake in every opportunity that is presented. They all buy or cook food that relates to their historical culture, and they particularly revel in special events such as Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, or Chinese New Year.
They all prize household ornaments, artwork, china, and family heirlooms that depict their parents' culture, and they purchase items for themselves that fall in line with these tastes. Although some of them may not have appreciated this aspect of their heritage when they were growing up, they find it a tremendous source of satisfaction today and make a concerted effort to retrieve and maintain traditional practices.

**Educating the multiracial/cultural child.**

These mothers are very much involved in their children's education and participate whenever possible. They are alert to the challenges that the system faces at this time, and yet these particular mothers are all extremely satisfied with the schools they have selected for their children. They feel that the teachers are making a sincere effort to meet the multicultural needs of all of the children, although they admit that the multi or mixed aspect has not been addressed. However, they feel that if teachers were made aware of this omission they would be receptive to constructive suggestions. They say that their children look forward to sharing their family stories and traditions with the class, and school projects are directed towards this goal. "I find that my son has become more proud of his heritage since this particular teacher brought up the topic in class." Overall, they feel that their children will more easily find a place for themselves in comparison to their own experiences in school.

In conclusion, these mothers appear to be committed to instilling ethnic pride in their children so that they are able to see themselves as true Canadians with a heritage that is a source of personal strength and pride. It would seem that they have indeed found ways to embrace multiracial/cultural diversity in their children.
Reflective Summary

Although I had thought we were going to discuss their children, I found that we barely got to that point before the end of the interview. That part of our discussion seemed to trail off towards the end and overall I felt the data were fairly superficial. They did not seem to have a lot to say about their children’s experiences at school, and for many of them I got the impression that race was not an issue they had spent any significant time discussing with their children. For the most part, they appeared to be comfortable with that aspect of their children’s lives and had chosen schools that they felt would exemplify the lifestyle that they wanted for their children. Some of them did express racial and cultural concerns regarding their children in the community and extracurricular activities. Overall, the participants appeared to be able to comment freely about themselves and their families. I did not get the impression that they were holding back; although at times it appeared to take some effort for them to organize their thoughts. For the most part, I did not probe, but waited for the story to come forth on its own. It was a very rewarding experience, and I can only hope that they enjoyed it as much as I did.

During two of the interviews, the tape-recorder broke down and so field notes had to suffice instead of a taped transcript. In this case, an event that I initially perceived as disastrous turned out to be illuminating, for I discovered that I was able to engage in the dialogic exchange more than if I had listened only. In order to ensure that my notes were accurate, I asked more questions and clarified points more readily. Thus, I found that I was better able to efficiently and effectively pull the data together later. However, if
given a choice, I would still prefer to have a tape-recorder working as a backup.

Above all of the tasks involved in this study, I found the interviewing process to be the most interesting and fulfilling. It was during these times that I felt I was fully engaged in the most meaningful part of the investigation. My participants were exceptionally hospitable. Their willingness to accommodate my needs made me feel at ease during the interviews. As Oakley (1981) confirmed, it is “the acceptance by the interviewee of the interviewer’s research goals and the interviewee’s active search to help the interviewer in providing the relevant information” (p. 35) that contributes to the development of a mutual rapport. It was important to me that my participants felt free to express their own feelings and beliefs without any influence from me, and I attempted to do this by responding with short or even incomplete phrases that invited the participant to confirm or expand their thoughts. I did not offer advice or judgement, but rather listened and tried to act as a sounding board, so that the participant could discover meaning in their own expression.

“Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets” (Oakley, 1981, p. 31). I found the interview gave the participants an opportunity to review their memories and organize some of their previous assumptions. In line with Oakley’s (1981) participants, the mothers involved in this study described the experience with frequent comments such as “therapeutic,” “fun,” “interesting,” and “empowering.” By the end of each of the interviews, I felt that all of my participants had experienced something new and intriguing, as all of them voiced the opinion that they had enjoyed the experience and
fully intended to continue this journey of self-exploration.

Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive about the experience of storying their experiences. Sue said,

Oh I think it's flattering to participate in something like this and it leaves me thinking I really should find out more about my background. I think I should find a better way to inform my children of what it was like and what it's leading to. I guess as a child, you are pretty selfish, you don't really consider what your parents would have gone through--the sacrifices they've made for themselves and for you. It would be really neat to hear what they have to say--theirs is the story that would have a lot more nuance than mine would be because I've been very fortunate that my upbringing's been great and straightforward and without a lot of controversy and conflict.

Lisa said, "I hadn't realized how empowering that discussion process can be." Jan said she welcomed the opportunity. I appreciated being able to speak about these things with someone who cared enough to ask. It is a kind of sounding board for my ideas-in-practice about bringing up my son. At this point in my life, my activism entails the complex bringing up of my son and engaging in culturally informed teaching of those who aspire to be educators.

Mary said, "That was fun. I really enjoyed that experience. It was so nice talking to others about this. We should do it more often." And, indeed I think we should.
5. Anna:

Anna travels back to Mexico all the time, and in fact had just returned from Mexico before our interview. She continues to maintain a home in Canada because of her children, but foresees a time when they will all meet in Mexico and live together once again. *Anna has just received her Canadian citizenship and prizes this very much. However, her homeland is Mexico and she enjoys spending prolonged periods of time there. Her love of the country has been passed on to her children, some of whom also indicate that they plan to retire in Mexico.*

Anna demonstrated her familial pride by describing some of the authentic furniture in her home, precious things that her family had treasured over the years and that she has now refurbished and keeps as family heirlooms. A beautiful massive instrument adorns the living room, and a selection of fine Italian furniture is on display in the dining room.

Once we were settled, Anna immediately launched into a fascinating history of her parents' life in Mexico. Her father, the son of a farmer, went to the United States to be educated and then returned to Mexico as an engineer. Her mother was the daughter of a doctor who had been educated in the United States and who then also returned to Mexico, in this case, to practice medicine. Being educated and speaking English, these people undertook crucial roles in the development of their communities. For instance, her maternal grandfather founded the school of medicine in Monterrey, and her paternal grandfather built the first airport in the area. Both sides of her family were extremely
active in all facets of life in the community while she was growing up.

My parents were Mexican and they felt Mexican and they were in areas that were growing and their grandparents had a lot to do with building up the community. A lot of their sense of well-being had a lot to do with doing things for their community. I really feel they were quite outstanding, but I didn't really realize it until I was much older.

*It is not difficult to detect the tremendous pride that Anna demonstrates when speaking about her parents and grandparents. She has obviously retained a deep sense of identity with her country of origin, and yet has also managed to create a comfortable home for herself in Canada. I find this to be a very unique accomplishment, for not many people can retain such pride for their homeland and yet be such staunch Canadian supporters.*

As far as citizenship goes, Anna has both a Mexican and Canadian citizenship, and so did her husband, but when they were working in the U.S. they had green cards. Their children were all registered in Canada when they were born, but also had the ability to travel and live in Mexico.

Yes, the first two were American citizens by birth. They were all registered immediately when they were born in Canada at the embassy in Mexico City. My husband registered them immediately.

*Apparently it was important that the children all be registered as Canadian like their father. There may have been some fear of the military draft for those children born in the 50s in the United States, but as the other two were born in Mexico they enjoyed the*
privileges of both countries.

6- Dinah:

Dinah is a white American married to a Black American, and she raised her children in the 1950s. At that time, she felt that the people in Toronto were curious but not overtly hostile towards Blacks. But that’s not to say that they did not encounter subtle forms of racism. For example, as an interracial couple they could not easily find an apartment when they first arrived in Toronto. Every time they found one, they would be met with the message, no vacancy. Finally Dinah took a white male friend with her to preview an apartment and it was let to her immediately. The owner did not see her Black husband until the day they moved in. She says, “We did not notice much trouble after that.” Again, if things didn’t go their way, they just worked around the situation and made things work out. They had a knack for dealing with such discrimination without creating a big scene. They were not afraid of confrontation, but it would appear that they had found more peaceful and effective means to solve such problems. It also seems to have been a source of satisfaction and pride. They were working for justice and freedom at a very exciting time.

This was an exciting time for Dinah. Her husband was studying at graduate school, and when he completed his Ph.D. he became heavily involved in the Human Rights movement. Dinah worked for the Labour Board and had been very involved in human rights work back at Oberlin College. She expressed some surprise at how quickly people took up the cause. But she said,

You just couldn’t tell in Toronto–some restaurants would serve you and some
would not—not just in Toronto but all over southwestern Ontario. This was different than in the States, where you knew exactly where you stood and you knew where you could go and where you could not.

This was typical in Toronto—other Blacks have also indicated that they were very careful where they went in order to avoid confrontations or potentially embarrassing incidents. It was risky, because Torontonians did not make it blatantly clear and sometimes one could unintentionally provoke an incident. In the U.S., segregation made it very clear. There were no gray areas.

Dinah is presently nursing her elderly husband at home and so does not stray out of town anymore. In earlier times, they were definitely on the road, working as civil rights activists. These stories are elaborated elsewhere, but I believe the great adventures were experienced through her work. One of her sons is an international singer and songwriter, so she does have exposure outside of Canada. She did not talk much about this theme, and most of her story was about the past.

Constructing as Multiracial/cultural Self

5. Anna:

Anna grew up in northern Mexico as part of a prominent family during the depression of the 1930s. Although no one had much to spare at that time, she does remember having everything she needed.

Growing up there in Mexico, northern Mexico was not a whole lot different in the 30s than in other areas like Canada and the U.S. People talk about what it was like during the depression years. I do remember that we did have everything, but
nobody had an awful lot. I mean most people had--you were lucky to have five
dresses and a Sunday dress, one sweater, one coat, your everyday shoes, and your
party shoes. And talking to other people later--I don’t think anybody had an awful
lot unless you were extremely, extremely wealthy. But certainly middle-class
people--people did not have a lot. There were some people who were poor, but
most of the people we knew were like us.

Anna’s family lived frugally, but she did not go without any basic needs. She
continued to attend private school and attended the birthday parties that frequently
occurred within her social circle. Anna knew there were others who had less, but she had
very little exposure to them and their way of life.

Anna went on to university in St. Louis, where she met her husband, and
thoroughly enjoyed the experience, considering it “one of the highlights of my life.” She
went on to become a medical technologist and worked to support her husband while he
continued in graduate school. “So our first child was born in Kentucky when he was still
going his Ph.D. and I was working in Medical Technology. And the second child was
born in Pittsburgh when he was doing this research—which was pretty much an amazing
type of research.”

When he graduated, the family went to live in Mexico near the sulfur mines, but
Anna found this lifestyle difficult while raising two small children. “It was not developed
and was just very different. But it was still fun in other ways. It was an adventure.”

6. Dinah:

During the time when Dinah’s children were growing up in the 60s there was not
null
much multicultural attention given to the curriculum. Dinah remembers that the Social Studies book described Québécois (from Lower Canada) as having black hair and those from Upper Canada as being blonde. It called native Canadians savages and described the white men as heroes. Books and curriculum like this were typical. It shows how far we have come in just one generation. Certainly they were aware of these shortcomings and likely pointed such things out to their children, who did grow into extremely well-informed adults.

Dinah says they talked a lot about race while the children were growing up—not so much about themselves, but about racial incidents and civil rights transgressions. Dinah and her husband were very involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Being American they must have had some strong reactions to the violent racial incidents in the U.S. They do not appear to have wanted to move back to the U.S. at this time with their young family. In Canada they both acted as watchdogs and confronted many individuals and groups who sought to promote segregation. They also founded the Ontario Black History Society—an organization that has made a tremendous impact on the state of black history today—historical documentation, records, education and outreach programs, museums, artifacts, and Black History month—obviously great proponents of race, culture, and education. One must surmise that, despite Dinah’s modesty, their home life must have offered a wonderful, rich environment for stimulating discourse.

Dinah believes that the strong family bond helped a lot—a loving home gave them the strength and support they needed to cope with racism. She remembers the stories her husband would tell them—about when he was in grade school in the U.S. “He would get
into fights every day, as he had to pass through the Italian neighbourhood. He was always coming home with his glasses bent out of shape and his clothes torn.” These were incidents that were talked about openly with his children while they were growing up. *It sounds reasonable to think that as parents, openly discussing racism in the past and present as daily incidents arose—that their children would feel free to come forward and recount any incidents that affected them at school or in the community. The open atmosphere would be expected to encourage conversations and personal narratives relating to feelings of difference. However, on this note—I might speculate that in fact, what these children were encountering might have been covert racism—the glass ceiling, being invisible—all-powerful constructs of racism that children cannot convert into meaningful expressions without a clear backdrop.*

She feels that her boys were fairly confident and assertive, while her daughter was less aggressive and hence did not speak out or strike out at slurs. Since that time Dinah’s daughter has expressed the feeling that she sometimes senses hostility from some blacks. Dinah doesn’t know if this is true or if it is just imagined—a sign of her own discomfort. *Dinah indicates that the personalities of her children may account for the way in which they handled their social encounters. Again, she does not recall any serious incidents and at the time felt confident that they were doing the right thing.*

“We often discussed the family ancestry—slavery on both sides of their father’s family including a white great-grandparent.” *Dinah explains that they were informing their children of their family history—which they believed to be very important to them. They even made it clear that they were descended from mixed relations in more than one
In other words—they were not unique as children of mixed racial status.

However, this was obviously a long time ago, in another land at another time, and possibly not an easy story to relate to for these modern children.

Dinah admits that she does not recall ever sitting down and talking to her children about how they felt. She says, “Both my husband and I felt very secure in our relationship, and at the time it was not something that we thought of in terms of a disadvantage to our children.” She admits she never asked them if they were having any problems due to race or especially to their mixed race. She never asked them how they felt about it—about themselves—if they were encountering any incidents of racism. Now, in hindsight, she wonders if perhaps it might have made things easier for them if they had talked about it—addressed it up front. “Maybe it would have been better,” she says.

Courageous and humble words from a loving wife, a devoted mother, and a dedicated humanist after a lifetime of giving to others.

Dinah recalls that she was aware of the American solution—elite Black clubs for the children of upper class, professional blacks, like Jack and Jill—but she deliberately rejected this route. Instead she took them to the University settlement—a community centre in Toronto that was founded by a group of university professors. Today it is located in the heart of Chinatown, and the Chinese, as before, make more use of it than the blacks in Toronto. It was not something they kept up. Thus it would seem that for the most part this family assimilated into their local community. Although they mixed with other blacks on social occasions and in a professional sense, they did not encounter elitism in their home. These were good parents who did what they could to ensure that
their children did not suffer because of their race, or because of their parent’s race. They moved them, educated them, stuck up for them, and held them together with a strong familial bond that has since empowered them to speak to important issues arising from their unique experiences.

Mothering the Multiracial/cultural Child

5. Anna:

Anna came from an upper-class family in Mexico and was raised with servants and nannies. She had not been trained by her own mother to clean house, cook, or care for children. Although she appears to love and honour her own parents and children, she did not particularly associate the act of mothering with the role of mothering. *In other words, changing diapers and feeding children was not her idea of fulfillment. She would rather have hired someone else to do that laborious part of mothering. However, she does appear to have become the matriarch of the family and is presently providing a home for her daughter, her grandchildren, and two of her nieces.*

Anna did learn how to mother and displayed tremendous respect for all of her children. The most important thing to her during their early years was their education. She sent them to private schools and tried to encourage them to be confident in their own identities.

6. Dinah:

When Dinah’s children were born they lived around Eglinton and Bathurst but eventually moved to Newmarket and remained there for about 6 years. Again, she does not remember noting much racism. Only once can she remember a silly comment: “Did
you get your kids from the Children's Aid?" However, Dinah was not one to attend to
gossip, and so did not feel particularly affected by any racial attitudes in her community.
She was not aware of any other mixed-race couples at the time, and they lived in a white
neighbourhood. Again, they were able to reside in an all-white community and as
"token" Blacks, respectable, upstanding, working for the Human Rights Commission,
light-skinned, with a white wife. They and their children presented no threat—no cause
for upset in the community. Dinah did not indicate why they moved back to the city.

When they moved back to Toronto they lived in Don Mills, basically a white,
middle-class neighbourhood. Few, if any, of her children’s friends were black, although
they did associate with other black and mixed-race families periodically on a social level.
Dinah remembers wishing that there were more black kids at the school, however there
were other ethnicities—"just no other Blacks." They did not seem to discriminate—friends
were just friends. Dinah and her husband chose to live in this neighbourhood because it
offered what they thought were good schools for their children—they wanted them to get a
good education, live in a nice neighbourhood, and prepare for their future.

Dinah commented that they did not share their feelings much with each other
during the time when her children were growing up. Now, she wondered if perhaps she
might have had a chat about those kinds of things while doing the dishes together when
she would have been alone with each of them on their day of dish duty. But in reality, she
did not see these things as an issue at the time—she assumed things were just the way they
were, and since nothing particularly extraordinary cropped up—things were okay. Here
one needs to understand the social context—the times, the parenting styles, the political
atmosphere, etc. Today, her children have found ways to openly express themselves.

Her oldest son married a white woman and has children. He became an international songwriter and musician. Among other things, he has recorded a song that refers to the effect he felt a certain degree of racism had on his parents—McCarthy’s song—the blacks turned on my father, the whites turned on my mother? An interesting perspective. I will have to get a recording of this song and some of the others. They may well reveal other aspects of his concern. The fact that his parents were working in the Civil Rights movement would certainly have provoked such public responses and perhaps these are the kinds of incidents the family did discuss openly.

Dinah’s other son also married a white woman and had three children. He became a very successful writer and has produced many articles and books that pertain to the state of being of mixed race—often expressing ambivalence and even at times wishing he were white like everyone else. This son has certainly expressed the most response to his racial identity. He has written extensively about the subject and is presently conducting a study of children of mixed race, interviewing many others. It would seem that perhaps there is healing in this act of gathering and comparing and sharing. He has demonstrated the knack of rendering strong emotional, poignant, or inflamed points with a turn of phrase into a humorous story.

Her one daughter, the youngest and darkest of her children, married a Sudanese man and now also has her own daughter who is very dark. I believe she is a writer, an editor, and in her mother’s opinion has probably encountered the most overt racism, as she was the darkest of the children. Dinah recounts a story when her daughter, around the
age of 12, was on a flight to Arizona and had to sit next to a man that insisted on asking her about her race, albeit likely well intentioned. When she finally told him her mother was white and her father was black, he said, “Oh, you’re a mulatto then!” This upset her very much, as she didn’t really know what that meant and was very embarrassed. *All of Dinah’s children have since expressed various feelings with regard to their racial location. However, as youngsters, it would appear that perhaps they did not recognize or define subtle forms of racism.*

**Educating the Multiracial/cultural Child**

5- Anna:

Anna attended private schools, but she does not feel that they were particularly elitist, rather they were the common schools, although public schools did exist in her neighbourhood. Later she attended a private school in Texas and then St. Louis University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Medical Technology. *Particular emphasis was made throughout the generations on getting a good education. Also she chose a very technical area of study—not something that most women would choose at that time in history. What an accomplishment!*

Anna relates that she thoroughly enjoyed her years at university where she found the course quite fascinating and enlightening. She particularly liked her philosophy courses where she was able to expand her knowledge in depth. Here Anna was really able to expand herself and feels that this is where she got a complete education, for she says they made her think. She thought Jesuits to be tremendous teachers. *Her love and respect for education and teachers is very apparent here.*
Anna comes from educated parents and, in turn, married a well-educated man. All of her children also pursued their education seriously and always did well in school. It was important to her that her children liked school and liked their teachers. Anna has great admiration for the teachers, and feels that many of them went the extra mile to give the children the extracurricular activities. *Anna believes she was very fortunate that her children never had any trouble in school. This is obviously a strong value that has been passed down through at least three generations. She is very grateful for the efforts of the teachers and the other community leaders and sees teaching as an extension of one's community commitment. She would hope that the schools promote more of a sense of acceptance of other cultures for the children who presently attend school in Canada.*

6 Dinah:

When Dinah's family moved from the suburbs back to Toronto, their primary concern was to find good schools for the children, and they decided on North York. They were aware that more black families lived in Scarborough, but they did not think the schools were as good and they felt that was more important for their children at that time. Now she wonders if perhaps it might have been better if they had been raised around more black families. *Such hindsight is a burden to any parent—especially if their children reveal past problems. However, at the time, Dinah and her husband felt that they were attentive, informed, and loving parents with their children's best interests at heart. They were not aware of much blatant racism in their neighbourhood and did not expect their children to hide those kinds of problems from their knowledge.*

Dinah recalls times when this son would get into fights. One time he witnessed
another boy being picked on and so he fought the perpetrator. Dinah believes that he fought that fight on principle. She felt that "he could identify with the kid who had problems." He never mentioned it, but when Dinah heard about it she told the other boy's mother. He hadn't mentioned it to his mother either. Dinah didn't ask why. She just accepted it and thought he had handled the situation well.

Dinah recalls an incident when her son's teacher had to choose a child and recited the rhyme, Eni, Meni, Mini, Mo. He came home and told his parents and they all marched right down to have a chat with the teacher. Apparently the teacher was mortified and had not intended to be so ignorant. Dinah tells this story with a warm-hearted acceptance of the teacher's ignorance. The point was that she was reeducated and probably never made that mistake again.

Quilted Voices

The voices of these two women demonstrate their unique experiences in relation to race, culture, and their perceptions of their roles as mothers.

Anna came from a life of privilege and attended American private schools and university. Her physical appearance did not distinguish her from the mainstream to any great extent, and as a woman of mixed heritage living in an upper-middle class society, she did not convey a negative image. She had been raised to regard herself in a humble but confident manner and preferred to see herself as a part of a larger altruistic movement inspired by her ancestors to assist and provide for others less fortunate than herself. Anna was very proud of the contributions made by her parents and grandparents to the community, and she herself is extremely civic minded.
Anna provided good educational resources for her children and felt great satisfaction with this accomplishment. She continues to provide a home base for her children and grandchildren who are presently living with her while they pursue their education.

Dinah led a privileged life and received a university education. She also showed great self-confidence as she sought a career in the civil rights movement. She also is a humble and soft-spoken woman whose strength of character is deceptive. She is a very fair white woman who married a Black man. Their love for each other overshadowed any misgivings they might have had regarding the mixture of their races in the lives of their children. They were educated, caring, and responsible, and they sought a life that ensured good prospects for their children.

Both of these women's stories clearly demonstrated how important they felt education was for their children. Both of them had husbands with Ph.D.s who presumably supported the educational efforts of their children. Both of these mothers attained specialized degrees themselves. All of their children in turn were highly educated consequently secured a solid position within middle or upper-middle class levels. They display traditional family values and do not appear to be ostentatious.

Their stories clearly reflect their confidence in the manner in which they raised their children during their early years as mothers. Although in hindsight they are more aware of the repercussion of their impact on their children's views of themselves, they are not prepared to shoulder any real blame. However, as loving mothers, they are still very much involved in the lives of their children and continue to offer advice and support.
Summary

Thus, it would appear that the mothers of this generation did the best that they could do at the time with the knowledge and insight that were available to them. Neither of them shows any signs of resentment towards their own mothers, but rather a comfortable sense of pride. They are proud of their children, but seem to be able to accept responsibility for any inadequacies in their roles as mothers. They see themselves as only human and do not dwell on any serious issues of "mother blame."

The Voices of Group C

My Mother’s Story

Out of some of the interviews with my participants, clues about family discretion periodically emerged. It would appear that secrets arose out of the parents’ desires to protect their offspring from discrimination as well as to enhance prospects for success during a time of economic depression and world wars. Evan Imber-Black (1999), a family therapist, recites a similar case when it was revealed that Madeline Albright, Secretary of State of the United States, unbeknownst to her, had been born to Czechoslovakian Jewish parents who had converted to Catholicism during the Second World War. With a view to survive, her parents had deliberately eliminated all traces of this aspect of their history while retaining the other essential elements. Ms. Albright had apparently “lived with a powerful paradox, absorbing the family ‘rule’ not to ask, to live in the present, and to believe her loving parents” (Imber-Black, 1999, p. xiii). Like me, she had been drawn unwittingly to her past as she developed an academic interest in Central European history.

My mother was the youngest of her family, an afterthought 10 years after the birth
of her two brothers. Her father was black and her mother was white. Since her father was the youngest of five, she found herself at least one generation behind the rest of her first cousins. When she came along, there were no others with whom to interact and relate. The only relative close to her age was a second cousin whose grandfather had also married white and had also not disclosed his black heritage to his son. When they were young, neither my mother nor her second cousin had much opportunity to interact with other relatives, except with each other.

My mother's father never told her that his parents were black. He was light-skinned and had married a white woman. Today we rationalize that he wanted to protect his daughter from the pain and hardship that he believed she might encounter if she had been labelled as black. To this day she finds it hard to accept that he felt that she needed that protection and that he was not able to bring himself to be frank with her (Imber-Black, 1999). She is not convinced that the knowledge would have affected her identity while she was growing up because there were no blacks in her neighbourhood, but during the depression and war years, one can understand her parents' concern that she might suffer racial discrimination and exclusion.

Now in her 70s, my mother addresses some of the themes raised in this study as she attempts to dispel some of the inconsistencies that she absorbed while growing up as white (Yeoman, 1998).

I always believed I was white, upper middle-class, Anglo-Saxon as was my family, or so I thought. I didn't know there was a black component until I was 45 years old. In school, I never knew I was part black and so as a child, adolescent
and as an adult, I was treated the same as everyone else. I felt I fit in well with my peer group. I never sought out any special peer group based on race. I don’t believe they influenced me—Ignorance is Bliss as they say! My experiences or lack thereof, were partly due to where I lived. I knew very few people of different colour or nationality and spent next to no time thinking about it as I was growing up, although I was raised to believe all people were basically the same, they just came in different shades.

In this case, I believe that both her parents took a passive role in not teaching her to acknowledge difference. Some family stories actually suggest that she was taught not to ask and that this was a forbidden subject. That’s not to say that the family ignored social and political incidents of race, but rather that they did not equate them to themselves. When we went to visit one of her cousins a few years ago, we were greeted at the door with,

I remember you! You once asked me if I minded being so dark and I said, ‘No, I don’t think so.’ You retorted back in my face, ‘Well I hate it!’ Your mother and father were so embarrassed that they got up and excused themselves and took you right home. You were a very precocious child.

Of course, my mother was quickly taken aback that her cousin, at 90 years of age, should remember this incident 50 years later, but it does demonstrate the sensitivity of the issue then and now. Her parents never discussed the incident with her or offered an explanation of her apparent transgression.

The way that I have interpreted these kinds of actions on the part of her parents is
that by ignoring the physical characteristics that normally designate racial differences, they essentially taught her how to be colour-blind. I think that it is very difficult, even today and in light of her new awareness, for her to discriminate on racial terms. Although this may sound very unracist, it does not easily allow her to be racially sensitive and accept the possibility that many deeper differences might exist in the minds of others.

I feel like a WASP even though I now know I'm not completely. My parents obviously knew our mixed racial identity and in order to make my life easier chose to not tell me. They died when I was still a young woman, but I'd like to think they would eventually have felt confident enough in my strength of character and that of my husband’s, and also of the ability of my personal friends and community to accept the truth and tell me.

I think strangers see me as white. My “cousins” in the States of course see me as one of them–black, for the most part, although a few of them also “pass.” I’ve changed in my own mind a little, but I don’t really think about my race much. It’s no more of a factor in my life than it ever was–except as an interesting fact–but it has very little influence on my daily life. I always believed Blacks were equal, just different, so I don’t feel any differently. I do tend to notice them more, and of course, now I notice them more than when I was young.

Here my mother expresses her regret that she did not have an opportunity to talk to her parents about this. She wishes that they had been more open and that she could have reassured them that she did not mind (Imber-Black, 1999). It was unfortunate that her parents died by the time she was 24 years old in the early 1950s. Her second cousin’s
father lived long enough to hear about and accept the revelation, and consequently her cousin has been able to reconcile much of her earlier conflicts. This woman now revels in the knowledge of her black ancestry and has taken great pains to reeducate herself about her multiracial history. She is gradually recognizing her own colour-blindness, as she becomes more aware of the “other” within herself. “Until then I was ‘blind’ to colour, because to me it had never mattered” (Yeoman, 1998, p. 266).

Her brother, on the other hand, found it very difficult to come to terms with his ancestry. In this case, he had experienced a deep sense of rejection when he married his wife, whom he had dated since the age of 13. Unbeknownst to them, her mother had also been an invisible minority, born in Barbados to light-skinned parents. When the prospect of marriage and black children became a real possibility, her father, a very loving and gentle man, refused to condone the union and ultimately he and his wife did not attend the wedding. My uncle was devastated, and although her parents eventually accepted the marriage and became doting grandparents, my uncle never really recovered from the experience. The thought that this could happen once again to his own children locked him into a mindset that remained until just before his death (Imber-Black, 1999; Freud, 1937).

I don’t know how my elder brother felt about the issue at all, but my other brother was very upset about it becoming public knowledge and had a hard time accepting the fact that everyone knew. This was true even though his own children didn’t seem bothered by the fact when they inadvertently saw a television documentary about their great-grandfather. I don’t think in fact, that my brother ever let many
of his friends ever find out.

Although her brother eventually accepted the fact that his father was black, he never felt comfortable with others knowing about it and always worried about exposure. Before his death, he made a tape for me, describing his feelings, his regrets, and his deep love for his father. It would appear that the loving deeds of his parents elicited mixed blessings, for they left him with much to resolve in later life.

My parents obviously didn’t have a problem personally with the difference although they did make every effort to “pass” as both white. I don’t agree with their decision, yet I understand how difficult it must have been for them in those days. My mother must have been quite brave, although I think her family was very understanding. I remember my mother often saying as I grew up that Dad came from a very good family. I guess she thought that someone might find out and tell me differently.

She often talks about the deep love between her parents. However, she rationalizes that social pressures must have influenced their decision to pass, not only for their children’s sake, but also for themselves and the sake of her mother’s family. Perhaps the emotional upheaval of my uncle’s marriage contributed to the perpetuation of the myth. My mother remembers being very close to her mother’s family and that they were obviously also committed to keeping the secret, for once her aunt, a sister to her white mother, almost let the cat out of the bag and ineffectively tried to cover up her slip of the tongue. At the time my mother gave it little thought, but remembers the incident now.
“Aunt Winnie once commented on how well her parents had taken to my father and indignantly I asked, ‘Well, why not?’” Her embarrassed and stammered answer was, ‘Well, he was so dark!’ And of course my mother, in her usual form, retorted, ‘Well, so what?’”

My mother’s present lifestyle is one that is totally involved in a white, rural community. She does not encounter many racial or even multicultural situations. Most of her friends are around her age and have all migrated from the city to the country for their retirement years. Their lives involve hobby farming, horses, tennis, informal social gatherings, and croquet matches.

Today my white community assumes that I am the same as they are even though some of them know of my black heritage. I expect it is because I look much the same as they do. I feel sometimes now when I tell people that I’m part black that either they don’t believe me or they don’t care. Many friends think it’s very interesting though, just as I do. Sometimes I think they don’t quite know how to react when I tell them, especially if I do so after some joke or comment has been made about race.

She does not find her racial mixture a problem in her everyday life. It does not really matter to her what others think of it, as she herself does not claim her identity through race. On occasion she will refer to her racial background in a joke, just to make a point and raise a bit of public awareness.

I think diversity is good if we can all learn to accept it, but with the understanding that, though different, we are all equal. So in some ways the answer might be to
all become melded and the same. I doubt we will ever do that though. I think sometimes being a little different is an advantage because it gives you the opportunity to be more objective about people and judge them all by the same standards despite their differences. I guess racial identity is more important to some people who have been more affected by being different in both good and bad ways. I would and did and do still feel fine about my own racial identity. It's easy for me because it didn't really change anything in my day to day life, just made my ancestors more interesting. I still feel white or whatever I am. Nothing has really changed for me. It doesn't affect me now, but I do identify with them to some extent now when I didn't before because I didn't have any reason to before.

My mother has gradually incorporated her newly acquired knowledge of her racial makeup, but culturally still identifies with the mainstream. As she looks white, she is accepted as white and feels comfortable in that role. In order to identify black she would have to encounter much more exposure to black folk and the black culture in general. She says that she is comfortable with herself as things stand now, but considers her racial boundaries to be more fluid that she once did.

My Story

Before I began to interview the participants, I subjected myself to an interview process whereby I attempted to speak to the issues that I intended to pose to my participants. Afterwards, I read over these questions and answers and considered whether I wanted to change them. Ultimately I believe that the exercise did serve to increase my awareness of the interview process from the perspective of the participant, and the
experience of listening to the stories of others made me more aware of the meaning behind my own stories. In line with Bagley's (1979) notion that my "self" was relational and specific to others, I began to feel more confident and justified in the way that I identified myself.

The act of exchanging and sharing stories made me much more sensitive to the similarities and differences in the stories of others and how they related to mine. I definitely felt a sense of cohesion and collaboration (Minister, 1999) as I listened to the stories unfold.

Rather than allowing a conversation to flow, I began my own interview with some definite questions that related to how I felt about my multiracial/cultural identity in terms of my family, school, and community. As previously explained, I discovered the multiracial aspect of my ancestry long after I had developed a racial/cultural identity. Today I still identify culturally as white, but readily acknowledge my multiracial identity as well.

While growing up I never thought to question my ancestry and therefore accepted the fact that, although I had a dark complexion, I belonged in the white, mainstream community. My impression in those days, the 1950s, was that one had to be one or the other and not much acknowledgement was given to multiracial unless one was openly and equally biracial, that is half black and half white. I never even considered the possibility at that time with respect to my family. In this case, I began to realize that I did not have to live out the concept that had been internalized during my early years (Bagley, 1979).

I remember only one childhood playmate who was ethnically different, and I recall
instances where she was cruelly teased. I still feel uncomfortable with these memories, because I knew it was wrong but I did nothing to stop it that I can recall. It was not something I ever discussed with my parents, and I did not really understand it at the time. Upon reflection now, I realize that I had no tools with which to work for I had never been exposed to racism before. That experience has made me much more aware of the lessons to be taught to my own children at early ages. Today I often seek opportunities to bring up similar scenarios with my own children as they encounter various acts of racism.

My own children do have some classmates of different races and they seem to be facing some issues of difference on a daily basis. We try to discuss it at home. This is very different than when I went to school, for we did not discuss race very much at all. It just never came up. It was not a factor in our lives at that time.

My children consider themselves to be culturally white. I believe that I allowed them to adapt and assimilate into the dominant culture that they were exposed to during their upbringing. I believe that although there are some genetic influences, they all look to be white and therefore live as such. In my case, I do not expect them to assume my racial identity as four of the five of them are adopted.

A few years ago my mother and I went over the border into Detroit to visit one of her first cousins. Once through the front door, we became as black too. We encountered a whole new world and thoroughly savoured exchanging and sharing so many common threads of our heritage. We laughed and talked into the wee hours of the night as if we had known each other forever. The next morning we attended church with them. The whole congregation was black, although to our eyes they looked as white as we did
and they seemed to think that we were as black as them. It was the most amazing experience as I found myself immersed in black culture. It was certainly as close as I will ever get to seeing through another lens, being truly of a different race for a moment.

At one point, I attended a writers’ workshop intended for Black women. Since I was interested in writing about the subject, I decided that I should find out first-hand about the issues that concerned black women. When I got there, the facilitator discreetly took me aside and informed me that this workshop was only for black women, to which I replied, “I know.” The woman then apologized profusely and made some polite small talk about light-skinned blacks today. Since there was no turning back at this point, carried on with the exercise.

To put it mildly, it was an enlightening experience. But ultimately I was not truly accepted as black for a number of reasons. One, I did not really consider myself Black, two, I did not live in the Black culture, particularly the Caribbean culture, and third, I was not dark enough. Many studies outline the importance of a cultural relationship (Bruner, 1990; 1996; Freire, 1998; Jones, 2000 to name only a few) irrespective of a racial one, and in this case my genetic bloodlines were just too watered down to validate my entry into this exclusive club. Although some of them were very gracious, there was no mistaking the antagonism on the part of several of the group, for I had invaded their special space in this endeavour to be enlightened. I was an outsider. I did not relish this position, but I believe that it was an important part of the process of becoming aware of what it is like for one to be the minority, even when one is a perfectly decent human being. Overall, I found the pilot study to be a very useful exercise, for it allowed
consider some themes that I proposed to use in a future study of multiracial/cultural identity. Without involving other people, I was able to fine-tune some of the format of my investigation.

In my first draft, I listed some questions and simply responded as if I were being interviewed. This style, even if presented in an oral fashion, limited my answers as a lot of the questions tended to focus on the "what" instead of the "why." From the participant's point of view, I did not feel compelled to reveal more than superficial answers to my interviewer. As a researcher, I was left feeling that I wanted to know more about the person. I found it difficult to ignore the nagging desire to simply log data. However, I think that the point of this research is to dig a little deeper to make the exercise meaningful to both the participant and the researcher. I think that this is an important point—the participant should benefit from the experience. As a result, I revised my interview format. In the second attempt, I devised only a few open-ended questions in the hope that the participant would respond more naturally during the course of the conversation. I eliminated the "question and answer" format and instead tried to solicit more discussion. I kept a bank of probes in my mind, but did not commit them to paper. The second form of interviewing became a self-dialogue (Bruner, 1996; Conle, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Crites, 1971; Oakley, 1981) and was by far the most effective in terms of provoking deeper and more meaningful responses from myself as I recalled stories that I had long ago forgotten. I began to look through a renewed lens and to construct and affirm my own identity.
and they seemed to think that we were as black as them. It was the most amazing experience as I found myself immersed in black culture. It was certainly as close as I will ever get to seeing through another lens, being truly of a different race for a moment.

At one point, I attended a writers’ workshop intended for Black women. Since I was interested in writing about the subject, I decided that I should find out first-hand about the issues that concerned black women. When I got there, the facilitator discreetly took me aside and informed me that this workshop was only for black women, to which I replied, “I know.” The woman then apologized profusely and made some polite small talk about light-skinned blacks today. Since there was no turning back at this point, carried on with the exercise.

To put it mildly, it was an enlightening experience. But ultimately I was not truly accepted as black for a number of reasons. One, I did not really consider myself Black, two, I did not live in the Black culture, particularly the Caribbean culture, and third, I was not dark enough. Many studies outline the importance of a cultural relationship (Bruner, 1990; 1996; Freire, 1998; Jones, 2000 to name only a few) irrespective of a racial one, and in this case my genetic bloodlines were just too watered down to validate my entry into this exclusive club. Although some of them were very gracious, there was no mistaking the antagonism on the part of several of the group, for I had invaded their special space in this endeavour to be enlightened. I was an outsider. I did not relish this position, but I believe that it was an important part of the process of becoming aware of what it is like for one to be the minority, even when one is a perfectly decent human being. Overall, I found the pilot study to be a very useful exercise, for it allowed me to
My Sister’s Story

Chris’s Black ancestry has given her great pleasure, and she is not at all daunted by any prospect of racial discrimination. Her husband’s Italian ancestry is closer, and so she makes an effort to relate to it for the sake of her husband and children.

Chris had been a very dedicated student in university, the best in her class, and upon graduation got a job as a zookeeper that she found deeply satisfying and interesting. When she became pregnant with her first child, she worked as long as she could and then gave it up. Just before the birth of her second child she assumed a teaching job at a community college and proceeded to work out a nursing schedule to suit her new infant. She did it all: worked, mothered, volunteered, stayed fit, and always looked great. Although it was extremely stressful at times, she managed it well. However, during all of that time, motherhood was the most important role for her, and now, even as her children are getting older, she is still deeply involved with their schools and other interests.

It is just like Chris to do something of everything and do it well. Being a mother was no exception, and so far she has carried it off. It will be interesting to see what happens over the next few years as her children go off to university. I expect she will handle it with the same finesse as everything else.

Chris has made a conscious effort to embrace all of the cultures within her family to pass on an appreciation of them to her children. She is well informed about her black heritage and encourages her children to make use of the information and share it at school. She has a keen interest in her Scottish background as well, and again, makes her children aware of it.
As my sister, Chris like me has a fairly dark complexion. She too learned about our ancestry as an adult, but aside from curiosity, has not been particularly affected by the revelation. Her children think of this ancestry as a novelty, but with their blonde hair and blue/green eyes do not racially identify with Blacks, but are alert to their heritage and do not hesitate to mention it if asked. However, since Chris’s husband is Italian/English, she finds her children feel an affinity for the Italian culture and do call themselves part Italian.

She is also conscious of her husband’s Italian ancestry and, for fun, will arrange a special Italian dinner, music and decorations for husband and children; using, of course, the special family sauce recipe.

It was a surprise to my sister, one day, when we asked the children about their cultural identity. Since they have an Italian last name, the children claim they cannot help but feel Italian. All of them have studied foreign languages in school and the oldest one is majoring in language and international studies. I was present when my sister asked her children about their racial/cultural identity and I will admit we both registered astonishment when the children all claimed a definite Italian identity. I suppose simply because none of them had ever mentioned it before. It was even more surprising when her husband entered the room and looked at my sister and me in disbelief as if to say, “Well of course I am Italian! What else could I possibly be?” I guess one should never presume anything.

Chris has had the opportunity to travel to many places around the world, as well as regularly to their home in Florida. She is planning some adventure trips with the family over the next few years and hopes to indoctrinate them all to her vivid interest in
nature and the environment.

"Education was Chris’s most successful endeavour throughout her growing years. It seemed to me that she kept up a 98% right through all of her schooling, even into university. Consequently, her children’s education is a major priority and she has been involved with their schools since they began attending. When her children were entering grade 5 she took them out of the local public school in North Toronto and enrolled her daughters in an elite girls’ private school and her son in a boys’ private school. Her concern was mainly about the quality of the education and attention that her children received. As she is very interested in racial and cultural events, she enjoys seeing her children celebrate other races and cultures in their schools. Although this was done in the public school, the quality of the delivery of the programs was not satisfactory. She feels that the private schools address these issues appropriately and feels comfortable with the exposure to multiculturalism that her children are receiving.

My Daughter’s Story

I adopted Tina when she was 13 years old. She had come into foster care and we had expected her stay to be temporary. That was 20 years ago. Tina’s birth mother was Iroquois Indian but was adopted by a French Canadian couple who had no other children. No birth records have been located, despite an effort on her mother’s part. Her grandparents have since died and did not reveal any further information before their death. The fact that her own mother was adopted and uprooted from her ethnic heritage surely accounts for the fact that this aspect of ethnicity was not passed on to her children and that they have never shown any desire to relate to that Indian aspect of their
ancestry. Her French culture was “adopted,” but for some reason was also not passed on.

Tina’s biological father was French Canadian. He came from a close but enormous extended French Canadian family. He was close to his mother and remained in touch with her throughout her life. He was an alcoholic, and as the disease took over his life, he drifted away from his family both physically and mentally. When his wife and children left him, he maintained only minimal contact with his other relatives. Tina attempted to reconnect with this part of the family a few years ago, but chose to let it go after a period of time. She does not feel that either of these connections can provide the kind of heritage that she would like to pass on to her children.

Tina’s husband comes from a Jewish family. Very briefly, his mother was adopted by a Jewish couple (the wife had previously converted to the Jewish faith). When his mother married his father, she also formally converted to the Jewish faith. When they divorced, she remarried an atheist Canadian. Tina’s husband’s father was the son of an orthodox Jewish family that had fled from the Nazis during World War II. Sadly, the mother was killed during the escape and eventually the father and the brother immigrated to Israel, leaving Tina’s father-in-law alone in Canada. He took this very hard and became embittered towards his faith. “He says it killed his family—it took them all away—his mother who was killed, and his brother and his father who left Canada permanently. He didn’t follow them.” He divorced his wife and remarried a woman from France, and they had two daughters but they too have since divorced.

This was the first time I had heard this story and I suddenly realized why my son-
in-law had always seemed so ambivalent about his Jewish heritage. Periodically I had thought it would be appropriate for them to display some acknowledgement of the Jewish faith, now that they had children. Such suggestions were always politely acknowledged, but I never saw much done about it and thought it just wasn’t that important to him. Now I better understand, for it makes sense since he was not actually raised in the Jewish faith for most of his life, despite a brief session at Hebrew school and the occasional participation in a Jewish holiday or tradition.

At this point I would like to share another problem that I personally encountered— the family tree! Oh what a dilemma for an adopted child! Which one do we choose? Tina explained how difficult this assignment was for her in school. Again, it was a matter of pretending rather than proclaiming one’s difference. It was personal and private, and yet it had to be made public. In her case, she was forced to include a different race and that news followed her for years amongst her friends. Those who knew she was adopted knew she was not really related to the tree she had turned in, and she was embarrassed by this. This was a no-win situation in her mind.

If it’s just a family tree the stories behind it are not understood and explained, it just boils down to blood and relations. And in my mind, that’s not really what it should be about. The whole point should be to show the breadth of the family—the expanse—how encompassing it is—not how exclusive it is. I think we are missing the point, in terms of multiracialism and multiculturalism. But it’s not an easy thing we are asking teachers to do, especially if they don’t have children of their own. In terms of mixed race and culture it also seems to be in my mind
something that’s not acknowledged. How do you combine them—how do you make two families into one?

*This is the bane of many adoptive families.* What on earth are we, as parents supposed to do with this exercise? Of all parts of the curriculum that need to be re-explained to teachers, this is one of them. In my opinion it needs to be tied into our own children’s ethnicity—be that of other races or cultures or adoptive status. A new perspective needs to be developed and explored that encompasses the current make-up of the kids in the schools.

Adoption is so close to being like mixed race. There are two sides. You have to say you’re adopted or not—because that family tree makes you choose, and that’s exactly what happens in schools when they make kids choose one side or another.

So when we’re sitting here with this knowledge of adoption between us and someone else says something then we are left thinking, do we say anything or not—and maybe that’s exactly what happens to kids of mixed race.

*In a way this understanding may provide a window into what it might be like to be different even if you don’t look it.* So I do hope that this kind of study will make people more aware of what’s going on beneath the surface and not just look at outside appearances or outside expectations. People are not always what they say they are and others should be more aware and sensitive.

Tina has sought out her birth ancestry as much as she can. She has travelled back to that part of the country and met many of those relatives. Her sister and brother live in Halifax, and she visits them occasionally. Her husband’s family reside in Ottawa,
Washington, DC, and Las Vegas, and so they tend to travel around visiting family quite often. They are great air miles collectors, and so find a means of travelling economically. Even with two little children in tow, they seem to be able to travel easily.

As a mother I also face the challenge of trying to be the perfect mother and always do the right thing. Tina explained how she felt about being adopted and how she has tried to relate to the family. She has obviously done much personal work on this aspect of her life and has come to terms with much of it over the last couple of years. The most difficult part for her has been to find a real place for herself so that she can feel as if she truly belongs. Depending on the circumstances, she has been relatively successful, but certain events such as large family gatherings and family reunions evoke feelings of alienation and distance. This is a very difficult challenge for Tina at this time because she is trying to compose a her/story that she can pass on to her children—one that she can live out in honesty and truthfulness. She expresses some concern about “explaining” it to her children. “to share that with my children—like it’s going to be a little difficult to explain.” She does not want to hide anything, but she also wants to get on with the new her/story and is sometimes thwarted in her quest. Even after all this time she still doubts the authenticity of her adoption. She continues to try to find a place for herself within her adopted family. It seems that in order to be able to pass on the true meaning of family she must draw on her own experiences, and these are still somewhat jumbled up. As she so typically understates, “It’s just an identity crisis!”

We share lots of other aspects of our lives, but Tina does not always feel as closely related as she would like. “Like it’s just a feeling that you don’t belong...it’s just
embarrassing." Sometimes she feels that her outer self does not truly reflect her inner self in terms of our relationship. She regrets the fact that there are some things she cannot share with me, and that makes her feel sad. She wants to ensure that she fulfills all of those needs in her own daughter and admits that she has set herself very high expectations. *We discussed this in terms of her image of a good mother and perhaps her unrealistically high expectations of herself, as well as me, with respect to motherhood. I think this is because it is so very important to her and that she still has some acceptance to do in this area. She is particularly sensitive to what others think of her, and I suspect also of what her own children think of her. This only makes the task that much harder for her and I will be alert to any opportunity to dispel such heavenly expectations. I can't help but feel that it sometimes makes my own role an impossible one to fulfill.*

Tina was originally raised as a Catholic, but was then adopted into our Protestant family and did not continue to formally observe the Catholic Church. However, she did attend a Catholic high school for a couple of years.

I think that as a teenager, I knew my parents wanted to do the right thing for me, but I think because of peers and peer pressure, it's not something I accepted well, and when I look back, I think it's too bad, because I would have benefited. I need it now. You know. I think I'm a little naïve.

*We sent Tina to a Catholic high school because we were under the impression that it offered a more structured and academic program than the public school and we thought it would provide the educational remediation we felt she needed. Upon new insight, our concern for her academic difficulties probably stemmed from her late*
language acquisition and hence might have been more directly addressed had we been aware of it at the time. She did not appear to object to relinquishing her Catholic faith although we felt that we should make it as available as possible, and so thought the school might provide this means.

Tina now attends a United Church regularly and takes her children to Sunday School. Although she did not attend church regularly, Tina readily accepted the Protestant faith and has recently taken a personal interest in learning more about all religions. It would appear that she is seeking spiritual growth for both herself and her children and has found a friendly place with other mothers that she knows.

I would like my children to be exposed to as much as they can and hopefully learn. At the moment, because my husband is not very anxious to practice his faith, I’ve taken the initiative in sharing my faith with my children...I want them to be able to make choices for themselves not because I think faith is going to shun them or look down on them.

Recently Tina’s mother-in-law began observing some of the Jewish traditions for the sake of the grandchildren. Tina thinks this was done especially for his brother’s children whose parents do not observe much tradition or religion. Although she was Catholic, she converted to Judaism and is content to have her children identified as Jewish. However, they only go through the motions and do not really practice the religion. Tina thinks that most of their Jewish connection is through social and business acquaintances that have been cultivated. Tina feels that this method of pursuing a religion is hypocritical and did not feel comfortable at first. However, this year she
enjoyed the practice more and felt that her children benefited from the experience. She is open to learning more about it at this stage and is reserving judgment for now.

We’d like to expose our children to the Jewish faith. My only problem is that because my husband doesn’t have enough information himself, he wouldn’t be able to share it with the kids. But maybe if they took an interest in it, maybe he would brush up on it and it would be fine.

Tina looks like me, and people often comment on how similar we, as mother and daughter. We are used to this, and each time it happens we have to decide how we will respond. After all, we don’t want to embarrass the person, but neither do we want to pretend. Usually we simply nod or smile and say nothing, but occasionally it backfires as the subject resurfaces and we are finally confronted with either lying or confessing. Talk about an identity crisis!

As mentioned, Tina attended public and separate schools and then went on to college where she studied Law and Security, and then university where she studied Sociology. School is important to her and she puts considerable thought into her children’s school options. Presently she is considering nursery schools for her daughter, but has also thought about elementary school. School represents something very important to Tina in terms of fulfillment, success, acceptance, performance, and potential. She is very concerned about the quality of her children’s education and wants them to have every opportunity. She feels that her own education has been limited in the past and hopes to continue it sometime in the near future. It represents a certain level of achievement, and I suspect status, for her. She may be applying the same criteria to her
own children. Although her children appear to be very healthy and bright, I worry that they may not be able to fulfill all of these wonderful aspirations she has for them. Just as her expectations are high for herself and others, so may they be for her children if she is not wary.

Tina has not had much exposure to multicultural curriculum, although she did attend a multicultural college. However, none of her curriculum focused on this aspect. She lives in a white, homogeneous community and therefore the prospects of her children participating in a multicultural setting are limited—at least for the time-being. As the town's population increases, more cultures and ethnicities will become incorporated into the structure of the community. Although she did attend schools that had a multicultural population, she has not been involved in multicultural programs. She was taught to not discriminate on racial terms and has some friends of other races and cultures. She considers them to be equal and does not recall witnessing racism. However, I suspect that she has not been sensitized to it as I myself did not teach her to be that way. I am now trying to explain such things to her and I can see that these are foreign concepts but she appears to be open to new suggestions and ideas and is willing to reconsider some of those things.

Tina did not want to celebrate her biological heritage and so any mention of her Metis or Iroquois background simply annoyed and embarrassed her. She was well-aware of her cultural identity but did not regard it as a source of pride. Although we tried to keep the channels open, we respected her feelings and did not push her on this issue. While she was growing up she preferred to identify with her adopted family and even
chose to change her name so that her middle name was the same as mine. However, we have continued to remind her of her heritage in gentle ways and she is only now beginning to accept it as a fact, however, she is still a long way from celebrating it.

When I asked her to read the following poem, she shrugged and said, “I don’t agree. I am a mother first and a woman second.” I suppose this very important motherhood stage is what ensures our children’s immediately survival and welfare. However, I do believe there is a price to pay and as watch her following in my footsteps I have harbour some feelings of sadness even though there are also many reasons to rejoice. This is my daughter and at one time I would have shouldered whatever burdens I could to save her the pain that she will no doubt endure. Now I can only stand aside and walk with her through the coming years as she bears the pain, sorrow and joy that come with motherhood. I will continue to mother my daughter as my mother still mothers me.
Mothering Myself

In a society preoccupied with how best to raise a child
I'm finding a need to mesh what's best for my children with what's necessary for a well-balanced mother.
I'm recognizing that ceaseless giving translates into giving yourself away.
And, when you give yourself away, you're not a healthy mother and you're not a healthy self.

So, now I'm learning to be a woman first and a mother second.
I'm learning to just experience my own emotions
Without robbing my children of their individual dignity by feeling their emotions too.
I'm learning that a healthy child will have his own set of emotions and characteristics that are his alone.
And, very different from mine.

I'm learning the importance of honest exchanges of feelings because pretences don't fool children,
They know their mother better than she knows herself.
I'm learning that no one overcomes her past unless she confronts it,
Otherwise, her children will absorb exactly what she's attempting to overcome.
I'm learning that words of wisdom fall on deaf ears if my actions contradict my deeds.
Children tend to be better impersonators than listeners.
I'm learning that life is meant to be filled with as much sadness and pain as happiness and pleasure.
And allowing ourselves to feel everything life has to offer is an indicator of fulfilment.
I'm learning that fulfilment can't be attained through giving myself away
But, through giving myself and sharing with others,
I'm learning that the best way to teach my children to live a fulfilling life is not by sacrificing my life.

It's through living a fulfilling life myself.
I'm trying to teach my children that I have a lot to learn
Because I'm learning that letting go of them
Is the best way of holding on.

Quilted Voices

The previous stories presented an intergenerational glimpse of how multiracial/cultural influences affected my family. I began this quest from a position in the middle, where I saw myself as a product of my mother and, indeed, my foremothers. And in turn I viewed my mother as a product of her own mother and foremothers as well. I feel fortunate that I feel comfortable talking to my children about heritage and culture, but I must admit, that the adoption issue complicates matters and tends to bring to the forefront more feelings of exclusion rather than inclusion. This is a challenge with which I continue to wrestle.

Today, I gaze on my daughter who is diligently trying to fulfill that impossible role of the perfect super mother that both I, and her grandmother have laid before her. I grieve at this revelation, for I see it as something that I have created and inflicted upon her and that I suspect, she will no doubt, inflict on her own daughter in a time to follow. I talk to her often about this and strive to erase the damage that I might have done. But I am not hopeful. I believe that this is a very ingrained psychological process that was imbedded in me long before I was able to become aware of it. Only now do my own mother and I discuss such things. I am sure that she blames herself in some ways, despite my assertions that she could not have done otherwise, based on her own upbringing. I know that she realizes this is true. But it is one more, heavy burden for a mother to bear and I cannot help but see this as inevitable. At this point I do not know how the mother who tries so hard to fulfill her image of the “perfect mother,” can do otherwise. For only by being less of a good mother could one hope to lower the standards. And one must ask,
for what purpose would this be? Do I want to be less of a mother than I am? I can readily answer No! I want to be even better and, as I am still mothering two young children, I continue in this relentless pursuit of a perfect future for my children. When does one learn to accept less than that? Even with the insight that I have achieved over the last few decades, having been a mother for almost 30 years I am still caught in this perpetual cycle. But it does not cause me unhappiness, for I have discovered great joy and wisdom in this part of my life. It is easy to say one must claim one’s separateness, one’s independence, one’s self, but I do not want it to be so definite. Of course, as a good mother, I want my children to be kind and gentle, yet strong and independent, courageous enough to do what is right, and follow their hearts to fulfil their own dreams. But still I linger in my role and my heart twinges every time I loosen a thread, for they have become a part of me, and my Self has become a part of them.

Truly I am blessed, for I have a very special husband who once sagely whispered to me, “I understand.”

Personal Reflective Summary

“White Canadians have rarely been ideological racists: discrimination has been allowed to persist because of ignorance and comfortable habit” (Walker, 1985, p. 24).

So where does this all lead me in my quest to validate my own ancestry? Well, obviously I began my quest from a state of confusion. I was raised thinking I was a dark-skinned, white person of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, with a touch of Spanish. I never questioned this and took some pride and interest in that identity. However, as I learned
more about my black ancestry later on in life, I began to experience difficulty holding the image together. The story that my own mother had told me while I was growing up did not reflect the reality I was later dealt. I had to reconfigure my identity so that it not only accurately reflected my ancestry, but also the values with which I had been raised. Although this was disconcerting, I did not perceive it in a negative way. Rather, I was eager to open the shutters that had previously filtered out what I felt to be my rightful inheritance.

It is difficult to explain the actions of those who have now passed on. And indeed, I do not want to speak for them, but I can assuage some of my conflict and resolve some of my own misconceptions. I can see that social, economic, and political pressures affected their lives and the way that they identified with their own parents. Just before my grandparents were married in 1915, they were faced with a growing contention that "Blacks were...superstitious, fun-loving, slow-witted, and lazy, with animal appetites best kept under control by strict white supervision (J.W. Walker, 1985, p. 14). Increasingly it was thought that "the mixture of races could lead to a deterioration of the Anglo-Saxon stock...Blacks were no longer simply a disadvantaged minority, but a danger to be guarded against for the sake of Canada's future generations" (J.W. Walker, 1985, p. 14).

In their day, the population of Toronto was not very racially or culturally mixed and minorities were certainly not able to integrate as they do today. Tolerance and acceptance of others generally meant making room f or others, but it did not mean equality. Canadian historians have finally revealed that, contrary to popular belief, those
who were different were usually relegated to the lower rungs of the social ladder. When I first heard of my black ancestors, I had no idea that so much racism had been such a definite part of our Canadian history (Backhouse, 1999; Bearden & Butler, 1977; Hill, 1981; Hubbard, 1987; Newby, 1998; Power & Butler, 1993; Robinson, 1989; Shreve, 1983; Talbot, 1984; J.W. Walker, 1984, 1985; Winks, 2000). Such attitudes were products of our little known Canadian history.

For example, in 1850 the Ontario Common Schools Act was passed in order to allow minorities to establish separate schools for their children. Although the intention of the Act was to provide public funding to the Catholic schools, it was also used by some school boards to ensure that black children remained segregated. Local authorities tended to enforce the Act according to the wishes of the majority of the local inhabitants. In 1951, a Royal Commission on Education in Ontario repealed the offending clauses of the Act. Incredibly, it was not until 1964, that Leonard A. Braithwaite, the first Black to be elected to the Ontario Provincial Legislature, demanded that all references to black separate schools in the Common School Act be removed (Abbott Papers, n.d; Slaney, 1995).

Visible minorities were also segregated with respect to employment, housing, recreational activities, theatres, hotels, and restaurants (Hill, 1981). “During the 1920s, efforts to amend the laws that did not condemn these activities met with failure. “Racial discrimination was not contrary to Canadian law” (J.W. Walker, 1985, p.16).

Somehow, my grandparents’ “passing” does not seem so mysterious to me anymore. My grandparents raised their children with different priorities than many of us
do today and they demonstrated their values in ways that not only vary from current but also past mainstream norms (Abbey & Harris, 2000). Stereotypes plagued the social strata and in this case, “dictated a place for blacks, creating social and economic stratifications which could then serve to demonstrate and validate the original stereotypes” (J.W. Walker, 1985, p. 16).

As a granddaughter, I think I am beginning to understand. As a mother, I understand completely. I, too, want the best for my children and every day I must choose which opportunities might best embrace their multiracial/cultural diversity.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

The following chapter reviews the findings through my own reflections as I consider the “big picture.” The study emerged into more than I had originally anticipated, encompassing the perspectives and experiences of several generations of mothers from a wide variety of races and/or cultures. The chapter closes with some thoughts on the implications to mothers, educators, multiracial/cultural Canadians, and finally, me.

Reflective Summary of the Study

Although the mothers were told that the study was intended to be about their perceptions of their children’s experiences, they focused more on their own stories and the stories of their parents. The findings show that they began their stories with their own upbringing in an effort to explain how it influenced their current racial and/or cultural perceptions. This phenomenon has been observed by other researchers (Bruner, 1990; 1996; Carlson, 1990; Chodorow, 1978, 1995; Hammer, 1975).

I suggest that these mothers may have not yet have consciously developed an awareness of “how” they themselves mother. Perhaps they were not prepared to examine the results of their own mothering at this time. However, they were clear about how they were mothered. All of the stories reflected the influence their own mothers had on them and the way they continued to fulfil their mothering role today. All of the mothers demonstrated through their storytelling that their own childhood experiences were guiding them in their quest to channel their own children’s best interests. When the mothers perceived their early experiences as positive, they strove to mirror the attitudes and practices of their own mothers (Caplan, 2000; Chodorow, 1978). These results,
falling in line with Caplan’s, indicate that if the mothers had perceived their own mothers as inadequate, they sought to reverse the situation in their own children’s lives. It was apparent that the mothers who had the most misgivings were the ones who had spent the most time thinking about their role as mothers and thus appreciated the opportunity to share their stories.

The initial aim of the study was to explore the experiences of mothers of multiracial/cultural children that emerged from the data. In line with the aforementioned literature, these included their perceptions of the mother role, multiracial/cultural identities, self-image, ancestral and parental influence, and physical appearances, as introduced in the literature. Although some of these issues arose from the data, a number of others became apparent such as the immigration experience, language, the importance of names and the naming process, ethnic food, and traditions, and religion. Based on the tone of the literature, I had originally approached this topic from a somewhat self-righteous stance, depicting the profile of multiracial/cultural children as being ignored, oppressed and neglected. Contrary to much of the literature (Golden, 2000; Kilbride 2000; Lazarre, 1999; Reddy, 1997; Root, 1992a, 1992b; Schwartz, 1998a) pertaining to multiracial/cultural children, the children of these younger mothers did not show signs of feeling caught between social and political barriers. In fact, even the Afro-Canadian child did not indicate that he appreciated his mother’s concerns about his welfare, for he had not yet demonstrated any severe sensitivity to the instances that his mother felt were racist. Certainly these mothers and their children enjoyed a rather privileged lifestyle from a social and economical standpoint. Further studies might consider the experiences
of mothers from other socioeconomic brackets.

In the present study, mothers who raised their children in the 1950s and 1960s reported that they did not address identity issues with their children while they were growing up and subsequently they now feel that their children may have struggled with their own multiracial/cultural identities. This finding does not necessarily imply that the mothers were responsible, nor do they particularly indicate that they feel responsible, for this phenomenon. Rather, these mothers feel that their approach to parenting was representative throughout their class of society and observed by Phinney and Rotheram (1986). Mothers of this era implied they felt they had no reason to be concerned at that time. My mother explained this phenomenon as simply the way mothers related to their children. The war was over, everyone was free, was employed, was healthy, and had infinite prospects for a successful future. They believed that all of their children would grow up to be happy, educated, and successful, and they did not realize until their children headed into the tumultuous 60s that they might have overlooked some vital stages of their children's lives. Now it would seem that they might express some regrets, but I would assert that such hindsight is not productive except by enlightening mothers of the future.

I would suggest that the profound love these mothers had for their children made it possible for their children to develop a sensitivity to the experiences that affected them so deeply. Today, these participants might well have practised their mothering in a slightly different way with respect to race, culture, and self, but at the time they were raising their children, they were responding to a global climate of optimism (Dei &
Asgharzadeh, 2001).

In the case of the new immigrant mother raising her children in the 1950s and 1960s in Toronto, other implications are apparent. This mother could not help but bring her own frustrations, disappointments and loneliness into her mothering practices. She had no family to rely upon, nor did she make any new friends that had surmounted the obstacles faced by new immigrants. She struggled with the language, worked both days and nights, endured lengthy separations from her children and understood little about the education system. Her children consequently found themselves on their own for the most part. They handled their own altercations on the street, determined the course of their education, worked for a living and found various ways to integrate into the Canadian mainstream. They shirked much of their cultural heritage until long after they became adults and had children of their own. Even now, they cannot completely divulge themselves of some feelings of resentment for the hardships they felt they had to endure. Certainly they want to make things better for their own children, but they are often haunted by familial ties and practices that continue to affect the way in which they parent.

The mothers raising their children in Toronto in the 1990s and the present century see things differently as they feel a profound sense of responsibility for their children’s physical, mental and spiritual welfare and education. They are actively involved in perpetuating a new version of their children’s racial and cultural heritage. Examples of this behaviour can be readily observed in many family rituals and practices, which may or may not reflect traditional values (Golden, 2000). They participate in diverse community activities and events and actively promote a multiracial/cultural school policy and
curriculum. The mothers in this study report a very positive view of their children’s status and sense of self, in their view. All of the mothers, regardless of their generation, voiced great pride in their own and their children’s racial and cultural ancestry. However, the younger mothers actively engage their children in conversations about their multiracial/cultural heritage and encourage them to recognize the advantages of their uniqueness, as these mothers see it as a passport to cultural enhancement. The mothers in this study read widely, network with other mothers, take courses on an infinite variety of subjects, and treat themselves as professionals, even if they stay home with their children instead of work outside the home. If they look after other people’s children, they call themselves day care providers, not babysitters, and if they run a business, they claim expenses as tax-deductible items.

Future studies will certainly provide interesting data as the lives of these children transpire into new and exciting prospects. What will these children say about their own mothers when they grow up? Will they have better prospects? Will they be better prepared to face the future? Who can say, for this country is in the process of changing dramatically. Dr. Vijay Mohan Bhatnagar wrote in a letter to the editor of the Toronto Star,

The new diversified Canada is more generous, friendly, understanding and religiously and ethnically more tolerant … than the Canada of the past. I have chosen it as my new country because Canada is a beautiful, marvellous and a very special place to live. It is, in fact, the most family oriented nation in the world.

(2001, p. A23)
However, from the narratives of the younger mothers, it seems apparent that significant strides have been made within the education system. It bears repeating that these changes are reflective of an overall change in social and political attitudes. These mothers not only seek out information, but they feel free to provide it as well.

All of the mothers strongly agreed that Canadian policy presently addresses many of the previous shortcomings and that the benefits and comforts their children are presently enjoying speak for the accomplishments to date.

The present study provided an opportunity to investigate aspects of multiracial/cultural identities in both mothers and/or their children that have so far eluded significant attention in the research field. The questions addressed in this study bring to the forefront a number of issues related to multiculturalism with respect to families, communities, and schools and how a better understanding of issues of identity is important to achieving more awareness as a total person.

The need to use complex semantics to discuss these issues posed a constant challenge and would suggest that empirical and rigid definitions offer inadequate scope to such discourse. Part of the initial difficulty in streamlining this study was the variant use of terminology, both in common use and in the research literature, with respect to those of multiple races and/or cultures.

Overall, this study demonstrated some variance in the experiences of participants from different generations. The mothers and their children represented a broad mixture of traditions and cultures and voiced more concern about racial and cultural issues than mothers of the previous generation. It would seem that the influx of new immigrants has
led to a general acceptance of diversity in the population of the Greater Toronto Area. In many neighbourhoods, the white mainstream is now the minority, and so it would seem that the complexion is now seen through a new lens.

The mother who demonstrated the most concern about racism was a white, single mother with a black son who felt he was in danger of being negatively stereotyped (Lazarre, 1996; Manette, 2000; Reddy, 1997). Thus it would appear that physical appearance continues to be a major factor in the identification of minorities. Future studies might examine whether a mother’s membership in a dominant culture versus one in a minority culture would affect her mothering role and influence.

Although none of the mothers denied that racism exists in Canada today, they all claimed that their children’s future prospects were better here than anywhere else. Furthermore, they were proud to be Canadians first and foremost, and did what they could to ensure that their children would also cherish their nationality.

It is with this strength of national pride that we as mothers and educators must continue to seek further awareness and sensitivity when teaching and nurturing our children. It is not enough to simply be aware of the cultures of others. “The denial of racism among all opinion makers is so habitual that making the allegation of racism, and raising the possibility of its influence on social outcomes becomes a serious social infraction” (F. Henry & Tator, 2000, p.3). Turning a blind eye to the skewed messages portrayed by the media and politicians will only exacerbate a state injustice and ignorance. Carl James, as cited in Mehta and Favreau (2000), warns, “The ‘majority’ must recognize that they too have a stake in addressing systemic racism” (p. 8).
Implications

Implications for Mothers of Multiracial/cultural Children

To be a person of color in white territory is to be monitored, marked, and excluded. To be white in white territory is to be able to pass the gaze of its bourgeois sentries and traverse its social space as an included, or at least properly subjugated, member. (McLaren, et al., 2000, p. 111)

This study suggests that mothers exert a profound influence on the way their children assume their adult roles in life. Mothers are teachers whether they aspire to the role or not, for their children do take note. In general, Canadians can take pride in the multicultural policies that provide for positive and enriching experiences for children of varying racial and cultural backgrounds. This study focused on the experiences and perceptions of mothers of multiracial/cultural children who were highly educated, were presently or at one time well employed, and consider themselves to be racially and culturally conscientious. The findings suggest that mothers perceive their children are responding to their mothers in subtle but profound ways. As these mothers’ own experiences as children show, they grew into adults who now live out those early lessons or lack of lessons when they consciously or unconsciously inflict their perceptions on their own children. The positive experience of talking, sharing, and reflecting on those lessons points to the value of these kinds of exchanges and forums in small groups of women.

The mothers’ stories in this study indicate that they felt racism was a part of the Canadian social, political, and economic landscape when they were growing up. They now recognize that it is imperative that members of the dominant mainstream assume
responsibility and realize that, implicitly or explicitly, they all contribute to the establishment and perpetuation of white norms (Abbey & Harris, 2000). Root (1992a) suggested that “the tendencies to classify people ordinarily and to resist changing the classification system if only a few people do not fit,” (p. 343) contribute to the oppression of multiracial/cultural people.

Spencer, Noll, Stoltzful, and Harpalani’s (2001) study indicated that schooling and identity formation processes are closely linked with cultural influences, and they conclude that parents play an important role, especially during the early stages of their children’s development. However, “the dilemma of competing allegiances and competing socialization contexts in the filtering of adaptive cultural learning makes the developmental course more challenging for such youths” (Spencer et al., 2001, p. 23). The more parents can encourage their children to cultivate a strong sense of racial and cultural self, the more successful their children will be when encountering racism and discrimination.

As a recent article (A. Johnson, 2001) claims, “It’s important for parents to start teaching kids about race–diversity, tolerance and fighting bigotry–when they are young” (p. M7) especially if they do not live in a diverse neighbourhood, because that is when they first notice differences. Presently, CCMIE offers an antiracism kit comprised of teacher’s resource materials that can be used in the classroom with the idea being that the information will become part of the curriculum and not just a separate unit of study.

Implications for Educators of Multiracial/cultural Children

Today, the national thrust for a multicultural society is becoming more and more of a reality. Our government is openly advocating the celebration of racial and cultural
diversity, and equity programs supposedly to ensure that everyone has a chance to partake in the opportunities that arise (CCMIE, 1999; CRRF, n.d.). Teachers are encouraged to develop lesson plans based on curriculum that reflects positive and equal images of all races and cultures. Multiculturalism is inarguably an important aspect of Canadian policy, but that does not mean that the racism that the mothers of this study previously encountered will be so easily diverted through such policies. Multiculturalism embraces many positive qualities but it does not necessarily address everyday acts of racism.

Mothers and teachers are actively addressing racism in the home, in the schools and in the community. Perhaps there is a place for mothers in the classroom since this study suggests that many of them are very interested in playing the role of the culture bearers. Perhaps the school curriculum has been effective in helping some of these younger women develop a greater awareness and sensitivity to these issues.

Antiracist education confronts issues of power and privilege and attempts to make people responsible for who and what they are. It is this deeper sociocultural question that must be addressed with the intent to probe internalized values and concepts and explore the core causes of racial and cultural acts of discrimination. Although multiculturalism is a part of this, educational aspects are usually directed at celebrating the differences. In contrast, antiracism education looks for similarities and is a critical process that can address a new "way of understanding the world, power and the nature of racism" (Mehta & Favreau, 2000, p. 5). McLaren, et al., 2000) claim that schools and teachers need to be encouraged to question the process to effectively combat intolerance and see deconstruct the invisible barriers. Perhaps teachers could be encouraged to tell their stories related to
their own cultural roots. By doing so, they might become more sensitive and consciously aware of larger implications for the hidden curriculum. Perhaps they could be encouraged to step beyond their own cultural lens.

**Implications for the Canadian Cultural Mosaic**

The Canadian cultural mosaic ideally represents the vision of our nation for most Canadians. The hope for a form of multiculturalism to permeate all of the current social, political, and educational structures is a noble ambition. However, in reality our efforts for true diversity have fallen short. I believe much of the solution lies in the educational resources and people that impact our children. Although diversity is presently celebrated in many classrooms, teachers need resources. It must be recognized that not all teachers are free of racial/cultural discrimination, nor are they all well equipped to deal with it.

Curriculum can only be affected by antiracism objectives if teachers who deliver the material are adequately and effectively prepared for the task. Assumptions can be changed only by genuine attitudes. The solution lies in providing an atmosphere that encourages diversity and freedom. Awareness and confidence need to be encouraged in teachers. Students need to be encouraged to truly care about others, and their sense of self needs to be further explored and heightened.

As a result, the changes in the school environment can contribute to a greater sense of self-worth in students, educators, and administrators. Personal and social aspects of school life can be positively affected as the processes of collaboration and immersion are explored. People, policies, processes, and programs must adapt in both substance and form for any transformation to take place.
Implications for Future Research

This study contributes a new layer of findings to academic literature pertaining to mothers of multiracial/cultural children. Women and minorities have been traditionally overlooked as resources for rich and insightful data (Minister, 1991), but as this study reveals, women can offer a new and fascinating perspective to the literature. As exemplified in this study, women find it fruitful to talk about those issues that lie close to their hearts in an intimate and meaningful venue. They enjoy the camaraderie of exchanging thoughts and feelings of motherhood that they can share. They enjoy sounding off these thoughts, telling, retelling, revising, and revisiting stories that they have known all of their lives.

More extensive, longitudinal studies are called for to develop a broader foundation of data upon which to base new and revised national as well as educational policies. As we develop new teachers within our present-day system, we, as mothers, must remain alert to the ever-increasing and fluctuating needs of our multiracial/cultural children. Given that the majority of teachers today did not receive a multiracial/cultural education, the education faculties need to better inform and sensitize teachers to racial and cultural diversity issues.

Certainly multiracial/cultural identities can be explored from a number of other perspectives. It would be particularly revealing to collect the stories of fathers who may or may not partake in the co-construction of their children’s racial/cultural identities. The gender of the children would also be worth exploring in terms of their identity and sense of self.
Socioeconomic factors are bound to play a significant role in the way mothers fulfil their roles as co-constructors of their own and their children’s racial/cultural identities. Such criteria need to be examined to determine the variability and extent to which they enhance or hinder their children’s social and personal development.

Given the sparse research on multiracial/cultural children, more studies are needed. Since Canada is considered a leading multiracial/cultural nation, it behoves our researchers to produce Canadian-based studies on the unique and illuminating experiences of its people. Outreach educators are presently in high demand to develop programs that address the multiracial/cultural diversification of the workplace.

Canada holds a unique position due to its diverse native population, its open immigration policies, its English-French language barriers, its geographic variance, and its urban and rural demographics (Mehta & Favreau, 2000). A better understanding of these larger issues will help people realize “how we are all implicated in the issues, ideologies and attitudes that are part of the culture that maintains a system of inequity” (James cited in Mehta & Favreau, 2000, p. 8). It is vital that Canadians are made aware of the significant contributions of all minority cultures to the development of Canada and its policies. It is through personal transformation that we will all come to a better understanding of our true equality.

Implications for Self Transformation

"Being becomes the point of departure" (Conle, 2000, p. 27).

The present study offered me an opportunity to explore my personal sense of self as a mother and a teacher. Like Conle (2000), my life has become entwined with my
research as I adjust my level of awareness and find a new place for myself within the world of inquiry.

I am presently happily immersed in my role as a mother, but I acknowledge these words of wisdom that I shall try to heed, for only by continuing to develop my Self do I believe I will be able to model new possibilities for my daughters and granddaughters. I also do this for the sake of my mother and foremothers, who will surely continue to judge their own achievements on the basis of my happiness and success.

I initiated this investigation out of a personal need to seek further self-understanding and a deeper awareness of the roots of my own identity. Through the interactive process of sharing my own thoughts with my participants, I have been able to develop my inner voice as a daughter and a mother. The experience has been both humbling and revealing, and I find myself wondering less and less about something that had very little to do with me and yet affected me so acutely for such a long time. Having devoted so many years to this personal quest, I cannot help but be amazed at the repercussions of my wonder. Over the last 10 years, I have written a family history, recorded seven generations of my family's genealogy, reunited a family separated for almost a century, rekindled and generated dozens of new friendships, collaborated on a musical play about my family ancestors, redirected my academic studies to new and exciting fields of discovery, and completed a thesis. As Ghandi predicted, my quest to understand my past has truly evoked a new future of further investigations.
References


Hi there! It seems like your message was cut off. Could you please provide more details so I can assist you better?


The text on the page is not legible due to the image's quality. It appears to be a page from a document, possibly containing text that is not clearly visible. There are no discernible tables, figures, or diagrams. The text is not in a format that can be accurately transcribed.


...


Statistics Canada. (2001). Infostats@statcan.ca


Valverde, M. (1992). When the mother of the race is free: Race, reproduction, and sexuality in first-wave feminism. In F. Iacovetta & M. Valverde (Eds.), Gender conflicts (pp. 3-26). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


Appendix A

Ethics Approval

Brock University
Senate Research Ethics Board
Extensions 3205/4315, Room C315

FROM: David Butz, Chair
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Sandra Bosacki, Faculty of Education
Catherine Slaney

FILE: 00-103, Slaney

DATE: December 13, 2000

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the research proposal:

"Embracing Diversity in Children of Mixed Race"

"The Research Ethics Board finds that your proposal requires clarification: The researcher may proceed with the work as soon as the following issue(s) have been addressed and approved by the Committee:"

*Clarification required.

1. Please add a statement in the consent form indicating that interviews will be audio taped, and another indicating the time commitment of the interview.

2. Please indicate when, during the research process, participants will be asked to read and sign the consent form.

Please submit a letter to me indicating how you have addressed these concerns.

No research with Human Participants will commence prior to receiving approval from this committee.

DB/ll
Brock University
Senate Research Ethics Board
Extensions 3205/4315, Room C315

FROM: David Butz, Chair
Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Sandra Bosacki, Faculty of Education
Catherine Slaney

FILE: 00-103, Slaney

DATE: December 06, 2000

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has received the research proposal:

"Embracing Diversity in Children of Mixed Race"

Initial screening of your proposal has been completed. Your proposal has been submitted for an Expedited Review. This procedure normally requires 10 days to 2 weeks to complete. We will be in touch by Email when the reviewers have made their recommendations.

However, if a reviewer of a proposal submitted for expedited review decides that a full review is warranted, that proposal will be reviewed at the next REB meeting. The recommendations to the Chair are:

Accepted as is
Accepted as revised
Clarification required (with written comments)
Resubmission required (with written comments)
Full review required (with written comments)

Thank you for submitting your proposal.

Please remember that no research with Human Participants shall commence prior to receiving approval from this committee.

DB/ll
Appendix B

Information Letter

Dear Participant,

Over the last several years I have become deeply interested in the aspect of race, particularly from a personal perspective. I have had the unique experience of living the first half of my life as a white woman and the second half of my life as a woman of colour. I have since explored many pathways back into my heritage and have found the quest to be very enlightening.

I am eager to further this quest through conversations with others of multiracial/cultural families. In partial fulfillment of my Masters of Education thesis, I am seeking five mothers to partake in the project. The purpose of this study is to explore the unique experiences of mothers and their multiracial/cultural children as seen through the eyes of their mothers. It is acknowledged that mothers play a role in assisting their children as they construct racial/cultural identities that are compatible with aspects of both their ethnic heritages and their Canadian lifestyle.

In sum, this study will focus on mothers and their stories about raising multiracial/cultural children. I was hoping that you might be interested in this study and would be willing to assist me in gathering data that may be of benefit to other mothers, teachers, researchers, and of course the children.

If you agree to partake in this study you will be asked to describe some of your experiences, including your self-perceptions as well as those of your husband and your children in terms of their ethnic heritage. The process of data collection will involve the following:

1- Completion of a family history questionnaire and consent form.

2- One individual interview (about 2 hours each in length) with me. This session will be audio-taped and you will receive a copy of the tape upon completion of the interview.

3- Following the interview you may be invited to join a group meeting (about 2-3
hours in length) to engage in a collaborative dialogue with the other participants. This session will also be audio-taped.

The study will commence in January of 2001 and all participant involvement should be completed by the end of April 2001. The questionnaire will be completed in January 2001, at your convenience and will not involve any specific time element. The interviews will be held in January and February 2001, at a time and place of your convenience. You will not incur any expense related to the research. You will receive my interpretations from your transcripts which you are invited to review and revise as you see fit.

All of the data collected from the questionnaire, the interview and the focus group discussion will be strictly confidential and only my faculty advisor and I will have access to this information. Your identification will be kept anonymous throughout the research study and your real name will not be used in the data or any presentation material. All information and data will be kept confidential and locked in a secure research office until the study is completed and the data have been analyzed. You may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you would like to become a part of this important study, please contact me so that we can arrange a time to meet and begin the process. Thank you in advance, for taking time to consider this request. Your assistance is very much appreciated and will contribute valuable data that will increase cultural awareness for all of us.

Sincerely,

Catherine Slaney
HI
Appendix C
Letter of Appreciation and Debriefing Information

January 21, 2001

Dear (Participant’s name),

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation for your generous offering in terms of personal involvement and time. Your input will prove invaluable in the promotion of awareness and attention in this vital area of concern for our children and their cultural identity. This study will address many potential areas of need in the development of multicultural curriculum in our education system and social organizations.

I do hope that you have enjoyed the process and have recouped a fresh sense of your Self out of the experience. It was a pleasure for me to be able to take the time to deepen our personal relationship and I can only hope that it will continue to grow and transform over the coming years.

I am forwarding copies of the tapes and transcriptions that we made as a result of our conversations and readings. You will receive a copy of the final document when it is published.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions and I hope that we may continue to stay in touch as others begin to enter the sphere of our work.

Sincerely,

Catherine Slaney

Dear Participant

I just wanted to get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you so much for your time and sharing such personal stories. I hope to be able to hear more the next time we meet.

I am hoping that you will be able to attend the focus group session on Wed., Feb 28th at 7 pm. It will be held at my sister’s home, 106 Glengowan. Directions are enclosed. She has a nice big house and it is fairly central for the other participants as well. It should prove to be a very interesting evening as you are all such unique people! If you need to bring your son, don’t worry – I’m sure we can find a TV or video game to keep him occupied.

I am enclosing my notes and a loose interpretation with reflections for your perusal. Please feel free to go over and add, delete or edit anything I mistook. I am new to this and so would appreciate any feedback you can provide. Also, if you can return or fax the consent form and information sheets, I can complete your 'profile,' and satisfy my technical requirements. Once again, thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Catherine Slaney
Appendix E

Focus Group Debriefing Letter

The following letter was handwritten on a card of thanks and each participant was given a bouquet of flowers in appreciation for her gracious offering.

March 6, 2001

Dear Participant

I would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me and the other participants to discuss your personal thoughts and feelings in a focus group setting. I found the experience to be extremely interesting and informative and I believe that your input made an important contribution to the study. Thank you for agreeing to be a co-collaborator in this investigation.

If you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to phone or email me.

My sincere appreciation,

Catherine Slaney
Appendix F

<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.0 Transitional//EN"><!-- saved from url=(0063)http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/sampleconsentformfour.htm --><!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.0 Transitional//EN"><!-- saved from url=(0063)http://www.brocku.ca/researchservices/sampleconsentformfour.htm -->

<Form #04  BROCK UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study:  Embracing Diversity in Multiracial/cultural Children

Advisor: Sandra Bosacki  Committee: Sharon Abbey and  Susan Drake

Name of Participant: (Please print) ___________________________________________

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve revelation of personal information regarding the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of myself and other family members, with respect to our race and culture. The researcher will engage me in two private interviews. Each may take up to 2 hours of my time. The interviews will discuss the extent to which I and my children are affected by our personal identification to our race and culture. I will complete a brief questionnaire before the interview is conducted. I understand that I am free to withhold any information that I do not care to reveal at that time. I am also free to divulge any personal information that I care to reveal at that time. I understand that I may be asked personal questions regarding the race of my family, our cultural practices and our beliefs. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty. I understand that there will be no payment for my participation. I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive, offensive or inappropriate. I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my answers. I understand that only the researchers named above will have access to the data. I understand that no personal information about me or my family will be revealed to the other participants except by me during the group discussion. I understand that the time commitment of the two interviews and the group discussion may entail up to two hours of time on each occasion. I understand that the interviews and group discussion will be audio-taped.

Participant Signature __________________________________________ Date ________________

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock Research Ethics Board. (File # ________ ) If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you may contact Catherine Slaney or Professor Sandra Bosacki at (905) 688-5550, Ext. 4987.

Feedback about the use of the data collected will be available during the summer of 2001, in the IRC, Brock University. A written explanation will be provided for you upon request.

Thank you for your help! Please sign and return the consent form to Catherine Slaney. Once the consent is received you will be contacted by telephone to make arrangements for the first interview.

Please make a copy of this form for yourself for further reference.

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.
Researcher Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________
### Family History Questionnaire

**LAST NAME** __________________________  **MAIDEN NAME** __________________________

**FIRST NAME** __________________________  **SECOND NAME** __________________________

**NICK NAMES OR OTHER PSEUDONYMS** __________________________

**PLACE OF BIRTH** __________________________  **DATE OF BIRTH** __________________________

**PRESENT ADDRESS** __________________________

**TELEPHONE NO. ( )** ________________  **E-MAIL** __________________________

**HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION** __________________________

**PROFESSION** __________________________  **PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT** __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMES OF CHILDREN</th>
<th>DATE OF BIRTH</th>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAMES OF SIBLINGS</th>
<th>DATE OF BIRTH</th>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H

Mother’s History/Father’s History Questionnaire

MOTHER’S NAME ________________ MAIDEN NAME ________________

DATE OF BIRTH ________________ PLACE OF BIRTH ________________

RELIGION ______________________

HER MOTHER’S PLACE OF BIRTH ______________________

HER FATHER’S PLACE OF BIRTH ______________________

DATE OF IMMIGRATION ____________ PLACE OF ENTRY ____________

On a separate paper(s), please answer any or all of the following questions in story form. Feel free to diverge from the specific question if other thoughts occur to you. These questions are only intended to guide you into your personal genealogical exploration.

Describe any details pertaining to the process of her immigration. Did she have to travel through other countries before coming to Canada/America? How long after applying for landed immigrant status did she receive it? Were there any complications in the process? Has she since become a Canadian/American citizen? Why or why not? Describe any ethnic traditions/customs that she has retained. How would she describe herself in terms of race and/or culture? Would you describe her differently? How? Why? What aspects of her ethnicity do you hope to pass on to your children? What is the frequency of her contact with your children? Describe her relationship with yourself. Describe her relationship with your children. Describe her relationship with your husband.
Appendix I

Scripts

1. Prologue to interview

*I would like to talk a bit about your feelings surrounding issues of multiracial/cultural identity. Like you, I have a multiracial/cultural heritage and therefore have a personal vested interest in the matter. I have given significant thought to a number of issues pertaining to the history of my own family and would like to hear what others have thought about theirs. What has it been like for you and your family and how is it that you are part of a mixed race/cultural family?*

2. Debriefing for interview

*Thank you for taking this time to talk to me about yourself and your family. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience and I look forward to more of these occasions. Do you have any further questions that you would like to ask me? If you think of anything else, please feel free to give me a call and we can talk further. For your information, here is a list of resources that you might want to contact for further information on cultural/racial awareness.*

3. Prologue for the Focus Group Discussion

*Thank you all for coming together today. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to interact with these other mothers. You have all had some time to reflect on the various topics that we discussed in our earlier interviews and now I would ask you to share some of those stories with each other. In order to get things under way I will ask each of you to introduce yourselves and tell us something about your children and/or your family.*
(After everyone has spoken). Can you each tell us something about the racial experiences either you as a mother or your children have had at some time. Perhaps we can allow our discussion to evolve from there.

6. Debriefing for Focus Group Discussion

Thank you for this wonderful experience. I hope you have been able to benefit from this encounter as much as I have. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to talk about anything further.
Appendix J

Interview Schedule

Open-ended questions will be directed to the participant during the interviews. If they do not respond, probes will be put forward to stimulate the dialogue. Questions have been organized into several categories but the interview will not be conducted on a strict question and answer basis. Probes will only be used if the participant lapses into prolonged silence. If they appear to be comfortable and at ease, probes will be directed to them. If they become tired or impatient, the researcher will either change the topic or terminate the interview.

1. Ancestry

Tell me about your family. Who were these people and what happened to them? How did you wind up in a mixed race family? Did your parents pass any stories down to you?

2. Mother’s Perceptions of Racism

What does racism mean to you? Have you ever experienced racism on a personal level? Can you tell me about it? To your knowledge, has your child ever experienced racism on a personal level?

3. Perceptions of Self

How do you describe yourself? Does your/your child’s inner self reflect your/their outer self in terms of racial identity?

4. Children and Race/Culture/Discrimination

Do you feel that your children are affected by issues of race in their personal life? Do you teach your child about their ethnic heritage? Does your child talk about race?
5. School Experiences

Did you experience any problems at school? Do you think that your children have any problems due to their race at school? Can you tell me about it? How well do you think teachers and schools handle issues of race and culture in your day? Today?

6. Community

How did your community reflect your race/ethnicity and/or culture when you were growing up? Do you think it has changed since you were young?

7. Participant Feedback

How did you feel about being asked to talk about these things? Is there anything else I should have asked you? Is there anything else you would like to say? Do you think this exercise will motivate you to do anything different or say anything new to your child?
Appendix K

Focus Group Discussion Interview Schedule

A two-hour audio-taped informal focus group discussion with all of the participants was planned once the interviews were completed. There was no formal interview schedule. Upon introductions, each participant was asked to briefly describe themselves and their family and respond to discussion relating to themselves and their children.
Appendix L

Resource Support for Participants

Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 4900 Yonge, Suite 1305, Willowdale, ON M2N 6A4
Telephone: (888) 240-4936, Fax: (888) 399-0333, Website: www.crr.ca

Canadian Council for Multicultural and Intercultural Education
124 O’Connor Str. Suite 200, Ottawa, ON K1P 5M9
Telephone: (613) 233-4916, Fax: (613) 233-4735
Website: www.ccmie.com/rapport1.htm#top, Video: ccmie@videotron.net

Multiculturalism Program, Department of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy St., Hull, PQ K1A 0N5
Fax: (819) 953-9228

Canadian Civil Liberties Association, 229 Yonge St., Suite 403, Toronto, ON M5B 1N9
Attn. Danielle McLaughlin
Telephone: (416) 363-0321, Email: ccla@ilap.com, Website: http://www.ccla.org

Canadian Human Rights Commission,
320 Queen St., Place de Ville, Tower A, Ottawa, ON K1A 1E1
Telephone: (613) 995-1151, Website: http://www.chrc.ca

Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 4900 Yonge St., Suite 1305, Willowdale, ON M2N 6A4
Telephone: (416) 952-3500, Webstie: http://www.crr.ca

Urban Alliance on Race Relations, 675 King St. W., Suite 202, Toronto, ON M5V 1M9
Telephone: (416) 703-6607, Website: http://www.uarr.org

Worldwise International Awareness Centre, 16 Pelham Rd., St. Catharines ON L2F 1P9
Telephone: (905) 641-2525,

Canadian Ethnocultural Council, 176 Gloucester St., Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K2P 0A6
Telephone: (613) 230-3867, Website: http://www.ethnocultural.ca
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Name</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father's Date of Birth</th>
<th>Mother's Date of Birth</th>
<th>Father's Age</th>
<th>Mother's Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>1980-01-01</td>
<td>1979-02-02</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>1975-03-03</td>
<td>1990-04-04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>1982-05-05</td>
<td>1986-06-06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>1975-03-03</td>
<td>1990-04-04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>1982-05-05</td>
<td>1986-06-06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>1975-03-03</td>
<td>1990-04-04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>1982-05-05</td>
<td>1986-06-06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>1975-03-03</td>
<td>1990-04-04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>1982-05-05</td>
<td>1986-06-06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>1975-03-03</td>
<td>1990-04-04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu</td>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Chang</td>
<td>1982-05-05</td>
<td>1986-06-06</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N

Participant Intergroupings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Jan
Mary
Sue
Lisa

Chris
Myself
Tina

Marion
Anna
Dinah