Constructing Mirrors of Learning: The Negotiation of Identity and Representation in the Lives of Chinese Canadian Women

by

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ABSTRACT

This inquiry explores how five women of Chinese descent, all formally educated and raised in Canada, understand and learn about identity and representation in their daily lives in a predominately eurocentric society. It examines some of the complexities and contradictions of living a "hyphenated" identity as "Chinese-Canadian women" across borders that continually re-define and challenge the meanings of sameness, difference, and be-longing. Within the frameworks of cultural psychology, discursive psychology, and hermeneutics, the project of living an identity is multi-layered and evolving as it entails negotiating the tensions between how one is known to oneself and how one is seen by others. Interwoven into this inquiry are identity issues in research that impact on minority women as both participants and researcher. The implications of representation and identity politics in research about racial minority women are addressed while engaging in a generative dialogue about learning across cultural borders.

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I extend a warm thank you to Dr. Jessica Ball for sharing her enthusiasm that psychological research can be conducted with a sociocultural vision and texture. I am indebted to the counsel of Dr. Leah Fowler in supporting my efforts to "live by the word" and write research in a voice in which I was entitled to speak.

The friendship and support of the women of the Tuesday evening thesis group, Elizabeth Chambers, Julie Garrison, Suzanne Gregory, and Maureen Murphy-Dyson were wonderfully invigorating. The generous spirit of Gina Kiem-Byrne accompanied me on sections of the steep and uncertain slopes of learning and knowing. Thank you to Bella Cenezero for her reassurance that I was not alone in my challenges.

I thank and heartily acknowledge each of the five women whose stories and voices gave shape to this inquiry. Their experiences and insights encouraged me to keep looking deeper and grow into being a researcher. You are all women warriors.

Finally, I thank my spouse, Sinclair Tedder whose belief in me kept my spirits high and whose care and patience held the ground firmly in place.

E. Lam
Summer, 1998

Feet on ground
Heart in hand
Facing forward
Be yourself.
(Jann Arden, "Good Mother")

Dedication

For my parents, Rose and David Lam, who carried education and art with them from one side of the Pacific to the other.

doh-tse

When we Chinese girls listened to the adults talking-story, we learned that we failed if we grew up to be but wives or slaves. We could be heroines, swords-women.
... Night after night my mother would talk-story until we fell asleep. I couldn't tell where the stories left off and the dreams began, her voice the voice of the heroines in my sleep.
... At last I saw that I ... had been in the presence of great power, my mother talking-story. After I grew up, I heard the chant of Fa Mu Lan, the girl who took her father's place in battle. ... I had forgotten this chant that was once mine, given me by my mother, who may not have known its power to remind. She said I would grow up a wife and slave, but she taught me the song of the warrior woman, Fa Mu Lan. I would have to grow up a warrior woman.

Maxine Hong Kingston
The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a girlhood among ghosts. (1977, pp. 25-26)

知	**"to know"** *"jie"*
口	"mouth" *opening; speak; beginnings; sharing experiences; giving voice to experience; new possibilities; discourses*
矢	"arrow" *aiming; going for deeper understanding; penetrating; striking at heart & centre; breaking apart previous ways of knowing & being; tools/connotations of a "warrior woman"*
日	"sun" *illumination; clarity of vision*
智	**"knowledge"**

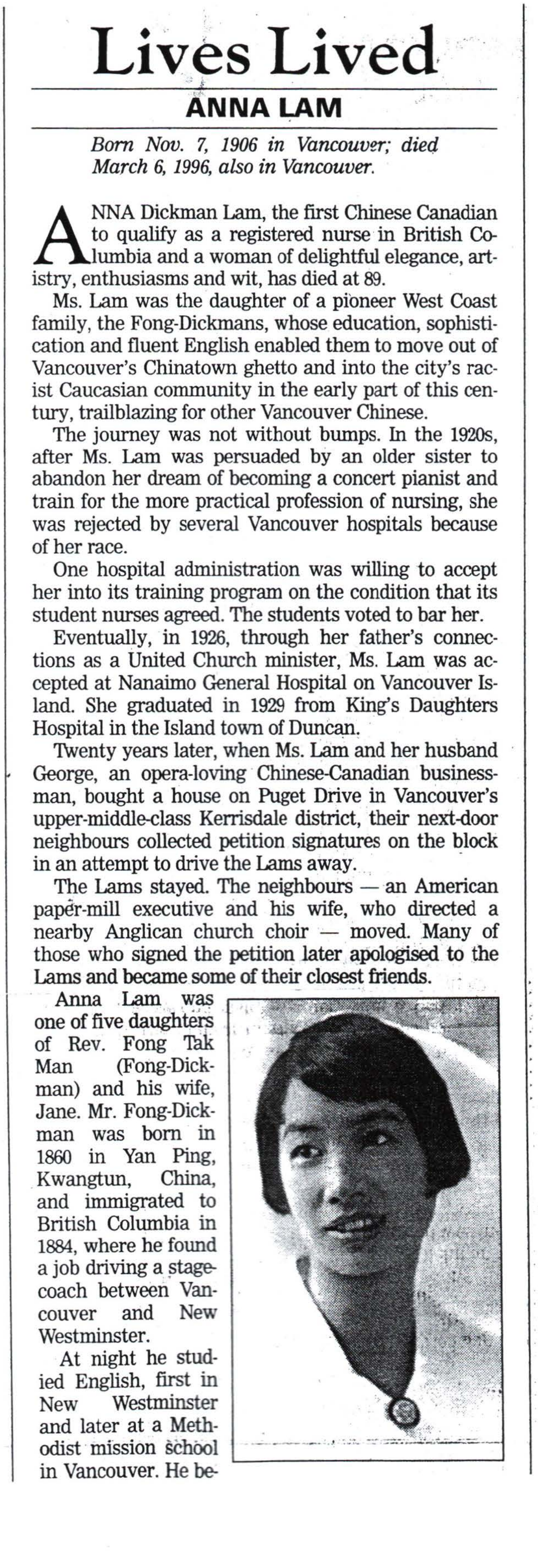
Caligraphy by D. Lam

Preface

> [M]emory is fragile and the space of a single life is
> brief, passing so quickly that we never get a chance to
> see the relationship between events; we cannot gauge
> the consequences of our acts, and we believe in fiction
> of past, present and future, but it may also be true that
> everything happens simultaneously.
> (Isabel Allende, 1992, House of the Spirits, p. 432)

If there is a story in this inquiry it does not begin here in 1997, but rather, in the 1920s. Around that time, women who I would eventually come to know in my family were beginning to make historical waves in their learning and educational lives. My great-aunt, Anna Lam became the first Chinese Canadian woman to register as a nurse in B.C. in 1929 and her sister, Esther Fong-Dickman, was the first Chinese Canadian female graduate of the University of B.C. in the class of 1926. That same year, the Chinese Exclusion Act prohibiting entrance to any persons of Chinese origin to Canada had been in full swing for three years and would not be repealed until twenty years later in 1947 (Chan, 1983). I learned of these events perhaps all too late in the spring of 1996 when Anna Lam passed away at the age of eighty-nine.

Months later when I embarked on this project and began to think about women of Asian descent, specifically Chinese Canadian women, in the spheres of academic research, I returned often to the thought that an understanding of human beings' lives can never be separated out, nor distanced from the practices and conventions of time and place. "[Y]ou cannot take a life out of history, that [is,] life-history and history, psychology and politics, are deeply intertwined" (Gilligan, 1983, p.xi). The life stories of Anna Lam and Esther Fong-Dickman have ridden the waves of this inquiry to remind me of this.



Lives Lived

ANNA LAM

Born Nov. 7, 1906 in Vancouver; died March 6, 1996, also in Vancouver.

ANNA Dickman Lam, the first Chinese Canadian to qualify as a registered nurse in British Columbia and a woman of delightful elegance, artistry, enthusiasms and wit, has died at 89.

Ms. Lam was the daughter of a pioneer West Coast family, the Fong-Dickmans, whose education, sophistication and fluent English enabled them to move out of Vancouver's Chinatown ghetto and into the city's racist Caucasian community in the early part of this century, trailblazing for other Vancouver Chinese.

The journey was not without bumps. In the 1920s, after Ms. Lam was persuaded by an older sister to abandon her dream of becoming a concert pianist and train for the more practical profession of nursing, she was rejected by several Vancouver hospitals because of her race.

One hospital administration was willing to accept her into its training program on the condition that its student nurses agreed. The students voted to bar her.

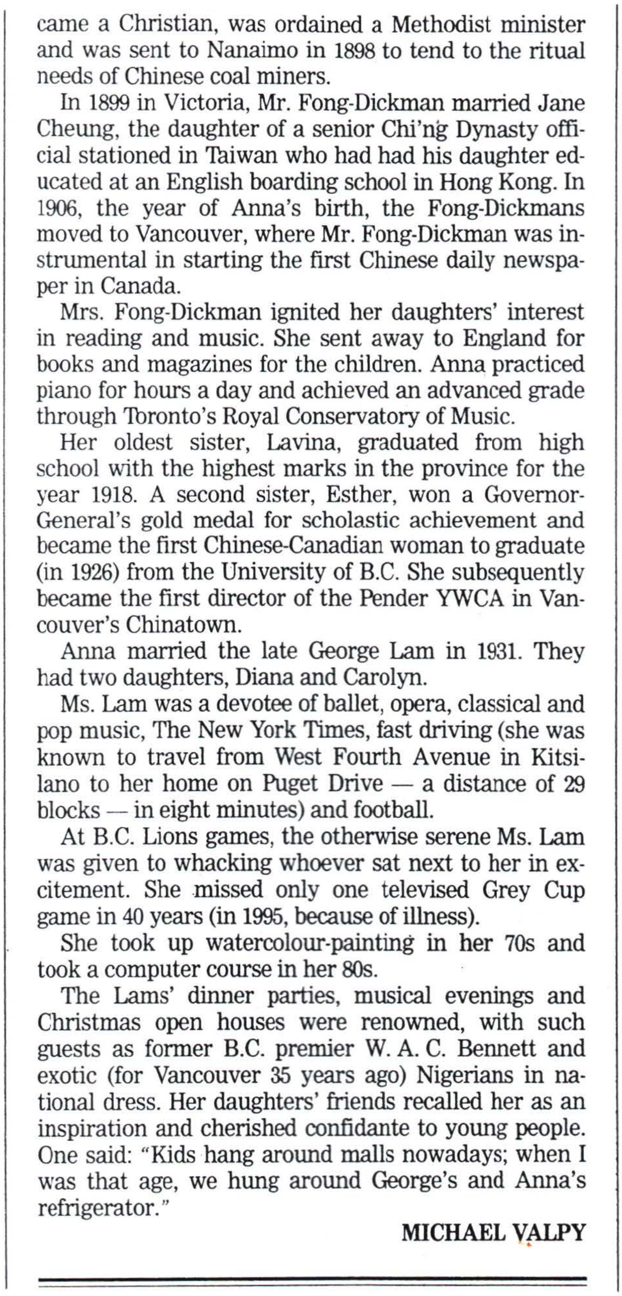
Eventually, in 1926, through her father's connections as a United Church minister, Ms. Lam was accepted at Nanaimo General Hospital on Vancouver Island. She graduated in 1929 from King's Daughters Hospital in the Island town of Duncan.

Twenty years later, when Ms. Lam and her husband George, an opera-loving Chinese-Canadian businessman, bought a house on Puget Drive in Vancouver's upper-middle-class Kerrisdale district, their next-door neighbours collected petition signatures on the block in an attempt to drive the Lams away.

The Lams stayed. The neighbours — an American paper-mill executive and his wife, who directed a nearby Anglican church choir — moved. Many of those who signed the petition later apologised to the Lams and became some of their closest friends.

Anna Lam was one of five daughters of Rev. Fong Tak Man (Fong-Dickman) and his wife, Jane. Mr. Fong-Dickman was born in 1860 in Yan Ping, Kwangtun, China, and immigrated to British Columbia in 1884, where he found a job driving a stagecoach between Vancouver and New Westminster.

At night he studied English, first in New Westminster and later at a Methodist mission school in Vancouver. He be-



came a Christian, was ordained a Methodist minister and was sent to Nanaimo in 1898 to tend to the ritual needs of Chinese coal miners.

In 1899 in Victoria, Mr. Fong-Dickman married Jane Cheung, the daughter of a senior Chi'ng Dynasty official stationed in Taiwan who had had his daughter educated at an English boarding school in Hong Kong. In 1906, the year of Anna's birth, the Fong-Dickmans moved to Vancouver, where Mr. Fong-Dickman was instrumental in starting the first Chinese daily newspaper in Canada.

Mrs. Fong-Dickman ignited her daughters' interest in reading and music. She sent away to England for books and magazines for the children. Anna practiced piano for hours a day and achieved an advanced grade through Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

Her oldest sister, Lavina, graduated from high school with the highest marks in the province for the year 1918. A second sister, Esther, won a Governor-General's gold medal for scholastic achievement and became the first Chinese-Canadian woman to graduate (in 1926) from the University of B.C. She subsequently became the first director of the Pender YWCA in Vancouver's Chinatown.

Anna married the late George Lam in 1931. They had two daughters, Diana and Carolyn.

Ms. Lam was a devotee of ballet, opera, classical and pop music, The New York Times, fast driving (she was known to travel from West Fourth Avenue in Kitsilano to her home on Puget Drive — a distance of 29 blocks — in eight minutes) and football.

At B.C. Lions games, the otherwise serene Ms. Lam was given to whacking whoever sat next to her in excitement. She missed only one televised Grey Cup game in 40 years (in 1995, because of illness).

She took up watercolour-painting in her 70s and took a computer course in her 80s.

The Lams' dinner parties, musical evenings and Christmas open houses were renowned, with such guests as former B.C. premier W. A. C. Bennett and exotic (for Vancouver 35 years ago) Nigerians in national dress. Her daughters' friends recalled her as an inspiration and cherished confidante to young people. One said: "Kids hang around malls nowadays; when I was that age, we hung around George's and Anna's refrigerator."

MICHAEL VALPY

The Globe and Mail, April 1, 1996

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URSULA HOPE COOPER

Ursula in the Registrar's office, Betty (not Elizabeth) everywhere else. She is always faithful to her gown, which lends dignity to the campus and to Betty's own frivolously curly, auburn hair—that hair which she loves to hear called red. She is specializing in French honors (observe the regular attendance at Mlle. Foucard's teas), but is also an expert in high finance—she once saved fourteen dollars in dime-savers. Betty possesses two virtues seldom found together—she can be both idealistic and practical.

EDWARD ROBERT CHAMBERLAIN

Good natured and of a striking personality, "Eddy" is very popular. An active member of the Players' Club, he takes a keen interest in the drama and for five years conducted the production of the plays staged by the North Vancouver High School. He is also an ardent disciple of Isaak Walton and spends his summer vacation fishing in the North. He is destined for the teaching profession.

ESTHER EVANGELINE FONG DICKMAN

"And still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all she knew."

Mathematician, platonist, and erstwhile philosopher, Esther is the class enigma. She divides the principal part of her time between the Students' International Club, the Math. Club, the S.C.M., Phil. essays (of all things), Economics, and a few other cheerful divertisements. Favorite occupation, starting for the library. Esther plans to follow the teaching profession. May she find the best that life has to offer.

BASIL STUART COGHLAN

Tramp, tramp, tramp, here comes Basil. Bow tie, long pipe, full dunnage bag, and his two faithful dogs. We think Duke and Mike enjoyed the Fairview Varsity as much as Basil. A cane, the open road, and we thought he was content; but this year he seems to have fallen for the wiles of the "unfair" sex. He comes to Varsity in a collegiate can, and supports his class like the true gentleman he is.

MARJORIE CAMPBELL DIMOCK

"To know her is to love her."

Why is Marjorie like her beloved Okanagan? She is famous for her sunshine. Her merry blue eyes and irresistible smile win her a permanent place in the hearts of all her friends. She is an authority on oratory—a prize-winner in the 1925 Women's Oratorical Contest; on Classics—vice-president of Classics Club; and on serenades. We foresee a very happy and successful future for you, Marjorie, and wonder when you will part with your "crowning glory."

INTRODUCTION

> An absence, then, as much as a presence, is a good point for a beginning. And when any situation is replete with both - where a pervasive absence signifies an absent presence, and a fleeting presence itself signals to a hidden imperative of invisibility, then that is precisely where the work of inquiry and description must begin. We begin with what we have - our invisibility. (Bannerji, 1993, p. xii)

> The mirrors that mainstream Western society holds up to Asian women are contradictions which distort and refract so many times over that one wonders how we are able to see ourselves and form our ... identities ... in this society. (Yee, 1993, p.23)

This inquiry explores how five women of Chinese descent, all formally educated and raised in Canada, understand and learn about the convolutions of identity and representation in their daily lives within a predominately eurocentric society. It examines some of the complexities and contradictions of living an "hyphenated" identity as "Chinese-Canadian women" across borders that continually re-define and challenge the meanings of sameness, difference, and be-longing. Interwoven into this inquiry are re-presentational issues in research that impact on racial minority women as both participants and researcher.

Almquist (1995) maintains that ethnic and racial minority women "do not and cannot compartmentalize their lives" (p.598) into experiences that are gender based and others which are distinctively ethnic, racial or socioeconomic based. Instead, minority women "have incorporated a whole constellation of roles, characteristics, and experiences into their self-concepts" (Almquist, 1995, p.598) and these operate together in how women see themselves and make sense of their lives.

Often over-looked in psychologically-oriented studies is how gender, race, and ethnicity constitute "status variables" (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990, p.405) working in tandem in the lives of minority women. These variables, or markers of identity, invoke differently-felt social and cultural locations that influence how women experience concepts of self (see for example, Anzaldua, 1987, 1990; Bannerji, 1993; Espiritu, 1997; Gunew, 1933; Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983; Trinh, 1989, 1991). Understanding and learning evolve from moving within and across these locations from one moment to the next. Living in a pluralistic and eurocentric society entails ways of knowing and agentic practices which sustain one's self when there are no hard and fast rules that govern how societal differences are played out and interpreted in the textures of one's life (Anzaldua, 1987; Hurtado, 1996). Gunew (1993) refers to the negotiation of gender, ethnicity, and multiculture as negotiations of "irreducible differences" (p.1).

If, as Heilbrun (1988) asserts, that women's "identity is grounded through relation to the chosen other" (p.24), then the "chosen other" is both significant in and implicated into the ways in which women seek to understand matters of identity and self from different cultural locations. For Chinese women who are born or raised in this country, and live as "double minorities" (Kim, 1981, p.42) by virtue of gender and race, the project of identity is complex and involves multifaceted processes and tensions which are in constant flux. Trinh (1991) calls the project of identity for minority women "having to live a difference that has no name and too many names already" (p.14).

Minority Women in Research: Visible Omissions and Stereotypes

Reid and Kelly (1994) argue that the academic community still needs to address how "women of colour"[1] (p.477) are either rendered invisible or depicted as anomalies within women's psychology. They state that this problem has its roots in both theory and practice:

---

[1] The authors use the term "women of colour" to denote "non-White women." They prefer this term over "minority women" and "ethnic minority women" because it is not dependent on demongraphics and can be used in various national and trans-national realms. In this research, I use the term "racial minority women" and "minority women" to describe women who are of non-European heritage such as those who are of Asian and Chinese descent in Canada and United States.

> ... [W]omen of colour are presented as anomalous through their absence in studies of "common" female experiences and by their selection for investigation of deviant female behaviour.
> ... Research paradigms directed at the study of the "universal woman" have in actuality focused on White middle-class populations. ... Research must break from the mainstream paradigms in order to invest the study of women with a sense of cultural diversity. (p.479)

Edwards (1990) makes a similar claim when she points out that Black women in research are either invisible or portrayed in ways which reinforce racial and gender stereotypes. Phoenix (as cited in Edwards, 1990) calls the research situation characterizing women of colour the "normalized absence/pathologized presence couplet" (p.477). Still, Sampson (1993) maintains that, not only has traditional psychology been critiqued on the grounds that practices "predominantly 'speak male'"(p.1220), but that the identities of minority and "third world" (p.1219) people are usually defined according to representational frameworks not of their own making.

While these dramatic views draw much needed critical attention to the problems surrounding racial minority women in psychological research, they fail to recognize women's agency as both researchers and participants in scripting their lives and identities *in response to* research agendas and frameworks that do not call into question representational imperatives as part of the academic project.

Research about minority women requires considerable attention and reinvigoration. Several core problems can be identified. First, concerns of invisibility suggest that research about women still lacks in-depth knowledge about the lives of different racial minority women especially from their *own* perspectives and in their *own* words. The potential of research *by and about* minority women appears to be over-looked and virtually untapped as a viable and creative solution to counter invisibility and underrepresentation. It is insufficient to "just do more" research "on" minority women without also making visible the agency of women who are engaged in that research.

Second, the research terrain is confounded by complex problems around representation and minority women (and men) (Sampson, 1993) that experimental paradigms in particular, cannot adequately address nor account for, hence the admission of anomalies and stereotypes. Heterogeneity within a given group is often unacknowledged (Almquist, 1995; Walker-Moffat, 1995). Research needs to simultaneously question and unpack how intersections of gender, culture, and race, among others, factor into the enterprises of both conceptualizing and portraying diversity and differences (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995) in pluralistic contexts. Assuming that these issues can be made "tidy" and unproblematic in the research domain assumes that they operate as such in social life. Britzman (1990) puts this in critical terms:

> If culture, history, and difference are perceived as factors to be transcended or as external things that impinge upon our real essences, then those dynamics become noises to be silenced. The fact is that any attempts to avoid such complexity diminishes who we might become. When differences are stigmatized, trivialized, suppressed, or erased, the status quo becomes lived as the natural. (p. 80)

Last, as emphasized in Britzman's quote above, the social context in which research takes place becomes crucial in understanding the lives of racial minority women. Contexts need to be an integral part of the research undertaking itself, as markers of identity such as gender and ethnicity "carr[y] ideological meanings without permission" (Britzman, 1992, p.257). These meanings are anchored in and reproduced by societal discourses and structures of power differences that operate in both visible and invisible forms to which the practice of research is not immune.

When the subjects of Chinese Canadian and Asian North American women[2] are transposed against these observations and questions that are ricocheting throughout the domain of research and racial minority women, my first impression is to ask myself whether or not there is even a place from which to begin an inquiry by and about Chinese Canadian women. As far as I can tell, both Chinese and Asian North American women are caught as fleeting glimpses in the overall picture of women's research.

Where Are "Our" Mirrors?

Researchers' observations of invisibility and anomalies are remarkably astute and acute when I recall the kinds of frustrations I first encountered while trying to locate any research (either qualitative or quantitative) about Asian North American women in the fields of education and psychology, even after narrowing my focus to women's psychology and multicultural education. At the time, I did not give very much thought beyond these practical difficulties to theorize what they might be telling me. Such was the situation to which I had grown accustomed and learned to simply live with as a graduate student. The challenges and situations I encountered can be categorized as follows:

1) invisibility;
2) representational discontinuities;
3) discourse of conflict and problems; and
4) absent stories and researching under wraps.

---

[2] The term "Asian American" is used by academics and writers chiefly in the United States to refer to diverse groups of people who trace their ethnic orgins and ancestry to different parts of Asia. These groups possess different cultures, languages, and histories (Walker-Moffat, 1995). Current usage of "Asian American" reveals a legacy in the civil rights era and imparts postcolonial connotations from the previous usage of the term, "Oriental" (Kondo, 1996). I use the terms, "Asian North American" and "Asian Canadian" to include individuals of Asian descent in both Canada and the United States unless specified by a given study or reference. While I draw on literature which pertains to both women of Asian and Chinese descent in North America, this decision allowed me to widen, rather than further narrow an already sparse topic area. My use of "Asian" and "Chinese" also recognizes them as heterogeneous and evolving categories which sometimes overlap.

Invisibility

I was hard-pressed to find research that focused exclusively on the Asian North American adult population, especially females. By comparison, there were many studies which examined and dialogued extensively about the experiences of Black, Native American/First Nations, and Latina women in Canada, the U. S. as well as the U.K. Where were Asian women in the landscape of multiculture and women? Sue and Sue's (1973) assertion that Asian Americans are "the neglected minority" (p.386) seems unchanged since they first made that statement twenty-five years ago.

Representational Discontinuities

When I did locate any in-depth research about Asian women, it tended to focus on women who occupied the subject positions of refugees, "recent" immigrants, English as a Second Language learners, and overseas students as opposed to those who were born, raised, and socialized in North America. In "cross-cultural" studies, Asian North American ethnic groups (Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Koreans, for example) were depicted as if they were an homogenous group (Walker-Moffat, 1995). Other finer-grained differences of gender, generational status, and socioeconomic status among others, were often ignored within a "group" even though they were sometimes alluded to. Questions of representation and identity such as, "Who constitutes 'Asian North Americans' or 'Chinese Canadians' ?" were, for the most part, left up to the reader to try to discern.

Discourse of "Culture Conflict" and Problems

I also began to notice how topics of ethnic and racial identity were reproduced and conceived as problems to be re-solved by the minority individual if he or she was to "*achieve* a positive identity" (Kim, 1981, p.iii). A nebulous but unexamined discursive logic of "culture conflict" and "struggle" constructed the underlying assumptions of these writings. This assimilationalist orientation, as one dominant discourse, was the most pervasive in ethnic and racial identity development models, descriptions about Asian North American popular fiction (see for example Haysom, 1997), and studies of parenting styles among Asians in North America. While emphasizing the self-agency and adaptation of individuals, there was a message that *an* identity could and should be re-solved once and for all if the minority person underwent a cycle of awareness so as to live in a state of non-conflict and self-acceptance. Although societal structures of racism and sexism were often acknowledged, theories and studies rarely extended into an understanding and exploration of how minority women and men resisted against and lived generatively within these different structures on a daily basis.

Hearing Stories and Researching Under Wraps

In very few studies and articles did I read the voices or stories of Asian North American women as told in their own words. One voice that stood out was that of Colleen Fong (1995), an Asian American Studies educator who is aware of how her role as a professor is inextricably tied to her racial visibility:

> ... I provide students of Asian descent with a sense of ownership and legitimacy on campus that is still in many ways dominated by a Eurocentric perspective and a white male faculty. Asian American students sometimes comment on how I am the first Asian American professor they have had. (p.111)

Another eloquent voice belonged to Dorinne Kondo (1996), an anthropologist who theorizes about her involvement with Asian American theatre as a way to re-write Asian American identity:

> Certainly, "going home" - not only to study one's own community, with all its asymmetries of power that term implies, but also to help create it, gives one a wholly different relationship to the usual anthropological project of distanced observation and "studying down." For the first time in my life, I feel myself totally engaged in a common struggle of incredible emotion, intellectual, and political urgency, a struggle to which - for a

change - I can contribute as much as I receive. (p.114)

What struck me about both these women's voices was their sense of affirmation and vision. Without mirrors, can there be ownership or legitimacy of "our" experiences? Mitsuye Yamada (1983) bluntly calls invisibility for Asian American women "an unnatural disaster" (p.35).

This collection of voices caused me to wonder why in most research by and about Asian North Americans, researchers seemed to keep themselves and their identities "under wraps" (see for example, Kim, 1981). Moreover, when I did find stories about Asian North American women in the form of biographies, they were usually hidden at the back of anthologies and journals by and about minority women. I wanted to hear their voices, as I had Colleen Fong's, Dorinne Kondo's, and Mitsuye Yamada's. How did they make sense of their experiences of being and living (and researching) in this society? How did they perceive themselves and their lives? What were their moments of learning about matters of identity? How did they understand who "we" Asian North Americans are and how "we" see ourselves? As Krieger (1991) describes it, "One grasps for a feel of the person behind each study" (p.64). I had wanted to grasp for a more "complete" and visible person who subsumed neither her gender nor her race within both the research and the story of the research.

Creating the Space for this Inquiry

The above constellation of questions, dilemmas, and developing observations about research by and about Asian North American women form the foundations of this inquiry. They have taken a long time to surface and articulate to myself, so embedded have they been in my daily life as a woman, first-generation Chinese Canadian, researcher, student, spouse, and past co-ordinator at a multicultural social services agency.

In re-reading Bannerji's (1993) assessment of invisibility in the opening epigraph, I still have mixed reactions to what invisibility and the other above challenges mean for research by and about Asian North American women. On the one hand, I am encouraged by the thought that there is a research "gap" that I can potentially address and fill about identity, learning, and Chinese Canadian women. I am certainly not the only racial minority woman who has ever had confusing glimpses or deeply-resonant experiences around identity, self, and representation that warranted expression and untangling.

On the other hand, inquiry and research for me is more than filling an empty conceptual space "out there" in the world of research. Rather, it concerns the link between representation and affirmation. When I think about where and how other women and I might begin to develop our perspectives and voices as Asian/Chinese Canadian/minority females (and researchers) when our lives remain invisible and constrained, I cannot help but begin to interpret this gap differently. It metamorphoses into a disturbing "gap-ing" omission that must be addressed and questioned in its relevance not only to research, but also to the society in which I and other minority women live and claim membership. In relating a story about the perils of what Britzman (1992) calls "academic socialization and dominant norms of White culture" (p.254) Britzman speaks deeply to my complexity of feelings and intellectual unease when she illuminates the risks and difficulties while offering an approach for doing research:

> [Research and researchers] must [begin to] enter that unsettling space between authorized and unauthorized discourse. It is a place of differently-lived anger and vulnerability, where the cost of identity entails reformulating the self with imperatives that veil how culture is lived as a relation of domination and subordination. (p.254)

This inquiry is about "entering that unsettling space" and opening up the discursive spaces between invisibility, stereotypes and other related matters of identity and representation that impinge on the lives of five Chinese Canadian women. This research therefore, treats identity as an enterprise of negotiation forged in the tensions and exigencies of how one sees her self and how one is known by others when both processes are complicated by socially inscribed meanings and discourses around ethnic, race, and gender differences. It moves the spot-light back and forth between how the women understand their lives to the collisions and gaps about identity which in-form and challenge conceptions of self. One strand of the topic focuses on how the women make sense of who they are and how they see themselves when they are embedded in social contexts and competing discourses that shape the meanings in which issues of ethnicity, gender, and cultural differences operate in their lives and this society. Another strand focuses on how the women construct "mirrors" to learn about themselves in an eurocentric context. This is an inquiry about discovery, making visible and challenging the notions of identity and representation that have constrained research about Asian North American women.

In a passage about women making their lives visible to others via stories, Heilbrun (1985) re-states the agency of Hong Kingston's (1977) notion of "talking-story" (p.25):

> What is essential is for women to see themselves collectively, not individually, not caught in some individual ... and familial plot, and inevitably, found wanting. ... I suspect that female narratives will be found where women exchange stories, where they read and talk collectively of ambitions, and possibilities and accomplishment.
>
> I do not believe that new stories will find their way into texts if they do not begin in oral exchanges among women in groups hearing and talking to one another. As long as women are isolated from one another, not allowed to offer other women the most personal accounts of their lives, they will not be any part of any narrative of their own. (p.46)

My goal as a Chinese Canadian female researcher is to bring some of the stories of women together in a framework that links the psychological to the social so we have a place to talk about and re-imagine our lives and identities in critical and new ways.

Given that this research is by and about Chinese Canadian women, "Chinese Canadian women" must first be located in terms of their historical context in this country. How did many of "us" come to be "here" instead of being "over there" or somewhere else?

Historical Context of Chinese Canadian Women

By situating Chinese Canadian women in an historical con-text, the lives of the women in this research can be better located and understood in terms of time and space. Although this background does not necessarily capture the individual histories and diasporic circumstances by which all women have come to be in Canada, it nonetheless endeavours to provide a flexible historical framework of migration.

The earliest history of the Chinese in Canada is a story punctuated by an absence of women. Large scale immigration to Canada began between 1858 to 1880 as a male exodus from Southern China (Jin Guo, 1992). Lured by the promise of gold and later by work on the final stages of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Chinese men left the famine and upheaval of their homeland and arrived with the intention of making their fortune in "gum san" or gold mountain, as North America was called at the time. In the early years, it was believed that the streets of San Francisco were paved with gold (Chan, 1983). Women remained in China and managed the household with remittances from lone husbands or "bachelor fathers" (Hsu, 1997). It was not unusual for families to remain apart on either sides of the Pacific, some for as long as several years or decades at a time (Chong, 1994; Hsu, 1997).

Most of the Chinese women who first arrived between 1885 and 1894 were either first and second wives or concubines of merchants who could afford to pay the exorbitant head taxes levied against Chinese emigrants (Jin Guo, 1992). From 1923 to as recent as 1947, family reunification and the entrance of single persons of Chinese origin was also prevented by the Chinese Exclusion

Act. Chan (1983) describes these two politically racist policies of that time. "Of all the immigrant groups seeking a new life in this country, only the Chinese had to pay a head tax - a fee for permission to settle in Canada. In 1923, the Chinese became the first and only people to be excluded from Canada on the basis of race" (p.10).

After the ban was lifted in 1947, thousands of women arrived in the next decades either to join their families or to begin new lives on their own in this country. Four years later in the Census of 1951 there were 3,586 females of Chinese ethnic origin[3] in British Columbia (Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951) and by 1991, census figures showed this number at 92,255 (1991 Census, Statistics Canada, 1993).

The lives of early pioneering women and the legacy connecting them to later generations have been chronicled in a variety of historically-informed works. Given the relatively small numbers of pioneering women and their low rates of literacy, these works give posthumous voices to their experiences (Jin Guo, 1993).

Chong's (1994) three-generation family biography traces the story of her grandmother as the second wife or concubine brought to Vancouver and Vancouver Island by her husband to help support the husband's first wife and family back in China. Through the eyes of Chong's grandmother and mother, the story examines ways in which women's lives were constrained by the conditions of a racially segregated society juxtaposed against the status of being a concubine in the Chinese community.

Time and place are brought together in a collection of oral histories of early and contemporary Chinese Canadian women called Jin Guo (1992). The title refers to jewellery worn by women used metaphorically to mean that "women are as brave and as strong as men" (inside cover). Organized by the Women's Book Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council, the book presents the stories of mainly Canadian-born and early pioneering women as told in their own words. Their stories speak of linguistic and cultural isolation, community involvement, careers and citizenship. Shorter exerpts examine themes across interviews such as the women's perceptions of identity, family life, work, education and political activism.

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[3] The 1991 Census of Canada publication, Ethnic Origin, defines "ethnic origin" as "the ethnic or cultural group(s) to which the respondent's ancestors belong. Ethnic or cultural origin refers to the ethnic "roots" or ancestral background of the population, and should not be confused with citizenship or nationality" (p.233).

The experiences of contemporary Chinese Canadian women have been included in anthologies of minority women published by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Mukherjee, 1993) as well as in creative works that weave together autobiographical fiction, history, and poetry. Contemporary writings such as Disappearing Moon Cafe (Lee, 1990), When Fox is a Thousand (Lai, 1995), and Many-Mouthed Birds (Lee & Wong- Chu, 1991) attest to the continual dialoguing and changing landscapes of what it is to be a woman of Chinese ancestry in Canada who looks back and ahead at the same time at the end of the present century.

"Me", "I" and "We": Implications of Identity and Speaking for Participants in this Research

In this inquiry, my relationship with the participants is both constrained by language as a signifier and preserved by a "shared" Chinese identity in this country. The nature and configuration of this relationship poses the impression of a seamless identity between myself and the participants under the rubric of "Chinese Canadian women." As a researcher who shares subject positions of gender and ethnicity with her participants, I invoke this "seamless" identification as an analytical tool to uncover the problematic dimensions of identity and representation within this project. While the "Chinese Canadian women" label brings "us" together semantically on these pages by presenting us as one opaque, unitary identity, this situation poses representational discontinuities and precautions which I need to address.

Researchers have drawn attention to the potential stakes and risks that befall the hands of researchers who might not share the history, gender, belief systems, cultural perspectives or ethnicity of those she researches and writes about (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Edwards, 1990; Fine, 1994; hooks, 1990). I do not perceive nor position myself outside this range of hazards. Despite similarities of ethnicity and gender, my "hand" as a researcher is clearly not the same hand, heart or mind as the women who participated in this research. Particular to this inquiry by and about "Chinese Canadian women" is its focus on the convolutions of identity, which further complicates the researcher-researched relationship as part of the written and unwritten text. For identity is a construct with many representational and affective strings attached to weighty ethical questions:

- How can I as a researcher presume to speak for (like) others in ways that do not mis-represent participants as individuals and "us" as "women of Chinese Canadian" descent?
- Who constitutes the "we" or the "us" in this research?
- How and under what conditions is the "we" connected to the "I" of the researcher's agenda, theoretical commitments, and those of the participants (Britzman, 1991)?
- When is identity based on how one sees herself and when is it determined by how one is seen/represented by others?
- Do the identities of "others" make a difference in the construction and placement of representational lines by which I and the participants are constituted?

In this inquiry, accountability (and culpability) through a shared ethnic identity at times appears to me to be more potent than assurances from the University Human Ethics Committee in rendering myself potentially more at risk of doing a "poor" job than in the absence of such an association. Nonetheless, these two forms of accountability are not mutually exclusive.

The ever-present argument that one "should have known better" (because she is "one of us") is never easily avoided despite the practicalities of obtaining signed consent and exercising methodological self-scrutiny. In terms of this research and my biographical presence in it, minimizing the boundaries of my identity would not only skirt an ethical responsibility, but I believe, a constructive opportunity to carefully use my "Chinese Canadian" female subjectivity to highlight the problematics of identity and researching identity.

In terms of ethics, I concur with Trinh T. Minh-ha (1990) that the issue of *when* one holds the status of "insider" and "outsider" within a given ethnic group is mutable and not defined by geography, statistics, or biology. I interpret her following passage to mean that the responsibilities of identification are always retained by the researcher. She must continually address the complexities and implications of her status and history in relation to those she researches (Hoskins, 1997) no matter how clear or ambiguous that status might be from one moment to the next:

> The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting the inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not quite an insider and not quite an outsider. She ... moves about always with at least two gestures: that of affirming 'I am like you' while persisting in her difference and that of reminding 'I am different' unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at.
> This is not to say that the historical I can be obscured and ignored and that differentiation cannot be made, but that I is not unitary, culture has never been monolithic and is always more or less in relation to a judging subject.

> Differences do not only exist between outsider and insider - two entities. They are also at work within the outsider herself, or the insider herself - a single entity. She who knows she cannot speak of [and for] them without speaking of herself, of history without involving her story, also knows that she cannot make a gesture without activating the to and fro movement of life. (pp. 374-375)

The "to and fro movement of life" is a waving flag that reminds me of my particular insider-outsider identity throughout this inquiry and the invisible expectations and responsibilities that bind me to the participants and the topic. As a researcher, I am cognizant of the hazardously shifting lines between identification and representation.

In terms of the theoretical links between identity and representation, I wonder about the degree of agency I have in determining where the lines are drawn, and who draws them. The lines mark and re-mark the borders of how the participants and I speak, for whom, and who "our" (imagined) audience re-presents me and them speaking for at any given time. Rather than side-stepping these concerns, Josselson (as cited in Hoskins, 1997) encourages researchers using participant narratives to remain open to their feelings of tension and difficulty as a precautionary measure:

> I am suggesting here that although this [kind of] work is important work, it is work we must do in anguish... To be uncomfortable in this work, I think, protects us from going too far. It is with our anxiety, dread, guilt, and shame that we honour our participants. To do this work, we must contain these feelings rather than deny, suppress, or rationalize them. We must at least try to be fully aware of what we are doing. (p.124)

Treating my (problematic) dual status with the respect accorded to the researcher-researched relationship and acknowledging further that I cannot be overly confident in ascribing its boundaries, is one of the strongest, although by no means infallible self-monitors for academic verisimilitude and rigour that I can claim within this project. Therefore, the interpretations of the participants' interview transcriptions and this inquiry are both a direct product of my biographical contexts as a female minority researcher (Krieger, 1991) coupled with the organizing theoretical anchors I have selected (Britzman, 1991).

Limitations and Form of this Inquiry as a Document of Learning

In addressing crucial issues of "bias" and veracity that link my biography to those of the participants, I argue that by acknowledging my presence and its potential limitations, rather than assuming that it can pass unnoticed, I can sharpen both how I conduct this research and conduct *myself* as I move within it. On a theoretical level, I adopt both Trinh's (1990) and Josselson's (as quoted in Hoskins, 1997) thinking as fruitful points to probe and reveal the complications about learning, identity and representation throughout my engagement in this project.

One strategy I employ is the use of first-person narratives woven throughout the document designated as researcher vignettes called, "talking-story" (Hong Kingston, 1997, p.24). These narratives are spaces or "pull out" points in the text in which I wrestle with issues of identity and representation as I have experienced them at a particular place in the life of the inquiry. I would like to emphasize the intertwined functions of this work as a document of my learning that captures the process of studying identity within a project that explores how matters of identity and representation are negotiated in the lives of racial minority women.

Richardson (1994) has emphasized how learning about a topic does not happen *before* a researcher sits down to write, but rather, that the learning comes through the researcher's journey as she writes and reflects:

> I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it. I was taught, however, as perhaps you were, too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say, until my points were organized and outlined. ... [This way of working] undermines the confidence of beginning qualitative researchers because their experience of research is inconsistent with the writing model ...[as it] requires writers to silence their own voices and to view themselves as

> contaminants." (p.516)

While this document appears to the reader as a linear piece of writing with chapters and page numbers, the research process as both a learning endeavour and a segment of lived experience is not a laid out map. Parts of this research journey are evident in the fibres of the writing while others are not so obvious. It is with this spirit of inquiring that I document my learning process of (re)constituting Chinese Canadian women's presence in this study as well as the worlds in which many of us move.

CHAPTER TWO
A RE-VIEW OF THE LITERATURE

> The particular is always more than a match for the universal;
> the universal always has to accomodate itself to the particular.
> (Goethe, as cited in Eisner, 1998, p.12)

> The problem is that knowledge of a culture is presented as if unencumbered by the politics and poetics of representation. As well, mainstream orientations have not addressed how knowledge of social difference might rearrange and bother the identities of the the knower. ... Can the language of multiculture begin with a recognition of the ambivalence of meaning and the detours of representing identities that are always overburdened with meanings one may not choose but, nonetheless, must confront and transform?
> (Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jimenez-Munoz, & Lamash, 1993, p. 189)

An Over-view of How the Literature Review is Organized: Synthesizing Understanding

This discussion of the literature draws from a variety of disciplines and intellectual orientations that together informed my conceptual understanding about the topic of Chinese Canadian women, identities and learning. In preparing for and conducting the research, it became evident that multiple implications and conceptual complexities associated with the topic could only be addressed by adopting a cross-disciplinary understanding of content and approaches. As I had received the bulk of my undergraduate and graduate training within psychological paradigms, I found that I would have to broaden my reading of the literature into other fields if I was to understand "Chinese Canadian women's" identity in terms of its representational components such as gender, ethnicity and race, among others. Hence, "it was only by stepping outside of familiar discourses" (Hoskins, 1997, p.3) of modernist psychological paradigms that I began to notice a host of inter-locking issues connected to racial and ethnic minority women (and men) and how identity was constructed in the literature as a personal, life-long project to be overcome. While the contextual backdrop and implications of this assumption were often overlooked and unexplored in modernist psychology, other orientations within psychology along with other disciplines have focused on them.

Writings drawn from poststructuralism, sociology and anthropology discuss how an understanding of identities cannot be limited to an inner, congruent experience of self, but is necessarily connected to broader issues of representation and discourse. Central to this point is how the notions of culture and difference are conceptualized when gender and ethnicity are examined in relation to "universalist" (e.g., non-gendered, non-raced) and positivist frameworks of self and identity. I draw attention to some of the core debates about difference in the human and social sciences as seen from various orientations. Some of these orientations disrupt modernist paradigms of identity as fixed, contained and universal, and advance the notion of multiple identities and subjectivities based on discourse and narrative.

To enter more deeply into some of these new ideas, I also relied on postcolonial and poststructural approaches in anthropology and cultural studies. These approaches had already begun the movement away from viewing individuals as possessing values and characteristics which were "culturally" unique and unchanging to casting an ideological eye to the meanings of identity and difference when considered in terms of the local and diasporic. My understanding of the concept of centre and periphery and writing from the periphery as an act of "speaking into existence" Asian North American identities come from some of these readings.

Surveying autobiographical and critical writings by ethnic minority women scholars brought me a step closer to the realm of the individual once again, but it was a differently-demarcated place from where I had begun. These voices from the margins further challenged the assumptions of identity as static and reinforced the poststructural, postcolonial stance of multiple subjectivities and identities. They also boldy made visible the invisible, unscripted lives of women occupying peripheral locations outside dominant discourses of a "universal person" (e.g., white, middle class, male) or "women" devoid of the contexts of ethnicity and class. The voices of these women spoke squarely to the lived realities of difference and identities intertwined with a view to social change.

My last touch-stone followed the thread of representation to an examination of how the identities of Asian North Americans in general, and women in particular, have been scripted by the dominant culture in which Asian North Americans are also embedded and participate. These writings provided a strong sense of "going home" by making visible and central both my "Asian/Chinese and female self " as a site for intellectual debate and examination. Issues that "we" as Asian North Americans face in "our" everyday lives about who "we" are and how "we" choose to see "ourselves" were honed and given a platform from which to speak.

This reading of identities and learning about identities contains shifts in perspective. The shifts necessarily expose fissures that would otherwise be glossed over by presenting the topic from staying on one or two paths. My strategy in presenting a reading of the literature therefore, deliberately "moves" the reader between the multiple levels of the psychological and the sociocultural. It simultaneously cuts paths across various disciplines and epistemological orientations to draw attention to the rupture points and lacuane that I discovered and the tensions that I felt.

My goal is to synthesize and blurr disciplinary boundaries to expose and reproduce how I, as a researcher, have taken up different subjectivities and ways of knowing in learning about myself in the inquiry process. In learning to live across theoretical borders and institutional departments, I mark my location by negotiation and movement rather than carving myself into one tradition or niche of knowledge. I invite the reader to explore the topic as multiple processes with multidimensional layers and shifts.

Conceptualizations of Culture as Context

This inquiry recognizes how cultural location and context impact on the lived realities of identity and contribute to a given person's understanding of self. Culture provides the means for understanding who one is. Sampson (1995) calls this a constitutive view of self in which the self is embedded and known:

> Culture is not something that stands in the way of persons or something that persons must overcome in order to realize their real self, but rather it is the only vehicle available for persons to know and to understand who they are. (p.427)

What is culture? In a review of the literature on culture, Kroeber and Kluckholn in 1952 (as cited in Lonner, 1994) identified 164 definitions, many of which were used within a specific study and not used since. The word "culture" is derived from the Latin "colere" which means "to till, to cultivate" and its past participle, "cultus" meaning "a cultivating, an active care" (Partridge, 1983, p.134). This inquiry emphasizes an holistic and contextual approach to the study of human diversity and difference that recognizes some important implications.

Raymond Williams (1981) conceptualizes culture as a "distinct 'whole way of life' that is manifested in social interactions and activities and "through which a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored" (p. 13). This definition emphasizes the socially-constructed nature of culture. The utility of Williams' definition is its non-reductionist, holistic approach. Culture is not construed as a summation of group-specific behaviours, values and practices, but rather, is viewed as a system or organic network that an individual is both part of, and constructs in relation to others.

Nancy Goldberger and Jody Veroff (1995) extend the notion of culture as a socially constructed and shared way of life to include sub-group membership as "cultures" and "sub-cultures" based on demographic demarcators such as race, gender, beliefs, class, age and sexual orientation:

> ... [I]n our society today, it is not uncommon for groups identified by race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or age to call themselves "cultures" and to be so called by others, despite the fact that their members also reside in and partake in the "culture" of the larger society despite the fact that members of these groups do not necessarily share distinct histories, languages, rules, beliefs, or an inclusive array of cultural practices. (p. 11)

While these researchers maintain that the definition may be problematic because it is based on smaller groups within a larger social order, and potentially reifies social categories and power imbalances between groups, their definition underlines the hegemonic implications that can result when "a 'culture' is .. created by the recognition of outsiders [as being] "different" and separate from the outside observers on one or many dimensions" when the outsiders belong to a dominant group (p. 11). The term "biculturalism " is a corollary of this definition.

In their extensive survey of models of biculturalism, LaFromboise, Hardin, Coleman and Gerton (1993) cite the early definitions by both Park and Stongequist in the 1920s and 1930s that emphasize the marginality of individuals who dwell between two cultures either through mixed racial heritage or by being born into and then raised in another culture. While the term "marginality" to describe one aspect of biculturalism has been contested, it describes the social conditions and psychological consequences of groups who live in a milieu where "two or more cultures share the same geographical area, with one culture maintaining a higher status than another" (p.489). Lavie and Swedenburg (1996) call this "hierarchical dualities" (p.3) and point out that the idea of cultures in a given setting being "equally 'different'" (p.3) ignores differential power relations.

The hierarchical characteristics often associated with culture and especially biculturalism draw attention to the hidden imperative of power.

Dorinne Kondo (1990) considers the notion of power in her broad definition of culture. Kondo moves deftly between poetic meaning-making and sharp social analysis without losing sight of either. Evident in her description is the tension between her position as an American of Japanese descent in American society and how her understanding of that reality is inextricably tied to larger social forces and practices. I quote Kondo at length because of the conceptual ground covered and the salient issues she raises about cultural meanings, difference and power:

> Culture and meaning, though for many years I had no name for these abstractions, lay in an awareness of assumptions, deeply felt, that shaped everyday life in the Japanese American community where I grew up. Mostly these assumptions had to do with the proper conduct of human relationships: the eloquence of silence, the significance of reciprocity, the need to attend closely to nuance, subtlety, ellipsis. Such deeply held orientations, imbued with moral, emotional, and intellectual significance, were sometimes at sharp variance with dominant cultural modes of action, and thus radically cast into relief the socially constituted nature of both "their" assumptions and "ours." Culture, from this standpoint, is no reified thing or system, but a *meaningful way of being in the world*, inseparable from the "deepest" aspects of one's "self" - the trope of depth and interior space itself a product of our own cultural conventions. These cultural meanings are themselves multiple and contradictory, and though they cannot be understood without reference to historical, political, and economic *discourses*, the experience of culture cannot be reduced to these nor related to them in any simple, isomorphic way. [italics added] (pp. 300 - 301)

Taken together, these conceptualizations open onto the debate in the social sciences about how the various components of culture and difference are theoretically addressed.

How Much of a Difference Makes a Difference?: Over-view of the Concepts and Issues of Culture and Difference

The connections between difference and power expressed in the above definitions of culture and biculturalism form the context in which minority

women's lives are depicted in research and how they unfold. These connections have been contested and discussed at length in academic writings by feminist and cultural theorists in different areas based on gender, race, and class as categories of critical analysis (Golberger & Veroff, 1996). While the issues presented in the debate lie beyond the realm and goals of this inquiry to resolve, they are central to this research by its interest in how individuals create learning "mirrors" that provide opportunities for learning about "themselves" in a pluralistic society
where the privileges of gender, race, class, and other distinctions, however subtle and at times non-existent, can and do emerge in various forms.

The following is a background of the main axes and dimensions of these debates adapted from the framework of Goldberger and Veroff's (1995) discussion of cultural differences in the social sciences. I also include the perspectives of different scholars to highlight pertinent issues and illustrate more clearly the complexities associated with cultural, racial, and gender differences. The collection of writings occur within diverse intellectual movements, some of which propose different epistemologies that impact on how differences are conceptualized, interpreted, and reproduced. In turn, the implications and meanings of differences as ascribed to culture influence and inform social practice, knowledge production and other social science endeavours (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995; Harding, 1996).

The purpose of presenting parts of this discussion is not to reach a resolution of the issues nor to provide an exhaustive enumeration of this vast area of academic scholarship. Instead, it serves as a foundation to the cross-disciplinary writings which follow with the aim of orienting and alerting readers to the depths of inter-locking issues which impinge specifically on this inquiry at the levels of individual lived experience and the selection of theory and methodology in making sense of that experience.

Universalism - Relativism

The heart of the universalism - relativism debate speaks to the question of whether or not there are invariant laws and principals that govern dimensions and traits of human behaviour. Implicit in universalism is the basic idea that if the dimensions of human behaviour can be identified they can then be selectively changed, predicted and generalized to all humans or sub-populations. This view argues that behaviour can be decontextualized and, hence, still be understood outside the particular conditions in which it operates.

A relativisitic stance generally takes the view that any aspect of human behaviour cannot be explained outside the specific sociocultural context in which it unfolds. It is often argued that relativism presents a contexualized view of human behaviour that, despite shared biology and genetics, makes it difficult to either infer any causal relationships or to suggest conclusive evidence about human behaviour without a thorough understanding of the context. Critics of relativism contend that, at worst, it distorts and brandishes the enterprise of the social and behavioural sciences into an exercise of ideological posturing and academically unfounded practices that side step the idea of a "pure" or objective social science (Sampson, 1993). Those who question the idea of a pure social science argue that all knowledge is anchored in social practice and, therefore, carries with it the values, assumptions and interests of those who formulate that knowledge (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Harding, 1996; Ingelby, 1995).

Often obscured in the universalism-relativism debate is the recognition of power; specifically, how power is implicit to research practices and theories. In this formulation, power works through language and discourse as vehicles with which a taken-for-granted picture of the world can be taken as "fact." This definition is based on theorists such as Jaques Derrida and Michel Foucault, the latter of whom argues that "matters of description cannot be separated from issues of power" (Gergen, 1992, p.23). Richardson (1994) explains that "[l]anguage is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where our sense of selves, our subjectivity is constructed. Understanding language as ... competing ways of giving meaning and organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration, struggle" (p.518). In studies focusing on those who, because of gender, race, class, and age, among others, may be seen to inhabit the "margins" rather than the "centres" of power, the implications of the universalism-relativism debate become salient and recast in sharper focus as the dimension of essentalism and deconstructionism.

Essentialism-Deconstructionism

The axis of this debate centres on differences between groups as either a specific set of traits, attitudes and practices that distinguish one group or as a socially constructed phenomena within the given conditions and constraints of the environment. When differences are conceptualized as socially constructed, it is often accompanied by the argument that the essentializing of difference, for example in terms of gender and race, sustains the status quo by implicitly suggesting that certain "essential" qualities of groups are fixed and hence not part of "normative" or standard characteristics (Ogbu, 1981). Moreover, a social constructionist view asserts that the labeling of categories and characteristics of people are encoded in the value and power-laden conventions of language and discourse (Parre, 1995; Sampson, 1993). On the other hand, essentialism is defined as "a belief in true essence - that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing" (Fuss, as quoted in Jhappan, 1996, p.28). Essentialism assumes a biological or "natural" basis to particular traits, characteristics, or behaviours. Often critiqued by social constructionists for valorizing and exoticising (Kondo, 1990) as well as pathologizing one group's "natural" tendencies, the argument against essentialism tries to expose an imperative of domination.

Feminist scholars and others concerned with issues of knowledge production in the social sciences have been especially active in bringing the essentialism - social constructionism debate to the forefront. One concern is the relative absence of women and people of colour in traditional psychological research agendas which purport to be representative of human behaviour in general (Bing & Trotman-Reid, 1996; Gilligan, 1983; Ingelby, 1996; Kaschak, 1992; Nicolson; 1995, Riger; 1995).

Sampson (1993) posits that the currents of various collective social movements (e.g., women, Third-world peoples, gays and lesbians) have called for a revisioning in the social sciences that is both sensitive to the politics of inclusion and diversity. He states that these movements have given rise to concerns about a politics of identity. The concern is premised on a recognition that individuals from historically marginalized groups seek to give voice to and have a stake in their own previously neglected experiences in ways which recognize their particular interests within the complexities of human experience and research agendas.

Yet the proposition for inclusivity is itself a slippery slope. It can be perceived as an exercise in essentialism and domination through the reification of categories and traits when inclusivity neglects to consider power differences between groups (Gilligan, 1983; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy and Belenky, 1996). Also, inclusivity that is functionally "additive," for example, merely adding on gender and/or ethnic within-group comparisons to a research design as evidence for diversity, has been criticized as an "accommodative" (Sampson, 1993, p.1220) remedy when the research neglects to address or transform existing structures that maintain power differences. In considering individuals in plural societies, Trinh (1991) questions the fundamentals upon which inclusivity and difference are predicated. She contends that insider-outsider status and, hence, the margins and centre of power are themselves unfixed and ambiguous. Still, Michaels (1995) has argued for a kind of "return to ... essentialism" (p.401) that is necessarily invoked when individuals no longer sustain certain practices and values of a culture but are nonetheless still connected to similar others who share their racial origins. When factored into the already complex and contentious culture equation, biologically-based differences such as gender, race and sexual orientation raise issues about the meanings of psychological experience as it is tied to one's corporeal reality (Appiah & Gates, 1995). These and other such questions raised in this discussion problematize the essentialism-deconstructionism axis from within.

Determinism-Agency

Closely parralleling the complexities of the essentialism - constructionism axis is the age-old adage of whether or not cultural context and essentialized differences influence human behaviour or if individuals posess agency with which to create and alter the conditions of that context and their developmental trajectories (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994). Without entering completely into the frays of this question, authors Goldberger and Veroff (1996) advocate an intercultural perspective in that the two processes are inextricable and cannot be seen to operate exclusively of each other (Stigler, Shweder & Herdt, 1990).

Burried within this debate, however, is that the determinism-agency polarity assumes that what is considered "culture" is more often than not perceived as a fixed, homogeneous entity or characteristic, rather than possessing evolving, heterogeneous properties that have social significance (Goldberger & Veroff, 1996). Baumrind (in press) argues that the construct of culture is not static, but should indicate multiple positions within itself that also includes shared points of similarity. In this perspective, culture is an evolving *process* that is therefore "subject to change in response to internal contradictions and critical social thought" (p. 1). Baumrind's proposal fractures the clean dualistic properties of the determinism-agency debate by reconceptualizing the culturally influenced trajectories of human behaviour.

That the focus of this inquiry is on a predetermined group of individuals who occupy the canopy of "Chinese Canadian women" introduces the related concept of identity.

Psychological Conceptualizations of Identity

In general, psychological theories of identity explicate stages in the human life cycle during which a person accepts, questions, resists, explores and re-integrates various attitudes, commitments and goals while maintaining an integrated and invariant sense of self.

Erikson (1959) maintains that the "term identity expresses ... a mutual relation ... that connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (selfsameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others (p.102). Sue (1991) delineates two kinds of identity theories in psychology: 1) personal-identity which are person-centered, such as Erikson's (1959); and 2) sociocultural conceptualizations which makes central, the inter-relationship between individual and environment. In his estimation, sociocultural theories of identity include racial and ethnic identity models that recognize the social realities of "racial minorities [who are] ... aware that their experiences with racism, prejudice, and discrimination often [contribute to] their identity, self-esteem, and belief and feelings about the self" (p.301).

One sociocultural model that considers ethnicity and gender identity is Kim's (1981) developmental model of identity in third-generation Japanese

American women. Using grounded theory, she found that the process of achieving a positive identity as women of Asian ancestry in America entails a movement through the following stages: 1) ethnic awareness; 2) White identification; 3) awakening to social political consciousness; 4) redirection to Asian American consiousness; and 5) incorporation. In addition, the model identified the following factors that faciliated the women's development through each of the stages: 1) ethnic and political information; 2) a support system of groups and individuals, and 3) an interaction with the social environment by participating in activities that raised social and political consciousness. Kim found that in two samples of women raised in either a"predominately White" or "non-White neighbourhood" (p.vii) the environment may have affected the nature of participants' experiences such as the entrance into particular stages and the duration spent in different stages. A weakness in the study is its assumption that identity is a project based on conflict. Hence, identity is constituted as a process that unfolds in a linear fashion and is only "achieved" by reaching a definitive "positive" end goal devoid of any further rethinking and rearticulation on the part of the minority woman.

The importance of a social support system in Kim's findings are central to a study by Ting-Toomey (1981) on the relationship between ethnic identity and same-ethnic friendships among first to fourth-generation Chinese American college students.[4] Ting-Toomey's results showed that ethnic identification, or the degree to which an individual perceived him/herself as "Asian," Euro-American or both, did not predict the number of close same-ethnic friendships. Also, ethnic identification was not a function of generational status. These findings suggests that when identity is defined in assimilationalist terms by one's perception of "Asianness," "Euro-Americaness" or a blend of both, it is not necessarily a linear process. A limitation to the study is that ethnic identification within an assimilationist framework is categorically fixed and therefore, problematic when the framework delimits the possibilities with which identity as an intrapsychic phenomenon may be conceptualized and claimed to be experienced.

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[4] The denotation of generational status used by Ting-Toomey specified "first generation" as individuals born outside the U.S.; "second generation" as U.S. born; "third generation" as individuals whose parents were U.S. born; and "fourth generation" as individuals whose grandparents were U.S. born.

Implicit in many of the above conceptualizations of identity is an adherence to a positivistic orientation about identity, ethnicity and self. That is, that identity and self-perceptions are based on an *a priori*, "essentialized" identity "*as* a Chinese Canadian" or "*as* a Japanese American." Positivism generally "seeks the development of universalistic laws, whereby actual or real events in the world are explained in a deductive fashion by universal laws that assert definite and *unproblematic* relationships" [italics added] (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 487).

Discursive and Contextualized Psychological Conceptualizations of Identity and Self

Discursive and contexualized conceptualizations of identity and self draw out inherent complexities associated with identity and self by orienting themselves to the particular by foregrounding identity and self as relationships constituted in social contexts, culture, language and meanings (Davies & Harre, 1994; Harre, Smith, & Van Langenhove, 1995; Kitayama & Markus, 1996; Sampson, 1996).

Davies and Harre (1990) propose a conceptualization of "self" based on discursive psychology. In their framework a person's sense of self is defined by language, narrative and conversation. They claim that, instead of viewing individuals in terms of multiple social "roles," the concept of "positioning" better captures how the same person can be variously positioned through a number of discursive processes and practices that pertain to social categories. Davies and Harre contend that these discursive processes are learned.

Further to a discursive framework, Harre (1991) features the gap between a construal of self as an intrapsychic phenomenon of continuity and singularity and self which is concerned with presentation in the social context. "Are there any differences between the ways that Selves can be known to the person whose Selves they are, from the ways they can be known to others?" (p.52). He suggests that in social encounters, selves take on a multiplicity depending on how a given individual is discursively positioned. "A person is positioned in this or that social location [or identity] in a discourse when the story-line which is unfolding makes available to them (sic) only a certain repertoire of possible contributions to that conversation" (p.57).

A similar framework is presented by Howard (1991) in linking together narrativity and culture in psychology to understand identity. He suggests that forms of story-telling or "culture tales" (p.187) are constitutive of how individuals perceive themselves within a given culture and social context. As such, attending to language and meaning are critical in how they formulate and order human thinking processes about who one is.

Bringing the question of identity to the fundamental level of the self, Kitayama and Markus (1996) argue that the conceptualization of self in psychology is limited because it is premised on Western, modernist notions from which psychology developed. This notion of selfhood is predicated on independence, autonomy and rationality. The authors offer other construals of selfhood, mainly from parts of Asia that emphasize its relational and interconnected features. They propose ways in which a more extensive conception of self might enhance the applicability of psychological theory and praxis.

Assuming a similar position, but with a view to social change, Sampson (1996) advocates what he terms, "a constitutive view of the person" (p. 426). Walking the reader through a short history of psychology, and political and social theory, he asserts that a reformulation of self in the era of globalization cannot be distanced from the particulars of the historical, social and cultural. Sampson argues for no less than a rethinking of selfhood that shakes off its modernist cobwebs in favour of an emphasis on narrativity and discourse.

Hurtado (1996) delineates between personal and social identity. Personal identity is enduring and is composed of a constellation of personality traits and characteristics that are unique to each individual. Social identity is determined by an individual's membership to a specific, delineated group. Hurtado argues that by virtue of a person's gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical challenges, individuals can also be said to posess multiple social identities. These multiple identities become problematic for an individual when one or more components are seen as stigmatized and subordinate to others.

Bridging identity as it is conceived as both an intrapsychic and sociocultural experience that includes a social analysis of that experience reiterates many of the concerns discussed in the psychological models of identity, self and earlier in the outline about culture and difference. It also introduces the idea of representation - the dynamics and complexities of being viewed from the outside by others and viewing oneself and like others from this perspective. The following section extends the conceptualization of identity to its corollary: representation.

Postcolonial and Poststructural Perspectives of Identity

Appiah and Gates (1995) maintain that "[e]thnic and national identities operate in the lives of individuals by connecting them with some people, dividing them from others. Such identities are often deeply integral to a person's sense of self, defining an 'I' by placing it against a background of 'we'" (p.3). The implicit elisons and collisions between the parameters of "I" and "we" raise salient questions about identity as a phenomenon that is subject to internal and external inferences of similarity and difference. This section explicates some of these issues.

Scholars writing chiefly in the fields of sociology, anthropology and education have generally utilized approaches and epistemological orientations in studying and critiquing the areas of identity as it is connected to culture and differences. Post-colonialism and poststructuralism are two integral approaches that consider the implications of identity from a representational perspective. Identity then becomes more than a question of who one *is* to oneself. By extension, *how* one is known, and *by* whom, is of central concern.

Identity and Postcolonial Approaches

The term "postcolonialism" was originally a descriptive term applied to the historical and geographically-specific legacies of colonization. Its contemporary usage has shifted to the arena of theories, practices and epistemologies which seek to address forms of marginality by strategically reconfiguring power relations (Suleri, 1995). Postcolonialism magnifies the issues of culture, identity and difference as a "free-floating metaphor for cultural embattlement and as an almost obsolete signifier for the historicity of race" (Suleri, 1995, p. 136-137). As such, it addresses complex questions of demarcation, relationship and authority in the configurations of self-other, margins-centre and subject-object sustained by the effects of power asymetries and distance. Stuart Hall (as cited in Fine, 1994) asserts both that features of identity are inextricably tied to the historical and that it is always relational. "History changes your conception of yourself. Thus, another critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are" (p.72). In the disourse of postcolonialism, the relationship between self and other, how one conceives of the relationship and responds to the workings of power within it, constitute sites of critique and reflection that impact on theory and practice.

Poststructural Conceptualizations of Identities

Poststructural conceptualizations of identity ignite the essentialism-deconstructionism debate by assertions of antiessentialism and critical social thought even as it problematizes both ends of the debate (Calhoun, 1994). Pinar et al (1995) posit that poststructuralism focuses "attention to language, power, desire and representation" (p. 453). Identity as a reality is neither presumed nor preconceived but embedded in the elisions and nuances of language. Treating identity categories such as "Asians," "the Chinese" and "Chinese women" as static and given is potentially problematic (Ong, 1995) While some meanings are assumed (e.g. ethnic heritage, foreigness, values), others are either constrained or erased (e.g., citizenship, language, generational status).

In the poststructural framework, language is not considered neutral but imbibed with the meanings and values of its producers and users. Precisely because of its signifying qualities, language is also seen to "position" a person into occupying an identity or identities which she may not readily choose for herself at any given time (Davies & Harre, 1990).

The connection between meaning and power operate through language in what are known as dominant discourses. These are are taken-for-granted features of language that shape and regulate our understandings of how human life and reality are conceived and cognitively ordered. Hence, the value-laden meanings which we ascribe to people, events, and any features of social life are reproduced in human interaction and all areas of "cognitive life" (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1994). Scholars writing about identity from a poststructural orientation often use language as a site of social critique to problematize and deconstruct the meanings behind taken-for-granted identities and representations by attending to the discursive features of a given phenomenon (Pinar et al, 1995). Others, such as Boyarin and Boyarin (1995), who write from a critical orientation, call for a rewriting of identity that exposes and expels the differential power arrangements within itself. "Perhaps the primary function for a critical construction of cultural (or racial or gender or sexual) identity is to construct it in ways that purge it of elements of domination and oppression" (p. 322).

The language of poststructuralism incorporates pluralized terms such as identities, subjectivities and subject-positions often in the place of identity categories (e.g., gender, ethnicity) to foreground the socially constructed features of of these categories over their essential qualities (Calhoun, 1994). This strategy creates openings which the conditions that construct those identities or roles can be analysed, held up for questioning, and rearticulated.

Calhoun (1994) presents a dense discussion of sociological theories of identity from modernist notions to poststructural formulations and spans the realm of the individual, community and nation. He conceptualizes identity/subjectivity as an on-going project, the core of which is an identity politics that holds the contradiction between how one is known to oneself and known by others. Calhoun is worth quoting at length about the problematics of identity in terms of its theoretical and political ramifications.

> It is not just that others fail to see us for who we are sure we really are, or repress us because of who they think we are. We face problems of recognition because socially sustained discourses about who it is possible or appropriate or valuable to be inevitably shape the way we look at and constitute ourselves, with varying degrees of agonism and tension. (pp. 20-21)

In a first-person account of her field work in Japan, Kondo (1990) examines the topic of "Japanese selfhood" and identity as it is constructed and negotiated in the daily lives of workers employed in small scale, family-owned factories and workshops. Kondo explodes the notions of cultural homogeneity, gender stereotypes and a unitary conceptualization of "the Japanese identity." She connects the construction of Japanese identity and selfhood to economic and historical relations between the US and Asia. Throughout the work, Kondo, a Sansei (third-generation Japanese American), uses understandings of her "self" to problematize gender and ethnic national identities by demonstrating that dualisms such as self-other, researcher-researched, personal-political, and Japanese-American - American are limited and do not translate between theory and praxis.

The strategy of disrupting taken-for-granted discourses and hierachical binary identities is mounted by Ong (1995). She challenges the readily-accepted idea that when Chinese women leave Asia for the U.S. and the "west," their lives are empowered and liberated from oppressive cultural practices. Ong dismantles the underlying meanings and uses of the essentialized term "Chinese woman." She presents a counter discourse of being a "Chinese woman" in the U.S. using examples from her life as an overseas Chinese and those of two informants from China. She addresses the fractures between place and ethnic identity in terms of theory and research.

In a series of essays film-maker Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991) also interrogates the politics of a binary or hyphenated identity in terms of gender and culture.

She explicates the intricacies and personal challenges of "having to live a difference that has no name and too many names already" (p.14). Trinh proposes a constant re-visioning and reassessment of an emergent, transitory identity for people of colour that is neither grounded in a dualistic, hierachical heritage nor delineated by seemingly pristine divisions between insider and outsider status.

The blurring and recontextualizing of insider-outsider, margins-center, self-other in many areas of the social sciences has occurred against the backdrop of everyday realities associated with migration, globilization and postcolonialism. Lavie and Swedenburg (1996) trace the intellectual and historical convolutions of this evolution as they pertain to moving, "geographies of identity" (p.1). In this framework, identity is viewed as a "third time-space," dwelling between previous conceptualizations of "identity-as-essence" and "identity-as-conjuncture" /dualism (p.13). While still concerned with destabilizing hierarchical power relations for social critique, third-time spaces are nonetheless "creative and affirmative" (p.13).

Adult Learning as Making Meaning

This research adopts the concept of adult learning as a process of making meaning. William Perry (as cited in Kegan, 1982) maintains that in learning "what an organism does is organize; and what a human organism organizes is meaning. Thus it is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making" (p. 11). This conceptualization of learning is constructivist in its approach and has its roots in an intellectual movement in the social and behavioural sciences by that same name. In general, constructivism posits that knowledge and meanings do not exist independently of human beings' own frames of interpretation or perspectives but that human beings are active agents in this processs (Hare-

Mustin & Marecek, 1994; Kegan, 1982; Mahoney, 1996; Pare, 1995). Mahoney (1996) notes that constructivism shares strong intellectual roots with feminist theory in the argument "that our attempts to understand ourselves and our worlds are [therefore also] constrained by our embeddedness in [certain] ... traditions [and perspectives that are privileged over others]" (p.128).

Using a constructivist framework, Mezirow (1991) developed a theory of adult learning that places an understanding of one's experiences at the centre of a variety of cognitive activities that make up learning. Learning occurs through an individual's shifts in and reconstructions of "meaning perspectives" or frameworks, defined as "an integrated psychological structure with dimensions of thought, feeling and will" (1981, p.108). The theory delineates three kinds of meaning perspectives: 1) epistemic, which refers to the ways in which a person understands the nature of knowledge; 2) sociolinguistic, which are related to cultural and social norms embedded in language, social roles and institutional practices; and 3) psychological, which pertain to how individuals perceive and define themselves, through personality, identity, motivations, emotions. The three types of meaning perspectives do not operate exclusively of each other, but are inter-related.

The process of learning as meaning-making and knowledge production has been studied by Belenky, Clinchy, Tarule and Goldberger (1986) in their model of women's epistemological development. These authors propose that the ways of knowing used by women have developed in response to "the dominant intellectual ethos of our time" that privilege some epistemologies over others (preface). Arguing that self, voice and mind are intertwined, they identify five "ways of knowing" that women use to assess the sources of knowledge claims to understand themselves and their actions in the world: 1) silence; 2) received knowing; 3) subjective knowing; 4) procedural knowing; and 5)

5) constructed knowing. Constructed knowing is operationally equivalent to Mezirow's (1991) constructivist framework of learning in its assertion that knowledge is contextually dependent, evolving and based on configurations of each type of meaning perspective.

Belenky et al's ways of knowing scheme (1986) has raised concerns of gender essentialism as well as a failure to recognize the differently positioned social and raced characteristics of women that impact on the making of meaning (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996; Hurtado, 1996). Hurtado (1996) points out that the process of meaning-making and ways of knowing is not without political implications influenced by one's gender, race, class, and physical and mental cababilities. In her assessment of social identity and the effects of stigmitzation, she asserts that, because different social positionings determine the opportunities, values and conditions with which various kinds of knowledge are made accessible, withheld or resisted, many women of colour develop and exercise faculties for knowledge production or "ways of knowing" that are specific and sometimes strategic to those positions. These include:
1) silence/outspokenness in the development of multiple voices; 2) withdrawl as a way of distancing from a mixed gendered and racial network to connect with like others; 3) shifting consciousness or the ability to perceive more than one social reality at the same time without sacrificing psychological coherence; and 4) speaking in multiple tongues, defined as the ability to speak to different audiences without losing one's cohesion and psychological ground.

The shifting of cognitive modalities and being is similar to the notion of "double consciousness" developed by the African-American writer W. E. B. Du Bois in his book The Soul of Black Folks (as cited in Gilroy, 1993). Double consciousness speaks to the complex experiences of racial minority individuals in the North American landscape. Quoting Du Bois, Gilroy contends that the experience of double consciousness is situated in the corporeal reality of race and Otherness.

> One ever feels his twoness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p.126)

By extension, double consciousness operates not only on the psychological and emotional level in the individual, but have social and political ramifications. For example, the assumed link between race and citizenship as well as the divided "loyalties" among diasporic people are foregrounded.

Borders and Border Consciousness as Meaning Making Across Multiple Identities

The concept of borders is used widely by authors to describe multiple positions of everyday lived experience between and within conditions of differences and power. Lavie and Swedenburg (1996) note that the term was originated by Chicana and Chicano workers along the U.S. and Mexican border.

For Gloria Anzaldua (1987), a woman of mixed Mexican and Anglo background growing up near the U.S.-Mexican border, borders are psychological and physical spaces of grating and rupture where differences in culture, race, language, class and sexual orientation synthesize and collide. "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition" (p.3). Living across multiple configurations of borders requires specialized kinds of knowing called a "border consciousness." A border consciousness preserve one's sense of self and integrity so that it is not subsumed by the dominant culture nor relegated to a fusion of two cultural entities. Anzaldua's writings address the preservation of the self and "preoccupations with the inner life of the Self, and with the struggle of that Self" in the borderlands (preface). Anzaludua expresses the qualities of a border consciousness as a "third element:"

> In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its parts. That third element is a new consciousness - a mestiza consciousness - and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. ... Because that future depends on the breaking down of paradigms it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. (p.80)

The concept of a "metiza consciousness" is similar to Sandoval's (1991) idea of a "differential consciousness" (p.14), or a selected mode of resistance against a hierarchical social order based on any differences of gender, race, and class. A differential consciousness is a tactical deployment of one of four modalities of oppositional consciousness: 1) equal rights; 2) revolutionary; 3) supremacism; and 4) separatism. Sandoval maintains that it is dependent on the individual or group's ability to read a situation in terms of the nature of domination and oppression being experienced. "The differential mode of consciousness operates like the clutch of an automobile: the mechanism that permits the driver to select, engage, and disengage gears in a system for the transmission of power" (p.14).

Other scholars have used the metaphor of "border crossings" to express the circumstances, practices and creative resistance required when one's national, ethnic, gender identities and loyalties are called upon to resolve its ambiguous and at times, contradictory status. As a Chicana ethnographer conducting research on a Latino community, Villenas (1996) reveals the impacts on the researcher-researched relationship when these borders are blurred. Her simultaneous identity status of studying and being the "Other" is impacted by loyalties conferred by ethnicity, privilege and academic discourses about the Latino culture. Villenas points out, that when ethnographers and other researchers from non-dominant cultures enter the unsettling territories between different borders, "their position as border crossers ... are their own voices of ... activism" (p.713).

Strategies of moving between the borders of the personal and social as a way to critically examine the interconnections of identity and power implications in one's life world are often utilized in the critical works of feminists, minority women, and women of colour in articulating and recontextualizing their own identities. Some of these topical works are discussed in the next section.

Women Writing Identities Through Gender, Race and Diaspora

In the book, Writing a Woman's Life, Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) raises fundamental questions about independence, work, identity, friendships and power that still plague contemporary women in the process of telling their stories in ways that endeavour to resist and dismantle identities and lives fashioned largely by and through male-dominated historical discourses. Heilbrun aims to expose and "examine how women's lives have been contrived, and how they may be written to make clear, evident, out in the open, those events, decisions, and relationships that have been invisible outside women's fictions, where literary critics have revealed, in the words of Gilbert and Gubar, "the woman's quest for her own story" (p.18). Her's is an account of how literary women sought to script and live the stories that were not always possible for them.

In the quest for scripting one's own story, writings by women of colour and others extend Heilbrun's thesis by claiming that the process of writing that story should not corral "women" into one universal identity that ignores multiplicity (Harding, 1987). Many works by and about Asian North American women and women of colour are proposals against the orders of universalism. These works seek to celebrate and critique differences beginning from their own lives and experiences.

Making Waves (Asian Women United of California, 1989) is an extensive collection of academic essays, poetry, short stories, and sociohistorical writings by and about Asian American women. The impetus of the anthology was to create a testament to the dynamic and often unwritten lives of women in the United States whose diverse ancestral roots stem from all parts of Asia, East Asia and Southeast Asia. The book examines the complex personal, historical and political themes of immigration, war, work, intergenerational dynamics, identity, injustice and political activism by over forty contributors from journalism, academia, creative writing and community activism.

The experiences of Americans of Asian ancestry are presented in a collection of writings compiled by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center (Tachiki, Wong, Odo & Wong, 1971) and written by college students and academics in Asian American Studies courses. While produced over twenty years ago, this comprehensive collection contains personal accounts, critical essays and interviews with prolific Asian Americans on topics concerning identity, inter-cultural and inter-racial issues, gender, politics and community which are still resonant today.

In similar volumes of work, the anthohologies This Bridge Called My Back (Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983) and Making Face, Making Soul (Anzaldua, 1990) present writings by and about the experiences of minority women from Black, Hispanic and Asian backgrounds. These works, some highly politically charged, some personally irreverent and poignant, are a forum for critical writings about issues pertaining to race, the women's movement and the stories of women whose voices want to express the concerns of life at various intersections of gender, race, class, sexual orientation and physical challenges.

In the preface to a collection of essays by Canadian women of colour, Bannerji (1993) addresses the irony of invisibility of women of colour in critical, scholarly works juxtaposed against the status of "visible minority." She examines the political exigency of "a developed critical voice of non-white women in

Canada" and appeals for a socially astute critique (p.x). Bannerji reaches some of the same conclusions as Heilbrun (1988). She claims that women of colour need to write from their lives and experiences; however, her point is anchored in a recognition of the intersections of gender, race and class. "[A]s non-white women, our experiences of "difference" need form and expression. ... But this enterprise of writing is fraught with dilemmas produced by context, restricted space and othering forms of difference. ... [And yet] there would be no critique if we did not begin from our actual lives" (pp. xxi-xvi).

Based on an account of her own life and a coming to consciousness about herself as a woman of Asian descent, Mitsuye Yamada (1983) exposes the intricacies of a self-imposed agenda of invisibility masqueraded as a sense of personal uniqueness as an Asian American female without the gendered trappings of exoticism. She links this potentially destructive way of thinking about oneself to the internalization of stereotypes about women of Asian descent. I quote Yamada at length because of her perceptiveness about assimilation and the perils of invisibility:

> [I was] an Asian American woman thriving under the smug illusion that I was not the stereotypical image of the Asian woman because I had a career teaching English in a community college. I did not think anything assertive was necessary to make my point. ... [B]ut it was so passive no one noticed I was resisting; it was so much my expected role that it ultimately rendered me invisible. My experience leads me to believe that contrary to what I thought, I had actually been contributing to my own stereotyping. ... When the Asian American woman is lulled into believing that people perceive her as being different from other Asian women (the submissive, subservient, ready-to-please, easy-to-get-along-with Asian woman) she is kept comfortably content with the state of things. ... I had created an underground milieu of survival for myself and had become in the eyes of others the person I was trying not to be. (p.37)

Yamada's essay articulates keen distinctions between universalism, invisibility and internalized gender and racial stereotypes. It also echoes the imperative of scripting one's own identity, even as one is impelled to fit into and survive within one's particular social reality.

In another autobiographical essay, May Yee (1993) addresses identity issues by weaving together narrative, social analysis, and poetry in expressing a claim for and critique of identity and "home" in Canada. She recognizes that, while it is necessary to examine her experience as a woman living in a eurocentric society, seemingly simple questions about the corners and folds of Chinese Canadian identity cannot be posed and answered without surfacing more questions. Yee reflects on her upbringing and education, perceptions of power, family, citizenship and trips to China moving between and within margins and geographies of difference. I cite the opening of her essay for it reveals the depths at which the rescripting of identity according to one's own multiple frames (e.g., psychological, political, emotional, historical) cannot be, in my estimation, dismissed as solving a one-dimensional puzzle of "who am I?":

> As a Chinese woman living in Canada, I will never be really "Canadian," whatever that is in this European occupied land - yet I will never know China, from the inside, even if I were to choose to live and work there. For me place is here, where I grew up, this is what I know. But, this is what I am constantly separate, separated from - by the forces of racism that always keep me asking questions of identity, belonging, place and voice. (p. 4)

The metaphor of "home," "finding the way home" and developing a way to articulate that journey as described by Yee (1993, p. 3) is often addressed by writers of colour and others to discuss the layered implications of identity and citizenship. Identity and citizenship are not necessarily synonomous with geography, nationality, heritage and the physicality of place, thus introducing the notion of diaspora as an enduring quality of "home."

"Diaspora" is a term that accentuates the fracturing of identity as a fixed geographical place of origin. It is often used to describe the experiences of individuals characterized by emigrant histories, transition and global mobility

(Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996). Within the notion of diaspora, cultural and ethnic identity for visible minority groups in North America shifts from a matter of embracing one's roots and "'inheritance' to an encompassing of the sociopolitical" (Ong, 1995, p. 351). Foregrounded in diaspora is a complex, "doubled relationship or dual loyalty" (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996, p. 14) sustained between blurred lines of culture, ethnicity and citizenship. As a result, the hyphen in "Chinese-Canadian" is figuratively "blown up" for inspection, to be created anew. Lo Shinebourne (1997) maintains that identity and home for the world's overseas Chinese has shifted from "a shared, stable, essential identity to a fragmentation" or diaspora requiring "maps to negotiate... [the] different positionalities" one occupies (quotes from conference presentation).

Kondo (1996) utilizes the concept of "home" to explore how Asian Americans might script new identity forms and possibilities in an analysis of a theatrical production about the Japanese American community. She argues for an Asian American identity that is neither hyphenated nor regulated by a Euro-based backdrop but is at once dynamic and transcends the binary of Asian and Euro-American. Compelling in Kondo's essay is her reaction as an audience member and ethnographer at the Japanese American theatre production. Having seen her experiences as a Sansei (third-generation Japanese American) so intimately portrayed for what she thinks is the first time, Kondo links invisibility and identities to representational concerns in a telling statement. "Asian Americans never laugh the laughter of recognition because we are systematically erased from [our own] view. We never see ourselves portrayed the way *we* see ourselves. Instead of exoticism, [critics and the audience] were exposed to ... more resonant, small truths of everyday life: the truths of 'home'"(p.103).

The implications of identity and representation as the "small truths of everyday life" that influence how Chinese and Asian North Americans in general, and Asian North American women in particular, see and learn about "themselves" is explored further in a discussion of representation and Asian North Americans.

Representational Issues Specific to Asian North Americans and Asian North American Women

The final part of the literature review examines works that address Asian North American identity and representational issues from the perspectives of stereotypes and images in the media, film and fiction. Fiske (1993) maintains that stereotypying is predicated on control, the effects of which constrain individual outcomes and perceptions. She defines stereotyping as a belief-oriented, "category-based cognitive response to another person" (p.443). Two salient features of stereotyping are its descriptive and prescriptive functions. Descriptive stereotypes are a form of generalizing that infers how most people in a group are purported to behave, believe and the degree to which they posess competencies. Prescriptive stereotypes determine how an individual is expected to behave and feel based on (perceived) group membership. Fiske points out that stereotyping, as linked to various forms of control and power asymetries, are mediated by the degree and nature to which individuals in control pay attention to others.

While it may be argued both that there is an ever-present disparity between stereotypes, depiction and "reality" and that images may be perceived as relatively benign, the problematics of discrepancy affect how a person views him/herself and others. When stereotypes are internalized, individuals are impelled to confront and contradict traces of that inaccuracy (Fiske, 1993). Citing Chin and Chan, Espiritu (1997) contends that, in the case of many ethnic or racial minority individuals, internalization occurs when "the psychosocial form of control conditions the minority [person] to *become* the stereotype, to 'live it, talk it, embrace it, measure group and individual worth in its terms, and believe it'" (italics added, p. 87). Yee (1993) elaborates on the unconscious levels with which stereotypes operate:

> [I[n different ways, it affects all our relationships with people who have internalized these stereotypes, just as we, as Asian women, have ourselves internalized them by accepting, denying, using, or challenging the distorted mirrors held up to us. (p.23)

The disturbing irony is that, in resisting stereotypes, be it with others or within ourselves, one is shackled by and to them in complex ways.

The Model Minority Image

In North America, individuals of Asian descent have often been described by the dominant discourses as being "model minorities" when their socioeconomic successes and educational attainments are compared to members of other groups. The term "model minority" was originally used in reference to Japanese Americans by sociologist William Peterson in a 1966 New York Times Magazine story entitled "Success Story, Japanese American Style" (Daniels, 1988). The label was later used indescriminately to describe any North Americans of Asian descent.

Popularized perceptions that paint Asian North Americans as possessing "superior" scholastic abilities and achievements especially in math and science, cultural values that reinforced industriousness, filial piety, submission to authority and a reverence for education among other traits (see for example Biggs, 1995) are often used as a teleological argument justifying why Asian North Americans have achieved the "immigrant's dream" of economic stability and success (Time Magazine, March,1990; Woo, 1989). In academia, the image and its fallout have sparked critical debate most notably in education and the social sciences. (See, for example, Hurh and Kim, 1989; Kitano & Sue, 1973; Lee, 1994; Kim & Valdez, 1995; Sue & Frank, 1980; Suzuki, 1980; Toupin & Son, 1991; Watanabe, 1973, and Walker-Moffat, 1995 who offer varying perspectives that converge on this extensive topic.) Herein lies an unsettling paradox. In an attempt to demonstrate that Asian North Americans are no more academically nor socioeconomically "successful" than other groups, these researchers may be unwittingly reinforcing the model minority discourse when the topics of learning and education for Asian North Americans are reproduced only in terms of achievement, scholastic "pressures," and socioeconomic mobility without endeavouring to uncover the complexities of the model minority debate, its political and educational implications, and by presenting the voices of those whose experiences are being researched. While I am not advocating against the *study* of Asian North Americans in educational institutions, I am stressing that research needs to be careful not to reinforce dominant representations which may hinder the ways in which Asian North Americans are seen to experience both formal education and their learning lives.

Evidence of the extremity to which the internalization of the model minority image has impacted the lives of some young Asian Americans has been chronicled by The Onion (http://www.theonion.com., 1997). In parts of the U.S. a growing number of Asian American youths have purposely resisted and undermined the trappings of the image by sabotaging their education. While the article did not address the severity of this phenomenon in terms of how images of a racialized group can be reprocessed and internalized by that group in ways that damage self-esteem and self-image, the article raises serious concerns about the psychological embeddedness of identity representation.

Focusing on Asian American women, Deborah Woo (1989) maintains that, while portions of the model minority stereotype do reflect the evident strides made by Asian Americans in the U.S. as a group, it dangerously equates striving with achieving, and it links this formula to perceived social equality. She argues that the pervasiveness of the model minority image shifts the focus away from inequalities and structural barriers still experienced by many women of Asian descent irregardless of generational status.

Colleen Fong (1995) discusses her use of the model minority image as a tool of critique and consciousness raising in the Asian American Studies classroom. She notes that students' deeply embedded beliefs about racial assimilation can undermine a sense of self when unequivocably equated with social equality. From an education perspective, Fong maintains that providing opportunities for Asian American students to learn about themselves and question unexamined beliefs about culture and race in an academic environment is an exercise in self-validation and empowerment.

Fong's assessment is echoed by the educator Diana Lam (1997) in an account of her life in Peru with dual Chinese and Peruvian heritages. Her citation and interpretation of a quote by Emily Styles articulates the importance of having the opportunity to learn about oneself. "Emily Styles ... says the curriculum - or I would assert the political structure of the country - should be both a mirror and a window. Every person should see himself or herself reflected in who is before them and at the same time, every person should be provided with a window to look out to a wider world of opportunity" (p.2).

Representation in Media, Literature and Literary Criticism

Moy (1993) traces the detailed history of how Chinese Americans have been represented or "staged" by the dominant culture in drawings, photography, theatre and film since the early 1900's to the present. This history challenges the possibility of Asian American attempts at self-representation in dismantling and reconstituting their own images. Moy contends that, while early representations were suffused by obvious currents of racism and "Otherness," the contemporary dilemma of Asian American and Chinese American representation is re-cast as an issue of invisibility, specifically "as a void that is waiting to be refilled" (p. 4).

Other scholars would argue that from a gender perspective, this void posesses a cemented shape, and it is the breaking of it that poses the greatest challenge for women. In fieldwork with New York-based Asian American female actors Lee (1997) argues that the fundamental questions of Asian American women's identity - "who we are and how we see ourselves" - are inextricably tied to media portrayals and a general lack of diverse role models. She found that Asian American females are typically cast in "mainstream" productions as reporters. Prevailing images are rendered as the "Connie Chung syndrome" with echoes of the model minority and the "Susie Wong image" of feminine meakness and exoticism. Lee maintains that the challenge of Asian American women's identity necessitates "negotiating a politics of cultural imagery" (quotes from conference presentation).

Writings by and about Asian North American women often identify a source of representational constraint which places women in tight binary oppositions between traditional and Western/modern values. First and second generation young women are seen as either bound to the "traditional" expectations of gender roles or eschewing any and all forms of their cultural heritage in favour of western, liberated, and "modern" lifestyles (Lee, 1996). There is little room between these two identities for anything else. Aspects of this polarity are discussed by Kondo (1990) in a feminist account of women's lives in Japan. She cautions against the "dangers of Orientalism - reinforcing stereotypes of Western women as the most liberated [in comparison to] our "poor Asian sisters who languish in submission" in mounting a "culturally specific feminist critique" (p.258). In the case of Asian North American women, negotiating and resisting the traps of Orientalism knows no national, geographical or generational boundaries.

The question of how Asian North American identities might be revisioned beyond its dualist Asian-American (or Asian-Canadian) hyphen is addressed by Fischer (1986) in his survey of autobiographical works of fiction and post-modernism, including Hong Kingson's (1977) novel, The Woman Warrior. Most compelling in his assessment is the latent distinction between being a Chinese in America and a Chinese-American. In arguing that there is no single role model for "becoming Chinese-American," Fischer suggests that identity as a living project is an agentic, organic process of multiplicity. "In part, such a process of assuming an ethnic identity is an insistence on a pluralistic, multidimensional, or multifaceted concept of self: one can be many different things, and this personal sense can be a crucible for a wider social ethos of pluralism" (p.196). Autobiographical fiction provides opportunities for writers and readers to continually engage in the postmodern project of identity (re)construction.

Trinh (1989) also suggests that stretching beyond dualistic identities in ways which resist assimilationalist views recognizes the need for plurality. She recasts identity as multiplicity by suggesting that self and other and the connections which sustain them are infinite and forged in human relations:

> Not One, not two either. "I" is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered by layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see a true face. ... Whether I accept it or not, the natures of *I, i, you, s/he, We, we, they*, and *wo/man* constantly overlap. ... [T]he line dividing *I* and *Not-I, us* and *them*, or *him* and *her* is not (cannot) always (be) as clear as we would like it to be. (p.94)

Part of the continual process of negotiation and construction of identity occurs as forms of resistance. Espiritu (1997) shines the representational light onto gender issues by critically examining how images of Asian American women and men in the arts, media and history are constructed and are simultaneously being resisted. She deconstructs the distorted images of the Dragon Lady and delicate Geisha girl by considering the link between sexuality and race. Espiritu points out that Asian American women need to re-construct their own identities in anti-assimilationist terms that also stretch beyond different configurations of dualism.

In an assessment of Asian American women and psychotherapeutic issues, Homma True (1990) contends that characters from Asian mythology and Asian North American literature offer vital sources of validating and claiming aspects of one's identity. She suggests that, the difficulties for Asian American women are a lack of contemporary role models as well as a scarcity of information about this wide and diverse segment of the population. Constructing one's own identities and images through role models via works of creative writing presents a source of therapeutic strength because it provides women with different possibilities of seeing themselves and their lives through like eyes.

Talking-Story:
A Place of Repose

> The *other* does not exist: this is the conclusion of rational faith, the incurable belief of human reason. Identity equals Reality ... as if, in the end, everything must necessarily and absolutely be *one and the same.* But the *other* refuses to disappear; it subsists, it persists; it is the hard bone on which reason breaks its teeth. [It is] the essential Heterogenity of being.
>
> (Machado-Ruiz as cited in Highwater, 1996, p. 211)

> At the same time she asserts her difference, she would have to call into question everything which, in the name of the group and the community, perniciously breaks the individual links with others, while forcing her back on herself and restrictively tying her down to her own reclaimed identity. ... For, how possible is it to undertake a process of decentralization without being made aware of the margins within the center and the centers within the margin?
>
> (Trinh, 1991, p. 18).

Is there a place where I can comfortably and generatively discuss the notions of difference and differentness (cultural, gender, racial) in this inquiry in terms of identity and learning and the plethora of implications and emotions that it raises that is neither self-exclusionary nor perceived by parts of me to be self-serving, reactive or "diagnosed" as merely a bout of "identity crisis" that I am sure to get over (get a grip)?

I fear the idea of difference and differentness. And I fear asking and talking to people about differentness. Sometimes an acknowledgment of it, the mere raising of it in thoughts and conversations, can be construed as a sign of weakness, bitterness; of caving into popular ruminations about discrimination; about not "fitting in;" about not being comfortable in one's "skin;" or as an indirect self-declaration that one is not what one hopes to be/takes oneself to be - "really Canadian."

Yet if I recognize that all thought, all feeling, all dimensions of being human is intersected with the social and the cultural, as do proponents of a cultural psychology (Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990) then I also recognize that without difference or differentness, there is no social, no cultural.

There are multiple strands of tension here. They have as much to do with my head in terms of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and the inherent constraints of representation and words as they do with my heart and the world I share with others. Yet tension in and of itself alerts me to a refusal of containment or cementation of both thought and being. Tension signals shifting, sifting, movement, collision, repatterning, redefinition, rupture, dynamic, organic, fluidity, quivers and rumblings.

Strands of tension permeate this inquiry with the eyes that read every word; with the mouth that tells others and reminds myself why I have chosen this topic; with the voice that often falters for lack of the right words or the prickling thought that I might be drawing invisible lines between myself and the listener; with the ears that listen thoughtfully to the questions and feed-back that I receive from my family, colleagues, friends, professors; and with the mind that lingers over words, scans what the five women have told me, questions, wonders, worries, filters and recognizes the face in the mirror as I live as "me" in the lacunae of emblematic labels -----

"woman" ... "Chinese" ... "Canadian" ... "student" ...."Canadian - Chinese" (Why is there a hyphen?)... "Chinese Canadian" (Why is there no hyphen?" "Why is the order reversed?)... "born in Hong Kong BUT ... " (read not a "foreigner"; no different from .... you / who?)... "researcher".... "subject positioning AS..." "person" ..."Eugenie" ..."self"

----- and the unspoken meanings that reside between these words which sometimes feel as though they are unmovable pillars, firmly planted never to be shaken except with a reflexive "eye - I" (Kondo, 1990, p. 3) that does not exclude myself from the act of looking.

Recently, when I attended an Asian American Studies conference at New York University on the topic of "home" for Chinese in the Americas, discussing my research with other participants was so oddly validating because, to borrow a concept from cultural theorists and feminist scholars [see for example, Fong, 1995; hooks, 1994; Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996], "the margins" had figuratively become "the centre."

In retrospect, I had glimpses that I was researching and living in the margins as I was plugging away at various points in my inquiry; yet, it was one which I felt uncomfortable allowing myself to acknowledge. So I kept my head immersed in analysing and reading in various fields such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, women's studies, Asian American studies, African-American studies, critical pedagogy, postmodernism, cultural theory, and works of fiction and autobiography that all spoke to the implications and corners of identity, culture, learning and difference. The issues raised and debated were both speaking directly to the heart of this inquiry and to my role as a researcher. Making sense of each field and perspective was akin to entering and crossing new territories and borders, each with their own dialects of vocabulary and concepts that entailed the learning of new languages and epistemological commitments.

I only began to feel the extent of the shift between margins and center after flying seven hours to the other side of the continent where none of the participants had to define that centre, that "place" to anyone else. We all knew. I knew. We were all studying the textured lives of Chinese Americans, Canadians, Europeans, South Americans, without apology (that we were not studying people other than ourselves because it would be presumed that we already "knew ourselves"), justification, and above all, simplification. I slowly began to resist the urge to listen to my own quiet whispers creeping in from the centre lulling me to gravitate instinctively toward the comfort and familiarity of an undeniable "universal." The notion of the "universal" from which I was drifting away was paradoxically being held in place by my own tenacious efforts to remain on familiar, safe and "neutral" conceptual ground, precisely the ground which gave fodder to the discourses I needed to re-examine.

"Aren't we human beings all the same?" "Aren't "We" all Canadians?" "Aren't the commonalities more important than the differences?" "Don't differences destroy? Look at Bosnia, the Middle East, Tibet, East Timor, the Oka stand-off." "We need to overcome difference." "We need not think about difference." "The survival of our planet depends on coming together, not driving people further apart than they already are." "Don't rock the boat." "Remember that you had as many opportunities as anybody else growing up in this country (read "So you have no grounds to rock the boat.")

I could spill forth more of these questions and statements which melt back into a "universal" without harnassing the clarity of vision needed to separate out the layers and contradictions, because I too have constructed them, lived them, and drew psychological cradling from them. I continue to hear versions of them both in the five interviews and in the dominant discourses in which I am embedded.

When I embarked on this inquiry about Chinese Canadian women, identity and learning, I had an inkling that I would be called upon to confront my own fears and touch the dilemmas and depths of representation and difference. It was an unmitigated invitation to enter into those dark, fearful places without the escape valve close at hand, but with the knowledge that, if I were to grope for it and pull, I would plunge back into a place of conceptual comfort that could only offer inertia and suffocation instead of the promise of risking new possibilities for learning.

When the centre and the margins change place with a fleeting blink of the eye, it feels as though the earth has moved in a mysterious way, yet, my feet continue to be planted beneath me, my bones have remained more or less aligned, and the air smells and feels the same with every breath. So what leaves as evidence of this momentary shift, is really a matter of vision, or as Mary Catherine Bateson (1994) calls, a "peripheral vision"(p.6). She writes that "[s]ometimes change is directly visible, but sometimes it is apparent only to peripheral vision, altering the *meaning of the foreground"* (italics added, p.6). For having recognized that there IS a margin and, therefore, there IS a centre, means that I have been dwelling and traveling in the centre for most of my life without knowing it, or rather not wanting to shoulder the yoke of implications and responsibilties that would come from that knowing. Embarking on this inquiry and moving with its tensions has jostled and wrestled me into gaining a peripheral vision despite the intellectual quandries, fears, and insecurities that were, and still are inherent in that recognition. Anzaldua (1987) calls this kind of experience an approach toward the "abyss" where one must confront old ideas and identities in new ways:

> She is getting too close to the mouth of the abyss. She is teetoring on the edge, trying to balance while she makes up her mind whether to jump in or to find a safer way down. That's why she makes herself sick - to postpone having to jump blindfolded into the abyss of her own being and there in the depths to confront her face, the face underneath the mask. (p.74)

One late night in New York, I found myself browsing around a book store in SoHo where I found a collection of essays by Alice Walker with a yellow cover. As I opened it and read, it was like being led past an abyss of cold rivers, deserts of futility, and dark forests to a place of repose by following a map carefully scripted in words. The following words of Alice Walker (1988) capture what happens when someone such as myself is met with this realization of centre and margins and is endeavouring to be transformed rather than diminished by it. "For when we hold up a light in order to see anything outside ourselves more clearly, we *illuminate ourselves* " (italics added, p. 62).

What we begin to see more clearly outside ourselves "in such light must also be paid attention" (L. Fowler, personal communication, December, 3, 1997). The next chapter on methodology describes how I paid attention and addressed key issues presented in the literature review in the conducting of this research.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

> That social scientists tend to think about methodological issues primarily in terms of methods of inquiry (for example, in "methods courses" in psychology, sociology, etc.) is a problem. That is, it is primarily when they are talking about concrete techniques of evidence gathering that they raise methodological issues. A *methodology* is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed. (Harding, 1987, p. 2)

> The kinds of questions that get asked and the route the researcher takes to get answers is, in most of the social sciences, at the heart of current debates over epistemology (the nature of knowledge) and methodology (approaches to inquiry). Nowhere are the debates more lively and profoundly challenging to old scientific paradigms than in the area claimed by culture and gender theorists, that is, the arena in which the primary questions express concern over the *nature and implications* of human differences. ... The recent history of this discussion over strategies of inquiry is in large part the history of the struggle of difference and the problem of comparison.
> (italics added, Goldberger & Veroff, 1996, p.125)

Having adopted Sandra Harding's (1987) assertion that "methodology is a theory and an analysis of how research does or should proceed" (p.2) means I have broken the cold hard soil and have prepared the cognitive landscape for fruitful learning by engaging myself to *think about* methodology while proceeding *methodologically* .

The main source of methodological challenge in this inquiry lies in the slippery, inter-related issues of identity and difference discussed in the previous chapter. The heart of the research question - identity and learning - and its tensions - difference - are magnified and mounted on the methodological plane as issues of re-presentation: how to "present again" the women who I interviewed which "accept[s] the dissonance and sustain[s] the tension between having an identity [pre]defined by the dominant discourses and practices of one's time and place and simultaneously challenging that very identity by probing its history, its production, and its uses" (Sampson, 1993, p.1219).

In this inquiry, the women's gendered and racialized subject positionings identify the main source of methodological challenge as "alpha and beta biases" (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1994). An alpha bias would declare "no difference," while a beta bias would claim and possibly exaggerate a difference of gender and race between the participants' experiences and those of any other individuals. While an alpha-beta framework crudely highlights how the concepts of gender and race difference cannot be boiled down to a matter of biology, Hoskins (1997) maintains that it over-simplifies an understanding of "human experiences" (p.108) and masks the power-laden assumptions that have constructed them. An alpha-beta framework only functions in terms of an ever present faceless and nameless category of "any other individuals." Though it is not expressly factored into this inquiry by way of a research design, "any other individuals" need to be acknowledged as the silent "centre" of "universalism" (e.g., maleness, whiteness, "the universal woman") given the research topic at hand. In methodological terms, the silent centre becomes an absent standard or "ground" to which the research participants' experiences emerge as "figure" (Sampson, 1993, p.1224). Sampson cautions how in research, the absent standard exerts considerable influence based on differences of power between groups of people:

> ... [T]he absent standard is not absent in the neutral way that we have come to think the ground is missing from our awareness of the figure. Rather, historical relations of power between various groups have rendered the standard absent, an unmarked controlling feature of our understanding of ourselves and others. (p.1219)

To proceed methodologically, I have asked myself some of the following questions that other researchers have grappled with in researching gender and race:

- "What does it mean when [researchers] study Chinese [Canadian] women as one entity?" (Chow, as cited in Ong, 1995, p.351).
- "Is it possible to avoid the otherness of exoticism and ineffable strangeness, on the one hand, and the cultural imperialism of [assimilation] on the other -

"They are just like [anyone else] or "What is so [Chinese or "different"] about that?" (Kondo, 1990, p.304).

Further questions of this nature include:

> What do we make of gender [and racial] differences? What do they mean?
> Why are there so many? Why are there so few? Perhaps we should be asking: What is the point of differences? What lies beyond differences? Differences aside, what is gender? The overarching question is a choice of question. (Hare-Mustin & Maracek as cited in Riger, 1995, p.151)

Gilligan (1983) transcends the biological-social dualism and reiterates the issue of difference as a matter of what question is being asked and whether that question constrains or creates the possibility for agency which is generative and transformational:

> I find the question of whether gender differences are biologically determined or socially constructed to be deeply disturbing. This way of posing questions implies that people, women and men alike, are either genetically determined or a product of socialization - that there is no voice - and without voice, there is no possibility for resistance, for creativity, or for a change whose wellsprings are psychological. (p. xix)

Centering this inquiry squarely on the lived experiences of Canadian women of Chinese descent whom I interviewed presents the possibility for the kind of resistance, creativity and action to which Gilligan refers. Such an approach requires an unpacking of the complex notions of identity, learning, and difference using some of the aforementioned questions to guide the process of inquiry (Sampson, 1993).

Bhavnani (1990) offers three organizing criteria for research based on feminist principles which I found to be both relevant and crucial for addressing the topic and aims of this inquiry:

- 1) Reinscription: The research should be careful so as not to reproduce participants according to dominant representations as this reinforces power differentials along the lines of gender, race and class and other social categories. The underlying issue here is that of agency and whether or not "the researched are [redepicted] into prevailing representations [and stereotypes]" (p.98).

- 2) Micropolitics: The inquiry should be attuned to forms of power differences between researcher-researched. Of central concern is "how and to what extent does the research conduct, write-up, and dissemination deal with the micropolitics of the research encounter - what are the relationships of domination and subordination which the researcher has negotiated and what are the means through which they are discussed in the research report?" (p.98).
- 3) Difference: The researcher should be cognizant of how gender, race and class differences, among others, might permeate the inquiry on all levels. It asks, "[i]n what ways are questions of difference dealt with in the ... study - in its design, conduct, write-up, and dissemination?" (p.98).

Bhavnani's (1990) above criteria helped to clarify the tangle of challenges inherent in the topic of identity which I discussed in the literature review. They also made visible the methodological proclivities of how I wanted to approach the researching of "Chinese Canadian" women's identity. Given the feminist orientation from which they developed, I concur with Bhavnani and other feminist researchers that practice (e.g., the research act) and theory are necessarily intertwined and carries both social and political implications. I describe in more detail, the features of a feminist orientation. In addition, I proceed to outline how the methodologies I selected adhere to feminist principles especially as they pertain to the issues of reinscription, micropolitics, and difference in the inquiry.

Feminist Orientation

Three approaches were selected and synthesized that would allow for flexibility and generativity in carrying out the approaches and goals as delineated by Bhavnani (1990) and others above:

- 1) cultural psychology;
- 2) discursive psychology;
- 3) hermeneutics.

These approaches were selected because they share and emphasize the following basic features and epistemological commitments of a qualitative, feminist approach that allowed me to delve into the implications of identity and re-presentation discussed.

Harding (1987) maintains that feminist research approaches recognize the importance of the social context in which research questions are raised, by whom, about whom, and to what end. The questions generated by feminist research orientations are derived from women's experiences and "uses these experiences as a significant indicator of the 'reality' against which hypotheses are tested" (p.7). Harding asserts that in feminist analyses, the term "women's experiences" is necessarily pluralized in its assertion that there is no universal woman. In this reformulation, heterogeneity and multiplicity within social categories are recognized:

> [W]omen come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no "woman" and no "woman's experiences." Masculine and feminine are always categories within every class, race, and culture in the sense that women's and men's experiences, desires, and interests differ within every class, race and culture. But so, too, are class, race, and culture always categories within gender, since women's and men's experiences, desires, and interests differ according to class, race, and culture. (p.7)

In general, the basic tenets of cultural psychology, discursive psychology and hermeneutics share features of qualitative feminist research orientations because they:

1. "Recognize the interdependence between [researcher] and [researched] thereby requiring the researcher to be an instrument of research" (Janesick, 1994, p.212).

2. "Avoid the decontextualizing of the subject or [researcher] and the researched from [her] social and historical surroundings" (Gergen as cited in Riger, 1995, p.155). This means that it "insists that the inquirer ... be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of the research. [T]he class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher ... her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attemps to paint. ... Thus the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests" (Harding, 1987, p. 9).

3. Adopt the epistemological stance "that 'facts' [knowledge and meanings] do not exist independently or outside of their producers' [linguistic and discursive] codes Gergen as cited in Riger, 1995, p.155). Yet they also acknowledge that there can be mulitple understandings of realities that exist separately and independently from our grasp or understandings of it, thereby recognizing that any understanding can only be partial and incomplete. These approaches recognize that "the production of knowledge is a discursive, dynamic and political process occuring through the interaction between the researcher, the respondent(s) and pre-existing discourses which are grounded in the ideas attributed to science and popular culture" (Nicolson, 1995, p.135);

4. Seek to "demystif[ies] the role of the [researcher in] establishing an egalitarian relationship between [researchers and others]" (Gergen as cited in Riger, 1995, p.155) while proceeding with ethical awareness and responsiveness to power differences;

5. Require a continual analyses and interpretation of the data that incorporates (a) systematic, method(s) of inquiry at all stages to uncover and push toward a fuller understanding of the topic.
(Clinchy, 1996; Fine, 1994; Gergen, as cited in Riger, 1995; Harding, 1987; Howard, 1991; Janesick, 1994; Mahoney, 1996; Nicolson, 1995; West & Fenstermaker, 1996).

What follows is an over-view of cultural psychology, discursive psychology and hermeneutics with an explanation of what each of these approaches in turn offer to the research topic in addressing the implications of identity, difference and re-presentation raised in the literature review and the opening section of this chapter.

Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology or "a transcultural psychology" combines theoretical foundations from a number of related fields including psychology, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, and sociology (Much, 1995, p.97). It seeks to examine "the ways in which psyche and culture, subject and object, and person and world make up each other" (Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990, preface) most notably in the areas of cognition, learning, self, personality and gender, promoting an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the human condition.

Of central concern in cultural psychology is how human beings construct and apprehend meaning from the sociocultural dimensions of their environments, and in turn, how these sociocultural environments themselves are constituted by the meanings which human beings assign to them largely through their engagement with language and cultural symbols (Goldberger & Veroff, 1995; Much, 1995; Schweder, 1990). Two core ideas or assumptions form the basis of a cutural psychology: 1) intention and 2) contexuality.

Intention

Human beings are considered to possess both agency and "intention" (Schweder, 1990, p.2) and actively engage in organizing, apprehending and ascribing meanings to themselves and their place in their lifeworlds (Howard, 1991; Kegan, 1982; Mahoney, 1996). As such, the plethora of processes, internal states, notions of self and other, and qualities of social life are not considered to be essential, a priori, fixed entities. Instead, they are dialectical and subject to the meanings which we ascribe to them, while simultaneously constituting the ways in which we understand ourselves (Riegal, 1975, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978). Shweder (1990) describes this concept:

> Psyche and culture are ... seamlessly interconnected. A person's psychic organization is largely made possible by, and is largely expressive of, a conceptualization of itself, society, and nature; while one of the very best ways to understand conceptions of self, society, and nature is to examine the way those conceptions organize and function in the subjective life of intending individuals (p. 26)

The assumption of intention and agency is highly related to the other key concept of cultural psychology, contexuality.

Contexuality

Cultural psychology maintains "that an 'intrinsic psychic unity' of humankind should not be presupposed or assumed" (Stigler, Shweder, & Herdt, 1990, p. vii). When psychic unity is *not* considered as pre-existing nor predetermined, the idea leads to two related key points:

1) A recognition of the highly context-dependent nature of the dynamics of the sociocultural environment on the *quality* and *textures* of human experience.

2) That any given sociocultural environment cannot be considered neutral or value-free but rather, asserts differential influences on the individual and how those influences are therefore apprehended (Goodnow, 1990b). (See for example, Cole, 1985; Goodnow, 1990a, 1990b; Riegel, 1975; Wertsch & Stone, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978, who offer similar psychological perspectives which arrive at and illuminate this point).

Contextuality recognizes that meanings are always constituted in relationship to others on multiple planes:

> The necessity of living's one's life in interaction with others means that one will spend most if not all of one's lifetime within life spaces defined by culturally symbolized positions within a social structure. ... This triple focus upon person, the social structure or social system, and the cultural symbol system perhaps best distinguishes ... cultural psychology. It is an

> approach which implies new potentials for transforming psychological studies of persons and groups within North America as well as those in more distant cultures [and locals]. (Much, 1995, p.105)

Implications of Cultural Psychology in Researching Diverse Groups and Addressing Difference

The two key ideas of intention and contextuality outlined above are methodological in that they imply ways for inquiry that call on the researcher to be aware of practical and theoretical outcomes when the research focuses on individuals who for various positions of gender, race and class do not traditionally belong to dominant groups. Shweder (1990) argues that, "[i]t would also seem to follow that if realities are not independent of our representations of them and involvement with them, then the raising [and pursuit] of [research] questions, even 'scientific' questions, is no *innocent* act (italics added, p. 31). I concur with Shweder's assessment that the epistemological commitments and principles of cultural psychology leave open a vital and important space that invites, if not expects, a researcher to exercise reflexivity, a constant-calling-into question her own assumptions, and a readiness to cast a critical gaze at the enterprise of inquiry itself (Dyck, Lynam, & Anderson, 1995; NIcolson, 1995; Sampson, 1993).

The intellectual movement from a sole emphasis on objectivism ("notions of discovering truth") to constructivism ("notions of the significance of meaning") in the human sciences, leaves researchers to re-evaluate not only what it means to conduct research, but "cuts to the heart of what it means to do good science" (Howard, 1991, p.187). In approaching my research interest from a cultural psychology perspective, I entered into this inquiry from a position of exercising reflexivity as a hallmark of sound qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Janesick, 1994; Krieger, 1991) to a solidification of reflexivity that recognized the inextricable relationship between power, difference and knowledge production

(Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy & Belenky, 1996; Lynnam, Dyck, & Anderson, 1995; Nicolson, 1995; Sampson, 1993). That these inter-related processes are embedded in, and thus reproduced by, the very same social structures, conventions and constraints that give rise to the research act as one form of knowlege production calls for a kind of methodological lucidity. Yet that lucidity is only partial because it, too, is subject to the social arrangements, ideologies and conventions embedded in knowledge production in language (Britzman, 1990; Kondo, 1990; Much, 1995; Harding, 1987; Riger, 1995). Plato (as cited in Grudin, 1990) recognized the co-constituting nature of the psyche and the social when he underscored the interconnectedness of knowledge and language. "Thinking and spoken discourse are the same thing, except that what we call thinking is, precisely, the inward dialogue carried on by the mind with itself without spoken sound" (p.111).

The primacy of language in cultural psychology is central to discursive psychology, which I used as my second methodological framework.

Discursive Psychology

A discursive framework concerns itself with the study of how meanings are constituted in and simultaneously shaped by our use of and involvement in language, dialogue, speech, conversation and other forms of social exchanges known as discourse (Harre, 1995; Harre & Gillet, 1994; Howard, 1997; Sampson, 1993). Such a framework contends that language, talk and related forms such as written texts, do not reveal nor are expressive of momentary glimpses into a person's hidden "picture" of reality, but rather, that discursive acts, simultaneously and continuously re-create and constitute that reality. Discourse and "discursive practice[s, therefore describe] ... the ways in which people produce social and psychological realities" (Harre, 1990, p. 45). Edwards (as cited in Sampson, 1993) maintains that "discourse provides us with 'not just a way of seeing, but a way of *constructing* seeing" [italics added] (p.1222).

As meanings are discursively constructed, it follows that they are never constructed in isolation; but they occur dialogically and interactively between individuals and between the individual and society by way of speech acts and texts. Deborah Britzman (1990) takes this idea one step further in her assertion of a socially constructed nature of personal meanings in which speakers are embedded and subject to the inherent constraints in the nature of language itself:

> The meanings we construct, while seemingly ours alone, never solely belong to us. Always asserted in each of our voices are the intentions of others, the ambiguity of language, the antagonisms of meaning, appearance, and representation, and the contradictions that open and suppress what we take to be the unique. ... The intriguing tension is that personal meanings are always situated in the social, the cultural, and the historical. And these dynamics cannot be transcended. ... My argument is that there is not one source for personal meanings but rather, contesting *discourses* that we take up, put down, borrow, and reaccentuate to make our own. And because of this latter struggle, personal meanings, like language itself, are never unitary, stable, or complete. (p. 79)

As elaborated by Britzman above, a discursive orientation asserts that our understandings of, and strivings for, knowledge of our lifeworlds, and our actions in those worlds, are intentional and never constituted in isolation of various discourses. Meanings are always privately and socially constructed, interpreted, and negotiated. Hence, "while persons can be seen as processing data [or events] in accordance with their own unique structures [experiences and understandings] they share with others interpretations of the 'text' of their experience ... [so that] meaning is arrived at communally" (Pare, 1995, p.5).

A discursive framework is helpful in addressing two concerns and practical requirements in this inquiry:

1) The notion of discourse presents a viable way to draw together psychologically and sociologically- oriented perspectives of identity through the

notion of positioning often used in feminist postmodernist thinking (Harre, 1990). Positioning means that an individual is seen to occupy various places or "positions" in the social world based on the language of society that fixes that individual into posessing a particular "self" or identity that she may or may not choose for herself. This leads to the idea of "contradictions as important sites" (Harre, 1990, p.47) of identity negotiation, investigation and interrogation .

A discursive framework, therefore, allows for the conceptual bridging of identity as both an internal private experience and as a socially constituted entity which is therefore, shifting and multiple because it is subject to who is doing the "speaking," and the conditions of those discourses being offered and selected. "Human beings are characterized by both a continuous personal identity and by discontinuous personal diversity. It is one and the same person who is variously positioned in a conversation" (Davies & Harre, 1990, p.46).

Davies and Harre (1990) soundly pave the conceptual bridge between the psychological and the social by pointing out the relationship between a discursive framework and a poststructural treatment of identity via subject positions. Their assertion also parallels the centrality of meanings and agency in cultural psychology:

> A particular strength of the poststructuralist research paradigm... is that it recognizes both the constitutive force of discourse, and in particular discursive practices and at the same time recognizes that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices. ... [T]he constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions. A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and locations for persons with the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned. At least a possibility of ... choice is inevitably involved because there are many and *contradictory* discursive practices that each person could engage in. Among the products of discursive practices are the very persons who engage in them. (italics added, p. 46)

2) Attending to each woman's use of language and the nuances of language could help me make sense of how she discursively constructed both her reality, and specifically, her "positioning" or identity within that reality. By probing and "listening hard" (J. Weinstock, personal communication, October, 10, 1996) I reasoned that I might understand identity by attending to how each woman positioned herself within and against different discourses, and understand the unique fine-grained movements between and within cultural "borders" (Anzaldua, 1987). Britzman (1991) asserts that attending to "language and personal voices of the participants ... allows us entry into their practical world. Language shapes and is shaped by meaning. Voice, in this context, suggests the individual's struggle to create and fashion meaning, assert standpoints, and negotiate with others. Voice permits participation in the social world" (p.12). Language could therefore give me an indication of the discursive mapping of borders, and assist me in understanding the meanings of identity for each woman. Howard (1991) suggests that "identities may be understood in terms directly relevant to stories. .... [I]dentity suggests how the personologist, or anyone seeking to understand the whole person, may apprehend identity in narrative [and discursive] terms" (p.193).

Implications of a Discursive Framework in Addressing Difference and Power

As a discursive framework considers that any social arrangements are arbitrary in and of themselves, and determined by the meanings of language, it follows that categories of identity such as gender, race, class and so forth "are seen as the effects of discursive processes involving power ... and [therefore, how] those divisions are constituted as well as the consequences of such divisions [and categories] becomes the central problem for investigation" (Sampson, 1993, p.1223).

The use of a discursive framework as a tool of analysis and critique has been advocated by Sampson (1993) in psychological research:

> [N]ot probing or challenging the categories, divisions, and objects we encounter ... but rather treating them as "givens" of the world, is to participate in a political act that helps affirm current formulations by never examining how they became current and whose interests they serve. ...Discourse theory likewise does not treat the categories of psychological subjectivity as features of nature independent of the very discursive processes of power by which these are made factual. (p.1223)

From a research perspective, my analysis and understanding of what discourses were being adopted by the women and the ways they positioned and perhaps resisted positioning themselves meant that as a listener whose aim was to uncover the complexities of discursive categories of identity such as "Chinese - Canadian," "women" and "culture," I had to proceed reflexively and respectfully to ensure that I was not appropriating nor failing to take into consideration power differences in the researcher-researched relationship in the work of interpreting the words of the participants (Britzman, 1991; Dyck, Lynam, & Anderson, 1995; hooks, 1990; Smith, 1991).

To this end, I adopted Uma Narayan's (1988) cross-cultural strategies of "methodological humility and methodological caution" as a listener and an "outsider" who endeavours to make sense of an "insider's" experiences:

> By the requirement of 'methodological humility' I mean that the 'outsider' must always sincerely conduct herself under the assumption that, as an outsider, she may be missing something, and that what appears to her to be a 'mistake' on the part of the insider may make more sense, if she had a fuller understanding of that context. ... By ... 'methodological caution' I mean that the outsider sincerely attempt to carry out her attempted critique [and understanding] of the insider's perceptions in such a way that does not amount to, or even seem to amount to, an attempt to denigrate or dismiss ... the validity of the insider's point of view." (p.38)

My use of a hermeneutic approach as a third method of inquiry allowed me to operationalize Narayan's appeal for methodological humility and caution by expanding it to include how, as a researcher, I would address the implications of interpretation, identity and representation within the life of the inquiry.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics refers to the methodological principals involved in the enterprise of interpretating texts. That is, the culling of meaning from the fabric of human lives to gain a sharper understanding and deeper compassion for the human condition so that one may be in-formed to proceed generatively with the aim of social responsibility and transformation (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; Smith, 1991). Hermeneutics claims its intellectual roots in philosophy and is named after the Greek God Hermes, who was both a messenger and interpreter between the gods and mortals, the latter of whom required assistance in grasping immortal meaning via earthly language (Pinar, Reynolds, Sattery, & Taubman, 1995).

In general, hermeneutic approaches are consistent with the epistemological and humanistic commitments and activities of a cultural and discursive framework discussed earlier. These approaches are:

> sensitive to both the purposive and unintended covering up [and are] openly dialogic in nature: the returning to the object of inquiry again and again, each time with an increased understanding, and a more complete interpretive account. ... Fresh questions raised that can be answered only by returning to the events studied and revising the interpretation ... Developing a new interpretation will often change the very form of the "facts" we are dealing with, as fresh aspects of the conduct leap to the foreground. [Hermeneutics] considers action and social interchange in the rich complexity that we all, in our everyday dealing, know them to have ... The end product of a hermeneutic inquiry -- an interpretive account -- is more modest in its aims than is a formal set of rules or causal law, but at the same time it is, I believe, subtle and complex, intellectually satisfying, and more appropriate to human action, embracing historical openness, the ambiguity and opacity, the deceptions, dangers, and delights that action [through research] manifests. (Packer, 1985, p. 1092)

A hermeneutic approach describes the way I worked and moved within the inquiry process at all stages in a cursive fashion rather than a pre-determined set of concrete activities. Consistent with the aims of cultural and discursive psychology's emphasis on meanings being constituted in relationship, a hermeneutic approach encourages the researcher to work at identifying themes and understandings through the engagement in interpretive activities that contribute to a holistic understanding between the topic as a whole and its inter-related parts. This generative, inductive process is called the "hermeneutic circle" (Smith, 1991). Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997) offer the following description of this process:

> ... [S]ince all sense-making is from an interpretive framework, then all interpretation is perspective-bound and partial, i.e. relative to that framework. ... The interpretation of part of something depends on interpreting the whole, but interpreting the whole depends on interpreting the parts. ... This process is called the *hermeneutic circle* of interpretation and its existence means that knowledge formation always arises from what is already known, even if only as a tacit 'background,' and is therefore, circular, iterative, spiral rather than linear and cummulative." (p.182)

As with other interpretive methods of inquiry, a hermeneutic approach strongly adheres to a systematic interpretation that is grounded in and informed by selected theoretical concepts and understandings throughout the research enterprise. It does not eschew theoretical grounding nor "substitute empathetic intuition for acts of rational cognition as some uninformed critics of hermeneutics [might] maintain" (Madison, 1988, p.3). In this inquiry, it meant that I would employ both a deductive and inductive approach by attending to paradoxes, silences and ruptures in various theoretical conceptualizations and the women's experiential understandings of identity, representation, and learning:

> The grounding of interpretation in "ready-to-hand" [deductive] understanding ... is the place to begin an inquiry with this practical everyday understanding ... [and then the researcher] push[es] this understanding into the "unready-to-hand" [inductive] mode [to] make it accessible to thematic description. One way in which this is done is by attending to that which is problematic in the original understanding, the lacunae, the gaps, and the contradictions that, in our everyday practice, we habitually gloss over ... Our understanding of a person's action (like

> written text) is never comprehensive or straightforward at the outset. Some sort of articulation and correction of our understanding is necessary, and a hermeneutic inquiry undertakes this in a systematic and coherent manner. The resulting interpretation has the potential to be what Giddens (1976) called "revelatory." It can go beyond what our original unreflective understanding showed us and also beyond what the agents report they were doing. (Packer, 1985, p.1089)

From this perspective, a hermeneutic understanding can be considered critically-oriented and re-informed through a constant returning to the literature and various texts such as interview transcriptions:

Implications of a Hermeneutical Approach in Addressing Issues of Difference and Power

Hermeneutics is well-equipped to address various difficulties and implications of power associated with identity and difference in this inquiry by challenging previously taken-for-granted categories and notions about identity, race, and culture as an act of "human freedom" (Smith, 1991, p. 189). Indeed, a critical agenda expresses my orientation and values as a researcher in featuring how interpretation may foster a refiguration of power and resistances against dominant discourses in social life:

> [G]ood interpretation is a creative act on the side of sharpening identity within the play of differences, and we thereby give voice to and show the features of our lives ordinarily suppressed under the weight of the dominant economic, political and pedagogical fundamentalisms of the times. (pp. 199 - 200)

In offering an understanding of identity within the social realities of power and difference, a hermeneutic approach fulfills a second aim of this inquiry by its insistence on the ethical responsibility of all individuals (e.g., readers, participants), especially the researcher, in having a stake in how those understandings might be arrived at and written about so that they are not exploitive, divisive nor reactive. In short, as Smith (1991) points out, hermeneutics tactfully *negotiates* understanding by establishing a "common ground" from which to speak to difference across borders:

> Everywhere there seem[s] to be a need for a language of "understanding" that could take up "difference" not as a problem to be solved but as an invitation to consider the boundaries and limits of one's own understandings. Hermes and I found each other, I suspect, because of a mutual recognition that identity means nothing without an ability to mediate meaning across boundaries and differences, whether those boundaries and differences be concerned with gender, race or ideas. ... [T]he hermeneutic imagination has an important contribution to make to that task, not to settle everything out once and for all by assigning people and things to their (so it might be thought) "essential" places, but for the ... pedagogical purpose of affirming the way in which present arrangements always border on and open onto the space of an Other whose existence contains part of the story of our shared future. (p. 203)

Synthesizing Methodologies

Meaning and Experience: Speaking About and Speaking To One's Story

Britzman (1990) proposes that:

> to understand the meanings of experience, one must theorize *how experience becomes meaningful*. Experience in and of itself, does not telegraph essential meanings and language does not automatically reflect experience. Rather, we bestow experience with meanings and these meanings are determined by habits, investments, fears, social conventions, dominant and sub-rosa discourses and relations of power."
> (italics added, p. 80)

My aim in situating how participants constitute meanings about Chinese Canadian identity and learning in their life worlds and in the discourses that impact on how those meanings are storied emphasizes the multiple functions of narrative as epistemological, descriptive, and critical (Somers & Gibson, 1995). Howard (1991) suggests that "the essence of human thought can be found in the stories we use to inform and indoctrinate ourselves as to the nature of [psychological and social] reality" (p.193). Examining the dimensions or "story" of being a woman with Chinese ethnic roots in Canada raises the question of how the intersections of ethnicity, race, gender, and culture are played out in the moments of everyday lives.

Trinh (1991) describes the dual purposes of narrative as "speaking about" and "speaking to" one's experiences within the story. In the first instance, speaking *about* one's experiences provides the listener, researcher, and reader with a narrative account of the story of being a woman of Chinese descent in Canada. The telling of any story, however, necessarily includes the teller's commentary of the story itself via the discourses that sustain its telling. "A form of mediation, the story and its telling are always adaptive. A narration is never a passive reflection of a reality" (Trinh, 1991, p. 13). Hence, speaking *to* one's experiences telegraphs how matters of identity have become meaningful for the teller/participant. In this discursive framework, each participant simulaneously both constructs meanings of identity and re-constitutes an identity as she tells her story.

In her explanation, Trinh (1991) suggests that speaking *about* the story occurs when "the story" is held at a distance and severed from the contexts in which it is told. In this condition, knowledge and meaning are produced out of an incurred separation between the speaking-subject and the object. Conversely, speaking *to* the story creates a synthesis between subject-object and telling-meaning by disrupting and blurring these dualisms. Implicit in this condition is agency and human freedom with echoes of Anzaldua's (1987) "third element" of a "mestiza consciousness" (p. 80). Trinh elaborates these distinctions:

> S/he who speaks, speaks *to* the tale as s/he begins telling and retelling it. S/he does not speak *about* it. For, without a certain displacement, "speaking about" only partakes in the conservation of systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/It; We/They) on which territorialized knowledge depends. It places a semantic distance between oneself and the work [or topic]; oneself (the maker) and the receiver; oneself and the other.
>
> "Speaking to" the tale breaks the dualistic relation between subject and object as the question "who speaks" and the implication "it-speaks-by-itself-through-me" as a way of foregrounding the anteriority of the tale to the teller, and thereby the merging of the two through a speech-act. Truth is both a construct and beyond it; the balance is played out as the narrator

> interrogates the truthfulness of the tale and provides multiple answers. (p.12)

In this inquiry, when participants speak both *about* their experiences and *to* their experiences, the speaking is functionally equivalent to speech acts in discursive psychology. Harre and Gillet (1995) contend that in discursive psychology, "[t]he crucial insight that enables us to explain psychological phenomena as patterns of discursive acts is that norms and rules emerging in historical and cultural circumstances operate to structure the things people do [and say]" (p.33). Moreover, speaking *about* and speaking *to* one's story are contained in what Belenky et al. (1986) call, "constructed knowing" (p.137) where subject-object and teller-story are seen as in-forming each other. In constructed knowing "there is an impetus to allow the self back into the process of knowing, to confront the pieces of the self that may be experienced as fragmented and contradictory" (p.136). Constructed knowing is a basis for meaning-making and interpretation.

Interpretation and the Construction of Meaning

Britzman (1990) warns that in the task of interpreting personal meanings, "we are necessarily encountering controversy: the push and pull of significations, of our [and our participants'] affective investments and fears, and of the lacunae among the felt, the expressed, and the repressed" (p.79). My hermeneutical interpretation attempts to enter into the lacunae to which Britzman refers to open the silences and erasures for the telling of different stories *about* Chinese Canadian women. It simultaneously demonstrates how the women speak *to* those experiences so that the researcher, participants, and readers might grasp new understandings of identities as "multidimensional" ways of being in the world. These different ways of being and knowing "can be a crucible for a wider social ethos of plurality" (Fischer, 1996, p.196).

Method: How I Proceeded to Carry Out the Inquiry

> "Integration" or even the word "organic" itself, means nothing is of value except as it is ... related to the whole in the direction of some living purpose.
> (Frank Lloyd Wright, Autobiography)

> One learns about method by thinking about how one makes sense of one's own life. (Denzin, 1994, p.501)

Although the three methodological frameworks of a cultural psychology, discursive psychology and hermeneutics describe a cursive way of proceeding in this inquriy, this section summarizes in chronological order, the activities, procedures and specific techniques which I employed within those frameworks to answer my research questions.

"Identifying" and Recruiting "Chinese Canadian Women" Participants:

While still in the early stages of the inquiry, it was apparent that narrowing down the group of interest, "Chinese Canadian women," and locating individuals was going to pose a myriad of challenges if a demographically homogeneous group of women was to be the primary goal. Questions such as number of years in Canada, generational status in Canada, geographical origin of family, socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, Chinese language fluency, and degrees of "acculturation" or biculturalism began to mount quickly.

In light of this constellation of demographic factors, coupled with the recognition that the proposed research was not an experimental design, I reasoned that, as the general premise of the research was framed in terms of learning, the most significant characteristic linking the women, other than a "shared" ethnic background, would be that they should all have received their formal education in the Canadian school system from the beginning of elementary school. A shared history of schooling would, therefore, faciliate a common ground of socialization in Canadian society (Pinar et al., 1995).

Where and How I Recruited Participants

I contacted various organizations and utilized academic and personal contacts. This included approaching professors, on-campus organizations, friends and community organizations for referrals. My main criteria other than ethnic and educational background were both that the women should be interested in talking about their experiences as a Canadian of Chinese descent and that she would also be engaged in a learning activitity such as teaching, community or volunteer work or as a student so as to be able to reflect on her experiences of culture and learning in whatever ways she could. After approximately one month, five women had agreed to participate.

Conducting Interviews: Locations, Consent and Time

After several initial phone calls and confirmation letters explaining the research, I met with the women individually in a variety of locations of their choice, encouraging each of them to select the place and time where they felt comfortable (Goldberger, 1996). Our interviews and short follow-up sessions took place at their homes, on campus or at my home over a course of about four months.

At the initial interview, each participant read and signed a letter of consent and confidentiality. Each initial interview was about three hours and a follow-up session lasted from one to two hours. In total, I spent an average of four to five hours with each participant.

Interview Transcriptions

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Each participant was forwarded a copy of her transcription for editorial changes that she deemed appropriate. In most instances, I posed additional questions on paper for written clarification and invited any reactions and thoughts to the interviews and the transcriptions that they might wish to share. The taped cassettes were destroyed after the transcriptions were returned and editorial changes made.

In the end, I had gathered approximately 20 hours of taped interviews, and, after transcribing, I had collected over 250 pages of interview transcriptions in addition to my own research notes that spanned the life of the inquiry.

An Inter-View as a Site of Knowledge Construction and Positioning

From a cultural psychology and discursive perspective, interviews not only serve the practical purpose of researchers meeting participants to gather specific views and insights from them, but also the interview itself is considered a dynamic place of interaction and negotiation offering unique and rich qualitative information that further informs the topic of the research. Kvale (1996) refers to qualitative interviewing as a conversation between researcher and researched as they engage in the construction of knowledge about the topic. "The qualitative research interview is a construction site for knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. [This conceptualization of an interview emphasizes] the interdependence of human interaction and knowledege production" (p.14).

In analysing the conditions and discussions of the interview sites, further understanding about the link between identity, positioning and discourse could be generated. Consistent with the frameworks of discursive and cultural psychology, individuals position themselves and are simultaneously positioned within any conversation or exchange through speech and the adoption of various discourses (Harre, 1990; Howard, 1991). Hence, the interviews are themselves considered shifting constellations of speech acts centering on identity as discursive subject positionings.

Semi-structured Interviews

I selected a semi-structured interview format as my main method of gathering qualitative information. The benefits of this format, as opposed to a structured one, are that it encourages rapport building and empathy, allows for greater flexibility to explore interesting areas as they arise, lessens power differences, enables participant to ask researcher questions, and usually results in richer "data" (Oakley, 1981; Smith, 1995).

I originally adapted some questions from the Ways of Knowing Interview Schedule developed by Belenky, Clinchy, Golberger and Tarule (1986) who conducted a large scale qualitative study of women's epistemological development. I selected open-ended questions specifically about learning and educational experiences, self-identity, educational pursuits, and perceived changes in self as a learner. As each interview progressed, however, I revised some of the questions to better suit the research focus. In addition to questions adapted from the Ways of Knowing Interview, I prepared questions that specifically probed experiences around ethnicity, culture, difference and family upbringing. These latter questions were based on preparatory reading, self-reflections and exchanges with previous participants. In follow-up sessions, the interviews were unstructured and based on statements that the same participant and others had made in the initial sessions. Appendix A contains a sample of questions adapted from the Ways of Knowing Inteview in addition to my own.

Cursory Movements: Analysis of Interviews with Grounded Theory Methods

In my analysis I incorporated into my hermeneutical framework what are known as grounded theory methods in working with interview transcripts. In general, grounded theory methods describe a meta-framework of qualitative analysis. It combines systematic techniques and levels of coding to identify processes, meanings and interpersonal-social relations within a transcripted interview and involves selective re-sampling of a target group to develop a theory that is dense and generalizable (Charmaz, 1995; Strauss, 1987; Smith, 1995).

The underlying epistemological assumption of grounded theory methods is to explicate causal relationships and processes in the data (Osborne, 1994). My aim was not to generate a theory that inferred causal relationships about Chinese Canadian women's identity and learning processes. Instead, it was to arrive at meaning by uncovering and problematizing existing conceptualizations of identity and learning through the identification of thematic processes. As such, my use of grounded theory methods was technique-specific rather than outcome-driven. Charmaz (1995) notes that grounded theory methods are useful for studying multiple levels of interaction within an individual and between an individual and social processes. As a novice researcher confronted with over 250 pages of transcriptions, I could not convince myself of what was surely to be a demanding task of analysis, that themes and meanings would emerge or "jump out" as if by some nebulous, subterranean process. At the outset of analysis in particular, I required practical solutions, guidelines and useful suggestions. As such, grounded theory techniques presented practical techniques of "working" the transcripts to open up, challenge, expand and reinvigorate my thinking to prevent myself from analytical drowning in the volume of transcripts.

Monitoring Researcher Subjectivity in Grounded Theory and Hermeneutical Approaches

The analysis of qualitative data can potentially result in an unintentional "forcing of the data" into pre-determined themes, categories and interpretations (Charmaz, 1995). To monitor and address this, my use of grounded theory techniques of analysis operationalized what it means to work hermeneutically. Smith (1991) describes this as follows:

> Within the hermeneutical agenda .. the purpose is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of responsibility. (p. 201)

The hermeutical approach, therefore, articulates rather than disguises or screens out the researcher's intended use of subjectivity. Moreover, precisely *because* it is intentional, subjectivity in grounded theory and hermeneutics is not a license for methodological recklessness or "free wheeling" unanchored in traditions of qualitative inquiry (Osborne, 1994). Instead, the use of subjectivity demanded that, as a researcher, I carefully monitor and orchestrate my thinking and activities throughout all stages of the research. The "new sense of responsibility" to which Smith refers was sustained and operationalized within grounded theory and hermeneutical approaches by my use of a qualitative software package and methods of triangulation.

Use of HyperQual2 Software Package

After analyzing interview transcripts from hard copies for several months, I transported the transcripts onto the HyperQual2 Software Package which is specifically designed to manage and facilitate qualititive data analysis on MacIntosh computers (Padilla, 1993). As the program is well-suited for theory and model building, I used it to collapse, refine, isolate and re-code data as my interpretation and identification of themes, concepts and the inquiry process progressed.

The stages and steps of analysis are documented in the program and on hard copies as lists of targetted quotations taken directly from the transcripts, organized and revised into meaningful categories and processes. Moreover, the program greatly reduced the amount of paper I might have otherwise used, allowed for movement between transcripts, and retained a degree of fluidity to the analysis. Although I began to use the program to aid me with initial cross-transcript analysis, I often returned to the hard copies at various points in the process to maintain a holistic perspective of each interview session. Later, I relied exclusively on the hard copies as I grew more familiar with the words of each participant. I also discovered that I required a strong tactile and visual (e.g., being able to write notes directly on the transcripts) sense of the interview texts that a computer screen could not provide.

Heuristic Toolbox: Triangulation Techniques and Activities

In addition to the use of more than one methodological framework, I engaged in and sought out various activities and resources to guide the analysis of the interviews and to inform my understanding of the inquiry as it unfolded. This strategy is called "triangulation," which is defined as a "heuristic tool for the researcher" (Janesick, 1994, p. 215) and despite the name, is not restricted to three activities, resources, disciplines or methods. Characteristic of grounded theory methods, my heuristic toolbox consisted of the following three groups of on-going activities and resources sustained throughout the life of the research:

1) observation and journal writing;
2) revisiting the literature; and
3) staying connected.

Observation and Research Journal Writing

During the preparation, conducting and writing up of the project, I kept notes of my observations of the interviews and more detailed writings of my on-going analysis and understanding of the research process. Lukinsky (1990) and Richardson (1994) maintain that writing is central to the process of analysis, learning and understanding. My writings or field notes were dated, revised and re-worked as my analysis progressed through a prolonged engagement with the transcripts and an iterative visiting of the literature.

Revisiting and Consulting with the Literature

Throughout the analysis and interpretation of the transcripts and the entire inquiry process, I focused and re-focused my reading of the literature to those areas in which themes and processes were beginning to emerge. While Charmaz (1995) calls this use of the the literature a "delay of the literature review" (p.28), my approach can be better described as intermittent and "organic" (Lee, 1996, p.98) in that the literature guided the research but especially during some critical points in the analysis. For example, I consulted the literature about re-presentation, identities and postmodernism, issues of gender and racial difference, ethnic friendships, and Asian American women's issues while simulataneosly grappling with these issues methodologically, when I perceived patterns and processes emerging across transcripts.

Staying Connected: Checking Back and Learning From Others

At the early stages of the inquiry and analysis, I kept informal telephone contact with each participant to both help solidify my understanding of emergent themes and to receive general feed-back. Despite our busy schedules, I also endeavoured to stay connected with them individually to prevent the interview transcripts, which were temporally and physically fixed, from metamorphosing into paper masks for these living and breathing women.

Throughout the analysis and writing I discussed my research with classmates and other interested individuals to solicit their impressions as a way of checking whether my emerging analysis made sense to them. I kept in contact with two Chinese Canadian female students on campus, one a colleague in graduate studies, and another who was referred by a professor. At a recent conference I shared my research with students and professors doing similar work and consciously used their perceptive questions, comments, and advice to further my understanding and reading.

Talking-Story:
How I Situate Myself in this Inquiry

> I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. ... I say it cause you do what I can't.
> What that? she say.
> Fight. I say.
> (Alice Walker, 1982, The Color Purple, p.42)

> Words too close to life *expose*. They share with the readers an intimacy that demands an equal laying bare and commitment on their part. "Placing oneself level with the body" in writing, is, among other things, putting one's finger on the obvious, on difference, on prohibition, on life.
> (Trinh, 1991, p.130-131)

From all three methodological approaches selected, words are said to signify meanings and powerful ways of being in the world. Words, as I understand how they might be used, present the possibility of collapsing the distance between "margins-centre," "insider-outsider," "majority-minority," "White-Asian" without extinguishing those tensions that hold them in place and bring them into existence. This means heeding an invitation to enter into the spaces between these sets of dualisms to disrupt them and examine those very tensions that signal ruptures and tears in previously taken-for-granted-ways of being and knowing. It means, as the hermeneuticist, John Caputo (1987) contends, to enter into "the flux:"

> ... In the thin membranes of structures which we stretch across the flux, in the thin fabric we weave over it, there are certain spots where the surface wears through and acquires a transparency which exposes the flux beneath. There are certain breaking points ... in the habits and practices, the works and days, of our mundane existence where the flux is exposed, where the whole trembles and the play erupts. Then we know we are in trouble. The abyss, the play, the uncanny - in short, all hell - breaks loose, and the card of castles of everydayness come tumbling down. Something breaks through because the constraints we impose on things break down.
>
> What breaks down in the breakthrough is the spell of conceptuality, the illusion that we have somehow or another managed

> to close our conceptual fists around the nerve of things, that we have grasped the world round about, circumscribed and encompassed it. (pp. 269 - 270)

As a researcher focusing on Chinese Canadian women, my aim is to remain in "the flux," situating myself in those places of the "betwixt and between" (Hurtado, 1996, p. 386), "the lacuna" (Britzman, 1991, p. 13), "the borders" (Anzaldua, 1987, preface), "the between spaces of Asian, American, and Chineseness" (Ong, 1995, p. 352), the "third time-space" (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996, p. 13) and the interstices and intersections that "refuse [for]closure and [keep] fluid" (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996, p. 17) the "flux" between comfort - discomfort, insider - outsider, center - margins, researcher-researched and their multiple permutations.

Doing "Homework"- "Objectively"

While residing in "the between spaces" semantically suggests retreat and inactivity, being and remaining in the flux to research means transformational action. Viswesvaran (as cited in Lavie & Swedenburg, 1997) calls such an approach doing "homework," juxtaposing it against ethnographic "field work" that usually happens outside the immediate, daily lives of both the researcher and those she researches (p.17). It involves "blowing up, both enlarging and exploding" (p.21) the hyphen in "Chinese-Canadian" associated with previously taken-for-granted conceptualizations of identities. Kondo (1996) perceives homework for Asian Americans as a way "to continue to write ourselves into existence" (p.116).

The principles of doing homework are operationally equivalent to Carolyn Heilbrun's (1988) appeal for women to write their own lives and scripts, in that both pertain to power. "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p.18). Both activities require from the researcher what Mezirow (1981) calls critical reflexivity. Critical reflexivity means to exercise an "[a]wareness of *why* we attach the meanings we do to reality, especially to our roles and relationships - meanings often misconstrued out of the uncritically assimilated half-truths of conventional wisdom and power relationships assumed as fixed" (p. 11). Britzman (1991) points out the limitations of regarding conventional wisdom as synonomous with common sense, the latter of which she proposes as a discourse that structures what we believe we *should* already know. "As discourse, common sense depends upon what is already known - the obvious - and hence resists explanations about the complications we live" (p. 6).

The dual approach of homework as a way of simultaneously complicating and scripting identities, therefore, demanded that as a researcher I take and carefully acknowledge both an academic and personal responsibility in the inquiry that in no way "attempt[ed] ... to substitute empathetic intuition for acts of rational cognition" (Madison, 1988, p. 3) in the studying of the qualities of "home." My use and explication of triangulation methods and other theoretically grounded approaches to operationalize the principles of cultural psychology, discursive psychology, and hermeneutics explains how I proceeded to take methodological responsibility in the research. Moreover, it required an exercising of integrity and lucidity at all levels and stages both in making informed decisions about the topic in the analysis and representation of the women's experiences in the text and in critically monitoring my movements and place within the preparation, analysis and authorship of the research document. For the researcher must "recognize the desire for safety and the construction of an identity while it problematizes within, highlighting its always provisional nature, and examining its enmeshment in networks of power" (Kondo, 1996, p.97).

I concur with Harding (1987) in her assessment that making explicit the movements of the researcher brings to bear the conclusions and findings of the research itself by openly addressing the question of objectivity while proceeding with an *informed* subjectivity associated with sound qualitative research:

> We need to avoid the "objectivistic" stance that attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects' beliefs and practices to the display board. Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free (or, at least, more free) of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviors of social scientists themselves. Another way to put this point is that the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of the research. *This* evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence. Introducing this "subjective" element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of research and decreases "objectivism" which hides this kind of evidence from the public. (p.9)

In my selection of a discursive and cultural psychology framework as a system of meaning-making which I construct through this inquiry to understand participant interviews, I necessarily acknowledge the imbalance of power created between myself and the participants. In addressing this concern, I reiterate Britzman (1990) and Kondo's views (1990) that the interpretation of meaning is always provisional and incomplete. That is, there is no single meaning that can be drawn, but multiple meanings and readings. As such, any framework is subject to the responsibility of the researcher to exercise reflexivity in continually rethinking her relationship with research participants within that framework.

Remaining in the flux and and situating myself there to "do homework" is not a comfortable stance, nor is it a location that I chose, planned or in which I strategically positioned myself at the beginning of the inquiry process. Rather, it was a place where I needed to just Be through my learning as a researcher when other possibilities were growing untenable for some of the following reasons.

Ethics of this Research

Studying identities and representation calls for a recognition and understanding of the interconnections and exigencies of power, knowledge and social arrangements that press down on all our lives to surface as various visible and invisible forms of difference such as inequities, domination, oppression, the eurocentre, and privileges of race, gender and class in the inquiry process. These are weighty, loaded words in my social reality, reminding me that I am sometimes afraid of thinking them, thinking *with* them and being misunderstood and misrepresented *because* of thinking with them. As a researcher, I write under the constraints of entangled discourses and identities about women and racial minorities in general, and Chinese Canadian women in particular. I feel what Dorinne Kondo (1990) meant when she declares, "What and how I write is no mere academic exercise; for me it matters, and matters deeply" (p.302).

Power, knowledge, social arrangements and the plethora of implications into which they open cannot be brushed aside methodologically, practically, nor ethically in this inquiry given the relationships between the topic, the subject positionings of the participants and myself as a researcher. Nor can the inquiry be entered into without the serious consideration of walking into other discourses that might rush in and appear to offer a way out of "the flux." These discourses themselves can also take on other forms of co-optation of different stripes. Kondo (1990) captures the inherent contradictions and tensions in resisting and problematizing dominant discourses. "[L]ike all oppositional discourse, the opposition can never be pristine or transcendent, but it is always already situated within other discourses, reproducing conventions even as it problematizes them" (p.302). Given these constraints and challenges, Suleri (1995) echoes the provisional nature of an oppositional discourse proposed by Kondo and strongly articulates the costs of non-action:

> [U]ntil the participants in marginal discourses learn how best to critique the intellectual errors that inevitably accomany the provisional discursivity of the margin, the monolithic and untheorized identity of the centre will always be on them. (p. 135)

Toward New Learnings and Understandings Across Borders

It is as much a goal as it is a statement of how I situate myself in this inquiry that the in-sights and experiences of the five women, and my approach as a researcher might be transformed into new learnings. My aim is to understand and rearticulate identities by speaking to the tensions and negotiations of "a human being [as she] endeavour[s] to become more human" (Aoki, 1983, p.335) at the borders and seams where "two or more cultures edge each other" (Anzaldua, 1987, preface), outside and inside herself, and as the inside is turned out.

My approach can neither mask nor dismiss the realities and difficulties of those social arrangements so they run the risk of being distilled into discursive ammunition that subversively widens the pavement between people, thus keeping margins and centre permanently wedged and sealed off from one another. My place within this inquiry is, therefore, fraught with moments of uncertainty and vulnerability because it places me "in the paradoxical position of deploying what is conventionally known as an antihumanist discourse for humanist ends" (Kondo, 1990, p. 301).

The three approaches I have chosen propose action and awareness on all fronts. Together they necessitate a working *at* uncovering and making visible and a working *against* dominant discourses to preserve the possibility for understanding across borders. This means to avoid being collapsed under a weight that speaks in the soothing language of the "universal,"or the kind of opacity that inadvertently inflicts confusion, panic, or exclusion when the aim is to heal, empower, and instruct.

I turn to the philosopher Sara Ruddick to help me express the commitment of that work when I look down at my feet and know that the intellectual ground and the ethical ground have grown into one other. "I now care about my thinking and think what I care about - about lives and what endangers them" (as cited in Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, p. 150).

The *work* for me has entailed "living by the word" (Walker, 1988) --- that is, the "doing" of this inquiry with the "knowing," or clarity of vision of Hong Kingston's (1997) "woman warrior." The epistemological tensions of this work (and this text) means that " '[t]o know' is not the problem; the challenge is "to know what you know" *and* to be able to circumvent the consequences of that knowledge while being true to yourself" (Hurtado, 1996, p. 378). Being true to oneself entails the sometimes difficult acknowledgement that while there is always a veneer of risk beyond the hand of the researcher, the situation presents opportunities for further learning:

> [A]uthors of the stories (and theories) lose control of their stories once they reach the world. [Yet e]very reading, is, in a sense, a revision. (Goldberger 1996, p. 6)

I believe that the doing *with* the knowing is to "live by the word" (Walker, 1988) in the hopes of keeping alive the possibility of new learnings between borders by "expos[ing] the flux beneath" (Caputo, 1987, p.269) -- without simultaneously being pulled under.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARTICIPANTS: CON-TEXTUAL MOVEMENTS AND VOICES

> The instabilities of the categories "Chinese" and "women" are multiplied by their juxtaposition, allowing for questions such as: "Who are Chinese [Canadian] women?" What do they tell us about "China" [or Canada]? What do they tell us about "woman" and "women"? What does it mean when ... [scholars] study them as one entity? Basically, how have the stories of Chinese [Canadian] women been told ... ? (Chow, 1991 as cited in Ong, 1995, p. 351)

> [T]he study of lived experience ... examines how we come to construct and organize what has already been experienced. ... The retelling of another's story is always a partial telling, bound not only by one's perspective but also by the exigencies of what can and cannot be told. The narratives of lived experience - the story, or what is told, and the discourse, or what it is that structures how a story is told - are always selective, partial and in tension.
> (Britzman, 1991, pp. 9 &13)

This chapter introduces the five participants as individuals brought together in this research. Consistent with the methodologies selected and Rey Chow's epigraph above, my aim in this and subsequent chapters is to situate their stories within the con-texts of the inquiry and the scope of Canadian society because a thorough analysis of these Chinese Canadian women, learning and identity recognizes that the two con-texts inform the topic on theoretical and practical levels (Ong, 1995). Further, as Deborah Britzman (1991) states above in writing research, the dilemmas of representation and authorship need to be addressed as features inherent in the "scripting" of identity and the crafting of any text. In the following section, I discuss these salient issues as they pertain to introducing and presenting the voices of the five participants throughout this inquiry.

Presenting the Voices of Others: Heteroglossia and Textual Considerations

A "marginal interpretation of a word" (J. Lee, personal communication, February, 15, 1998) and the representational tensions in the language of a written text have been referred to as "heteroglossia" after the work of the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (Pinar et al., 1995). In my hermeneutical assessment of the word, the prefix "hetero" refers to multiplicity, while the stem "gloss" denotes a smooth sheen and semblance of uniformity. Whitson (as cited in Pinar et. al., 1995) defines heteroglossia as "the inclusion of all conflicting voices" (p. 289). Ong (1995) points out that in heteroglossia, language "produce[s an] in-between consciousness of differences" (p. 352).

Both these definitions highlight the key difficulties of extrapolating meanings from language (introduced in the literature review and methodology chapters). In a cultural and discursive psychological framework, language is not considered transparent because it carries with it the known and unknown intentions and relationships between speakers, listeners and readers. Heteroglossia recognizes the paradoxes of language and the perils of interpretation, or how meaning is ascribed to language.

Features of Voice and Text

I use the core ideas of heteroglossia and extend them to call attention to three inter-locking issues particular to this inquiry. First, the practical difficulties of presenting the voices of others as text are examined. Second, I consider heteroglossia as it pertains to theoretical questions regarding identity, specifically what constitutes and signifies a "Chinese Canadian" text/identity. Lastly, I discuss the implications of heteroglossia in permitting a multi-voiced Chinese Canadian identity for women in this inquiry.

The first feature of heterglossia attends to the lacunae between presenting a given person's voice or words (e.g., utterances and articulations) and the written text which struggles to "authentically" interpret and then present those words in the con-texts of an academic document. The dilemma, according to ethnographic researchers such as Britzman (1991), is that, even when a written text duly preserves the integrity of an informant's words in its original context, one is hard pressed to consider that there is a direct one-to-one correspondence between the spoken words and the text that sustains them. Britzman articulates the cautions and limitations of interpreting and presenting the words of one's research participants as a matter of voice:

> The study of voice, however, makes for a cautious study in three regards. First, we do not have one voice but many. Our voice is always contingent upon shifting relationships among the words we speak, the practices we construct, and the community within which we interact. As practices, perspectives, and communities shift, so too does the voice we use to name them. Second, our capacity to make language work for us is problematic. There is never a simple corespondence between the words we use and the things to which we refer. Language can mask and illuminate, and also affirm and challenge, how we understand our social conditions. It has the potential either to reproduce given realities as immutable and ubiquitous, or to produce critiques that have the potential to construct new realities. Third, interpreting the voice of others leads to the development of yet a different voice. [The] dilemma as a researcher is to reconstruct and critically re-present the voices of others, and, in doing so, care for their integrity, humanity, and struggles.
>
> Representing the voices of others means more than recording their words. An interpretive effort is necessary because the words always express relationships, span contexts larger than the immediate situation from which they arise, and hold tensions between what is intended and what is signified. (pp. 12-13)

As noted above, the words and voices of participants are always enmeshed within the textual and theoretical structures of the research and larger social discourses that together, mediate and configure how meanings are constructed by both participants and researchers. Yet the mechanics of voice and interpreting the meanings of participants go beyond the technical limitations of words as mere tools of (mis)communication. Instead, voice as words constitute a decidely social medium which arrive pre-packaged in our thinking and vocal chords as highly textured and differently perceived understandings of one's social world (Vygotsky, 1978) and locations within it.

Voice as a Social Medium

In a cultural and discursive psychological framework, meanings are said to be multiple. As the medium through which meanings are ascribed, "voice" is therefore, multiple and open to contradiction. What one says is contingent on the different social relationships and discourses being recognized and resisted and the implicit conditions that colour them at that moment. Ong (1995) reminds us that in heteroglossia, voice posits "different socioideological perspectives" (p.352) and is, therefore, "always mediated" (J. Lee, personal communication, July 3, 1997). Voice is also mediated by differential power relations between individuals and society (e.g. by gender, race, class distinctions) as well as between researcher-research at all stages of a research project from its inception through to dissemination (Bhavnani, 1993). Implicit in this inquiry of identities and learning as one form of meaning-making about identities is "how subjects produce and reproduce meaning and myths about ... [Chinese Canadians, Chinese Canadian women and Chinese Canadian identities] through their theories, practices, routines, discourses and contexts and reflections" (Britzman, 1991, p.15). In this regard, the participants' voices telegraph identity by how they see and position themselves situated in their life worlds within competing discourses about Chinese Canadian identity, women, and women of Chinese descent in Canadian society.

Writing Stories and Scripting Identities

The second point about heteroglossia addresses its textual implications in this inquiry. What is spoken/unspoken and written/unwritten in the biographical sketches and verbatim citations of the participants exert influence on how the participants' identities *as* Chinese Canadian women, and their "Chineseness" are multiply conceived in the written text. For example, including (and excluding) certain topical biographical aspects of participants' lives such as the degree of fluency in Chinese languages, interest in one's heritage, "official/professional" and personal ties to the "Chinese community," participation in various cultural practices, ethnic background of spouses/partners, values and beliefs, and features of one's family and upbringing become salient markers with which an infinite possibility of ethnic/cultural/gender identities and formulations may be inscribed. One begins to see how featuring Chinese Canadian identity as a listing of "ethnically/culturally-relevant" actions and values is limiting when conceived within an assimilationalist framework of continuums and typologies of "Chinese/non-Chinese," "Asianess/Whiteness" and their permutations. I propose that the challenge for conceptualizing and presenting Chinese Canadian women's identity hinges on language.

As in the style of many Asian landscape paintings, the white unmarked spaces of "nothingness" inform one's understandings of the landscapes of identity as much as those spaces touched by the brushstrokes of ink. In the writing of this and subsequent chapters, I am made acutely aware of the paradoxes of having shaped facets of the participants' identities and especially their indvidual "Chinese Canadian" identities on these pages even as the participants themselves have engaged in this endeavour in the course of our interviews. In short, how does a researcher proceed to write about the participants' understandings of their own identities without forming them in the process? Heilbrun (1988) eloquently states the practical difficulties and paradoxes between writing *about* the lives of others and *writing* the lives of others:

> There are four ways to write a woman's life: the woman may tell it, in what she chooses to call an autobiography; she may tell it in what she chooses to call fiction; a biographer, woman or man, may write the woman's life in what is called a biography, or the woman may write her own life in advance of living it, unconsiously, and without recognizing or naming the process." (p.11)

In addressing the above constellation of theoretical, contextual and ethical implications, Ong (1995) proposes that the problematics of scripting other's identities by "writing their stories" might be reconfigured but no less ignored, if power is considered in slightly different terms than "a question of negotiating trust and avoiding betrayal" (p. 353). She posits that if researchers carefully consider power as relational and mobile, and above all, not as something which can be lifted from the hands of participants, the writing of others' stories contributes to human knowledge by enabling individuals to understand their lives and others' in new ways:

> There is a tendency to consider the subjects' power as totally defined by the ethnographer, while their words are given little weight because they are represented and rescripted by the ethnographer. However, if one considers power as decentralized, shifting, and productive force, animated in networks of relations rather than posessed by individuals, then ... subjects can exercise power in the production of ethnographic knowledges. ... While we do not deny our use of informants' stories for our own purposes, we can choose to introduce their perspectives into rarefied realms of theory-making.
>
> Given our privileges, there is a greater betrayal in allowing our personal doubts to stand in the way of representing their claims, interests, and perspectives. The greater betrayal lies in refusing to recognize informants as active cultural producers in their own right, whose voices insist on being heard and can make a difference in the way we think about their [and our own] lives. (pp. 353 - 354)

The core idea of heteroglossia as a multi-voiced text proposes an approach to addressing the above intertwined theoretical and textual difficulties in this inquiry. A multi-voiced text presents each participant as both a part of a community of diverse Chinese Canadian women's voices and as one voice. This recognition enhances both the uniqueness of each of their stories and the complexities with which identity should be considered.

The features of heteroglossia raised in this section invite the reader to consider that a written text and the storied voices of individuals who occupy its pages are necessarily situated in time and circumstance. As articulated in the discussion of feminist research orientations and the opening of this chapter, language and voices are partially defined by the textual constraints of research as a decidely social and historically-situated endeavour (Harding, 1987).

Meeting the Participants: An Overview

Each participant brought her own unique experiences and insights to this inquiry. They represent a variety of ages, backgrounds, and life stories as any group of interesting individuals one might have the privilege of meeting at a social gathering. The five women ranged in age from twenty-one to thirty-nine. At the time of the interviews, all were either attending university or had completed an undergraduate degree. Hence, all were engaged in some form of organized learning and education as students, teachers and/or volunteers in non-profit community organizations committed to immigrant and ethnic minority groups, women, education, and social issues. Two of the five women were either married or living with a partner, both of whom were non-Asian.[5]

Four of the five women are Canadian-born, three to parents who had immigrated approximately thirty years ago or more, while the fourth was born to parents who were also born here. The one participant born outside of Canada arrived prior to elementary school. All the women had spent their formative years growing up in Canada and attended the school system in its entirety from elementary school through university. Two were brought up in very ethnically-diverse neighbourhoods in large cities populated by different generations of immigrant groups. Two other participants were raised in less ethnically diverse suburban communities. A third grew up in a large, diverse suburban center.

Given the period in which four of the women's parents immigrated (between 1950 to the late 1960s) and the largely economic circumstances that spawned mass emigration to Canada, it should not have been unusual that three of the five women grew up in families where *both* parents were employed in the hospitality trade as cooks and waiters in primarily Chinese restaurants. In the families whose parents emigrated to Canada, three of the participants served or continue to serve in different capacities as English interpreters for their parents. In these households, one parent, usually the mother, had at one time attended an English as a Second Language class. As children, all five women communicated to their parents with varying degrees of fluency in one or more dialects of Chinese including Cantonese, Hakkga, Hubei and Toisan. Two had attended community Chinese language schools during childhood and adolescence while another had studied Mandarin Chinese at university. Most of the women have retained some functional ability in at least one Chinese dialect which they use in specific contexts such as with family members, members of the Chinese community, and in stores and restaurants. Their self-described abilities range from minimal (e.g., salutations) to interpreting government and business correspondence for parents. Additional European and Asian languages have also been prevalent in the lives of three of the women. In fact, many of the women have led international lives, having spent periods working, studying and traveling overseas. Interest in different languages and cultures has guided several of them to enriching careers and involvement in various recreational and volunteer activities.

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[5] The two participants who referred to the ethnic backgrounds of their spouse/partner did so while talking about themselves and not because the information was requested by the researcher. After making changes to their interview transcriptions, both participants chose to retain this information in the transcripts.

The common feature that brought the women and me together, aside from the formalized structure of research was, I believe, the desire to share insights and stories from different perspectives gleaned from a shared ethnic background in this country. As the project unfolded, it became evident that each woman was to become a mirror for me as a researcher, a researcher who stood within the community of their voices (Krieger, 1991). To enter into their community of voices, the following is a short biographical sketch of each participant, how I came to know each one on an individual basis, and general observations gleaned from our meetings. These are followed by individual excerpts from our first interview. Each participant either describes herself or provides background information about herself and some feature of learning and/or self. My selection of these introductory descriptions was not based on responses to the same question because some of the participants' articulations would not have been condusive nor practical for this purpose. Further, my principle aim in this task was to acquaint the reader with the "sense" or voice of each person as best I could.

Names and some of the identifying information were changed by the women themselves. I made additional minor alterations to further ensure anonymity. In light of the theoretical issues pertaining to identity discussed in this chapter, I have endeavoured to work at preserving each of their unique personalities and experiences in the text while also protecting confidentiality.

Biographical Portraits

Suzette

I was referred to Suzette by an individual with ties to several community organizations. Having worked myself in the not-for-profit sector where I observed the interest with which many former colleagues spoke about culture and social issues, I deliberately sought someone with knowledge about the concerns and lives of ethnic minority women at the community level.

Suzette was born in a mid-sized town in Eastern Canada and is the youngest of four siblings. Both her parents were also born and raised in the same town where on parent had attended an all-Chinese elementary school. Her parents both worked in the hospitality industry and her father ran a small business on the side. Suzette's family has many long-standing ties to the Chinese community in several locales. When we met, she had been an active volunteer at the senior level for a number of organizations for eight years. Several years before, she was nominated for a prestigious award for community work. At thirty-five, Suzette's career is in hotel management. She is the only child in her family to earn a university degree and to visit China.

Our interviews took place at her home looking out onto a garden carefully tended by Suzette and her husband. I noticed the kitchen clock with numbers written in Chinese script and how often people phoned to leave messages about community events and meetings. It was not unusual for me to leave our interviews with a new collection of pamphlets from different agencies and organizations.

At our first interview, when I asked Suzette to provide me with any background information about herself, learning or anything I might want to know about her, her self-introduction included the following:

> S: I was born here. Went through the educational system here. When you talk about cultural things, how it affected my education, I started to go to kindergarten but I dropped out of kindergarten because of... I was teased a lot and got into fights and so I refused to go to kindergarten. Got to grade one and my elementary school years I would not say were my happiest years. I was faced with a lot of discrimination ... had trouble dealing with it, had trouble ... with my own insecurities of being the youngest in the family. So I hated elementary school. [In] junior high school, I started to develop a little bit more and enjoyed junior high cause I started to get involved with extra-curricular stuff like sports and newspaper club and student council and things. And then I went to high school here. Those were sort of the better years of my life because I started to develop as a person. I think that's when ... a lot of my ideas as a woman seemed to come together. I was really into trying to be a woman of - I guess back then - the seventies. Read a lot of *Cosmo[politan magazine]* and stuff like that.

E: Umm hmm.[6]

S: I was really ... in touch with things. And to me, my role models were very powerful, intellectual women. I went to university. One, because I didn't know what else to do at the time. Secondly, none of my family had ever gone to university and I was the youngest in my family so it was my parent's dream that one of us would go to university. So I went to university and was majoring in English lit and psychology and ... decided to take one elective, a Chinese history course. And I ended up changing my major. I majored in Asian and Pacific Studies with my sort of... specializing in Chinese history and Chinese language. Today I ... Well I never continued my studies. I made it in just to get my B.A. And .. at that point there was nothing [that] said this is what I *should* do now. So I stayed in the [hotel] hospitality industry which I had put myself through school doing cause I enjoyed it. And after my B.A. I worked in various hotels always in the restaurant area.

E: Umm hmm.

S: I'm working as a manager. We, my husband and I moved to [another town]. ... We returned back here about twelve years ago now. I guess ten, eleven years ago now. ... And once again I've still worked in the hospitality industry. ... Once I did my (degree) and I went to China for the first time, I became very interested in Chinese culture mainly out of the fact that I rebelled so much when I was a child that I was just eager to learn more.

E: Umm hmm.

S: So I started to ... rent Chinese movies, read books by Chinese artists, writers, go to exhibits that were in town to do with the museums, pieces or Chinese art.

E: Yeah.

S: ... And then there was a time of sort of realizing that my only connection to the Chinese community right now was through my parents. When I walk downtown everybody says "hi" to me but it's because I'm so-and-so's daughter. And if someone said, "Oh who's that?,"

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[6] In all verbatim transcriptions, I denote an attentive listening response on my part, with this articulation rather than omit it from the text. Although in some cases, I do not include my posing of a specific question, I aim to preserve the conversational nature with which the interviews took place, and hence, emphasize that speakers and active listeners enage each other in speech acts.

> I'll hear, "Well she's so-and-so's daughter." "Oh." You know, I realized unfortunately one of these days my parents won't be here and I won't have a place in this community. So about six years ago I got involved with [a cultural organization]. That was one of the few women's organizations ... that I really didn't need to have to speak Chinese cause I don't speak Chinese.
>
> E: Oh. Okay.
>
> S: So I joined that and within half a year I became president. And we were able to get the [the organization] very involved. They were a new club so they'd become quite involved in the last six years and one of the things that I was able to do was I was able to get them to become a [more active and higher profile] member of the [community].

Marie

I was introduced to Marie through a mutual friend who suggested that Marie might be interested in meeting with me. After I contacted Marie and we had time to talk briefly on the telephone, I perceived that her comments helped me to anticipate some of the dimensions in the inquiry that I had sensed, but had not began to explore fully.

Marie was born in East Asia where her mother and father's families had resided for two generations. She is the third of six children. Her father left a career in engineering and moved the family to Canada in the early 1970s when Marie was six years-old. The family eventually settled in an ethnically diverse, mid-sized city which Marie described as an "inner city." Marie recalls learning English when she started school yet continuing to speak Chinese with her mother and Tamil with her father. Last summer, Marie traveled back to East Asia to visit relatives. During our interview, she told me about some of the history and lives of the Chinese in her birthplace, bringing to the forefront the lived realities of diaspora.

At twenty-eight, Marie is a mathematics instructor at an independent school. At the time of the interview, she had almost completed her first year of graduate studies which she was pursuing on a part-time basis. The day we met, Marie was right in the midst of a busy move. Together, we hauled several boxes and pieces of furniture before sharing a quick dinner at a nearby eatery where we discussed graduate school. Ironically, during the "real" interview, Marie reflected on how she described the two of us on a message she left for her partner on the answering machine should he wish to join us. "Ask for two Chinese women," she had said.

When asked how she would describe herself, as well as herself as a learner and impressions about learning in a graduate level classroom, the following exchange unfolded:

> E: If you were to describe yourself to someone who didn't know you, how would you describe yourself? Use adjectives or whatever.
> M: I would say outgoing, sometimes inappropriate [laugh].
> E: [laugh] Can you give me an example of that?
> M: Like maybe I'll make jokes like with sexual allusions to it. Right? Like that kind of double entendre kind of thing. On a good day that's probably not something I'd want to say to people you don't know too well. [laugh] But I don't mind. [laugh] [pause] I say things the way I see them. So it might not be the way *you* see them. *My* reality is what I speak.
> E: Umm hmm.
> M: So I really speak close to my heart. And I find I get two reactions from people. People either don't know how to take it and they hold their cards closer to themselves cause I've exposed too much cause they would never think of doing that. Or else people will be able to relate to me right away because they can talk to me. I don't really talk with a hidden agenda. I guess that's the best way to put it. I do think that's a positive quality but that also can make me like a loose cannon at times too. You know, in my job when you're in a place where a lot of things get done by committee and stuff, it's not the way things get done. Rather than speak honestly you have to kind of play with that agenda.
> E: Umm hmm.

M: And I think I'm funny. And I think I'm refreshing. [laugh]

E: Care to add any more to that? [laugh]

M: I think I'm sensitive. [laugh]

E: How about ... how would you describe yourself as a learner? I'll use the word "learner" rather than a "student" because I think learner goes beyond just being in a classroom but just maybe your approach to things that interest you, how you try to develop your mind, how you try to develop a sense of yourself. So ... how would you would describe yourself as a learner?...

M: That's interesting. Let's see as a learner ...now this is something you kind of keep learning about yourself cause you give a lot of thought to this when you're going through school. Umm. It's funny cause I'm realizing a lot of things I do don't have validity unless I do it to mastery. And of course you know, you can't be a master at everything. So you know... I'm kind of going back to my art again and that's always something I've kept as a hobby. But it's like ... I'm afraid to say that I do art cause then people will make assumptions about my goodness.

E: Umm hmm. The quality of your abilities or your product or...

M: Exactly. Or the, "*I* like that, so it's good." You know that's (chuckle) not necessarily a logical thing, right? [chuckle] But as a learner I think what I realize is I'm not afraid to speak as much because I really need to say things, get my mouth around words to make it real for me. I also need to write things and experience things so much. ... I think semantically, like writing and reading. I think I *am* strong at those things but those are really just mere exercises like not the you know,... what... that "spark" that makes you want to learn. That spark that means, okay *that's* why this happens. And then you just start with that because that's why it happens. You don't look on either side of it anymore. It has to do with doing things and experiencing things. I think a lot of it has to do with relationships...

......

E: Do you think you've changed too in the last couple of years as far as the kind of learner you are, how you engage in learning, what you want out of it ...

M: That's funny cause...

E: ... and how you perceive yourself?

M: As a learner. That's a hard question cause like on one end of it I find that... Like there's one extreme where okay, if I don't understand it, it's stupid. And if I don't... That doesn't make sense to me, this is a waste of my time. And that's still very much there although I'm learning to temper that a little bit more but it's still very much there. And then the other extent of it is, oh my gosh, there's so much to know. ... There's so much to know and I want to take it all in and basically what happens is it's like you're a walking encyclopedia as opposed to you know, somebody who's got facts that are interesting that have to do with you.

......

M: ... But then there was a conversation that happened and here were my colleagues who had really interesting opinions and takes on certain things and they'd be talking about something ... and there was no point to talking about it because it was stupid. All of a sudden, I realized maybe ... maybe it's not stupid. [laugh] Maybe *I* just don't understand. Maybe there's something in *me* that's not getting to that level of understanding. So I would say that's probably the most significant experience I've had.
E: How were you judging "this is stupid" and maybe this isn't worth my while to think about? Where did you feel that or how did you sense that?
M: I think that part of it was I just didn't ... [pause]. There was certain things that I think that were easier to assume an understanding for. While I'm talking to you, when I say, "You know what I mean," and you have to rephrase it so you're sure that's what I mean. If I were doing the interview, maybe I'd be, "Oh yeah. I know what you mean." I'd assume I knew.
E: Umm hmm.
M: ... And I'm going to put a negative word to it. An arrogance. I did assume I knew what I was talking about or what you were talking about or what the teacher was talking about. And when I got to the point where I didn't understand what they were talking about ... Well, it actually never ocurred to me that maybe there was more to it. And the other thing is the work aspect of it.
E: You mean work load or ...
M: No. Work in terms of working toward understanding. Cause I thought that understanding was something like you look at a book. You read it. It's like you understand it but you don't. ...

.....

E: Would you say that until that time, your approach to learning content in class was essentially, if I can learn it on first try then I can learn it? I've learned it.

M: Yes. It was very superficial, I would think. Yeah. In a certain way.

....

E: Would I be incorrectly labeling that it was also kind of an impatience type of [approach]?

M: No. That would be totally right. [laugh]

E: [laugh] Or I mean an impatience meaning you want to learn and you want to learn it fast.

M: Yeah. And also what I was saying earlier about that grade ten math teacher who said, "Oh, you're Chinese, so you know this." And I was kind of ... I set myself up so it's like I *should* know because I'm expected to know.

Francesca

I was introduced to Francesca, an educational consultant and teacher, through a mutual friend. Six years earlier, Francesca and I had originally met at an informal gathering and had not seen each other since. Our first interview took place at Francesca's apartment with a view of the ocean, a setting which suits her great love for out-door sports and recreation. At the end of our interview, Francesca treated me to a stir-fry and rice dinner.

Francesca was born in a mid-sized Canadian city the second oldest of five children. The city had a mixture of different immigrant groups. At thirty-nine, Francesca has devoted much of her life to studying and teaching languages. She now trains English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors and teaches ESL.

During our session, Francesca spoke at length about her growing-up years and her impressions of what she called, being "an immigrant's child" coupled with having a physically challenged sibling. Her parents immigrated from China about forty years ago with elementary and some high school education, and worked all their professional lives in Chinese restaurants. Francesca described the multiple challenges that parent-child language barriers, cultural unfamiliarity and limited economic opportunities had impressed on her as well as her parents. The challenges she experienced as a young person have helped her to understand the worlds of her students, many of whom are first generation Canadians from non-English-speaking families. Even as Francesca spoke about some of the challenges of her life, I was impressed by her irreverence and sense of humour.

When I asked Francesca how she would describe herself, followed later by her definition of success we had the following exchange:

> E: And how would you describe who you are today, Francesca? You've mentioned the words [chuckle] "stubborn," "strong," "independent." If you were to go on because you said you wouldn't be the person you are today. If you were to describe yourself to someone who didn't know you ...
>
> F: Umm. I think I'm a very courageous, in some ways, an enigma because I can be quite social and very chatty, very well-spoken, very articulate in certain realms. It depends on whom my audience is and my comfort level and my own expertise. If I feel any importance of what I'm doing and what I have to say in the value I am placing on whatever the situation is. But yet again, I know I have this quiet part of me and a little bit of fear that what I have to say has no value or has little value because I think I have also come away from childhood having learned that as well. So in... I know, I guess for an example in my work sometimes when I speak during staff meetings or when we have staff meetings with our colleagues or administration, I don't voice much or I tend to take a back seat when perhaps I could speak up and say, "Well you know I don't really agree with this. I think it's wrong. I think we should try something else." That would be one arena where I would tend to or could very well be quiet and not say anything. And that could be also because I have a little fear of that and also I have to watch what I say because we're a union

[laugh]. So it's other things, other parameters or variables come into play as well.

E: Other forces aside from just your own.

F: With certain colleagues I'm very comfortable and I'll say what I feel like and I'm quite the person I am on my own and with my peer and my own personal friends. But with certain colleagues, I have to watch what I say. It's just the way it is in the working world. Umm. There's certain people with whom you need to tread very carefully.

E: Are these people older... and in more positions of power?

F: That's right. And traditional. And if you want to collaborate and do any kind of work project at the school level with these people you need to watch your steps and watch your words. Yeah. That's right.

....

E: So you use the word enigma as one word to describe yourself along with the other ones you had mentioned like "stubborn," "strong-willed." Are there any more that you would like to add?

F: Courageous. I think now, I'm more... I tend to be more of an optimist compared to when I was a child. I didn't have a lot of hope for myself once I realized the way my parents were bringing up their children. And unfortunately, because of my brother, I was quite a sad person and quite serious, like I mentioned before. But once I felt that I knew who I was and I've established sort of my identity and not having this dual, kind of schizophrenic kind of thing happening, once I felt that I was who I wanted to be and was able to manifest that personality, I felt stronger about who I was and happier with myself. Then I felt that I could say what I felt like saying and not feel bad about it or feel that someone's going to shout down at me or you know, do something horrible to me so that I wouldn't be heard. Yeah. So. Definitely more of an optimistic. I have more self-confidence and definitely more self-esteem. I guess that came with learning how to survive on my own after all the problems I had and also I guess graduating from university and being able to fend for myself, getting a job, being successful at my job and having friends. All that combined, builds one's self-esteem and gives you self-confidence, whereas I never really had that when I was younger.

....

E: How would you then define success for yourself, Francesca? If you were to say, "Yes, I am a successful person because ..."
F: Now that is a very difficult question. I'll try to do my best to answer that. I believe I'm a successful person because I try to be true to myself and my own wishes and my own goals in life. Although I do have an inner struggle about is this the right thing for me. Is this right for my career and all that. But I certainly feel that I have attained a certain level of success because I came out here on my own and managed to survive, put myself through university, paid off my student loans, found myself a job and a place to live. Made friends and I have long friendships now. I mean... they're over twelve and fifteen year friendships, so and to me, that is a sign of success, if you can have a long-standing friendship with somebody. Umm. I think I'm a more content person. I'm not so troubled, I would say. And I'm not so caught between the two worlds of being Chinese or being Canadian.

Carrie

I met Carrie, a twenty-one year-old social work student through a professor. As she was currently in university and nearing the end of her degree, I anticipated that she might offer a unique perspective to learning, especially since she soon would be making a transition from "formal education" to the working world for the first time. Her enthusiasm for working with youth and the keen interest she had in discovering where her education might take her, were evident in our conversations.

Carrie was born in Western Canada to parents who had immigrated to southwestern B.C. from Hong Kong in the mid-nineteen-sixties. She has four siblings. Carrie's parents had received parts of their education in Commonwealth countries prior to settling in B.C. and according to her, had a fairly good command of English when they arrived.

Carrie attended a private girls' high school with a high academic reputation and began university thereafter. Carrie perceived that her parents made it economically feasible for her to attend university. At the same time, other activities such as volunteerism, recreational sports and musical pursuits that encouraged her to develop what she called "leadership abilities" were important in both her eyes and those of her parents.

When I first met with Carrie, she was in the midst of packing her belongings and putting them into storage until the next academic year. We decided to meet on the university campus for both our interviews. Our conversations spilled over to the hallways and parking lot. One new adjustment that Carrie mentioned in the first interview was the transition from an all-girl's high school to a co-educational university. In the following excerpt which took place near the end of that interview, she describes her experiences and keen observations about how gender, classroom participation, and educational aspirations intertwine:

> C: ... We covered quite a bit [in the interview]. I thought there might be more questions on education and things like that.
> E: What kinds of questions?
> C: What it was like to be a girl in a classroom as opposed to a boy, you know, that whole topic of ... having girls and guys in the classroom, so co-ed or, stuff like that.
> ....
> E: So did you perceive that yourself, moving into university here that that was something that you noticed a lot?
> C: A little. ... I think that you *do* notice. I'm thinking back to a class that I took where there was a lab section where it was all discussion and I don't think that the girls really said too much in that class. In that class there was this one guy who wasn't always talking, but ...
> E: In general, when you've got a mixed group or a mixed class, do you think that women are less inclined then, to speak out?
> C: I think so. Yeah.
> E: Have you felt that way, too?

C: I think sometimes I feel that way, that I don't really want to say anything in class. ... I don't really know if I can really find a time where I said consciously to myself, there are guys in this class, [so] I don't want to say anything. But I'm sure there are times when I haven't said anything because ... there were guys ...?

....

E: Do you think that if you'd come to a university that was not co-ed, do you think that would change the types of experiences that you were just talking about, about being in the classroom, about males speaking more than women. And women not contributing as much [to the discussions].

C: Yeah, I think that it would. I'm pretty sure that it would. ...

E: What do you think that is? If you could try to name it or put your finger on it. I've never been to a girls school so I don't know what it would be. If you could kind of explain to me what that dynamic is like.

C: I think it's just like things on TV or things in books, and things that, umm that girls who are smart are always considered nerdy, or ... not liked by guys. And I think that girls don't really want to ... to come across as being too smart, you know. Or too opinionated, or too... I'm not really too sure. They don't want to come across as being too opinionated, or knowing more than guys or something like that.

E: If a girl would come across that way, why would it be a worry or a concern?

C: Just that... people are always saying in our class [that] people who always speak up, guy *or* girl, that they're such a bother in class [chuckle], that they always have something to say. That they're always arguing with the teacher and things like that, when the rest of the people just want to go to class, take the notes and leave, kind of thing. Umm. And I think that girls tend to take that more personally when people say those things about them, than guys do, and so girls...

E: You were saying about guys and girls in a class. Now, have you been in a class where a girl has been fairly active in speaking but was not held back or thought badly of? It sounded like what you were saying is that you risked being ... seen in a certain way if you were a girl who was quite vocal in class.

C: No, I don't... ... In [my program] because there are so few guys, people who speak up tend to be girls because there are more girls in the class. But ... in one of my other classes, there was a girl who always spoke up and people would always talk about her and how she's like, oh she's so... asking questions that don't always pertain to the class or nerdy, or so "into" the class or ... you know, things like that.

E: Umm hmm.

C: So I guess she did get that negative impression that people made of her.

E: What's the balance point of how to be in a class and how to be a girl in a mixed class?

C: I think it needs to start from a younger age, like in the elementary schools, when, as a teacher, you need to be able to reinforce more to the girls and really encourage them to say how they feel. And if they do that at a young age, they won't grow up thinking how, thinking that they can't say things just because the guys are around. They need to teach the girls at a younger age that it's okay to be smart, that it's a good thing to try for sciences, that they can do it. At least start at a younger age, I think.

Emily

Emily's name had been given to me by a member of a student organization committed to raising local awareness about social issues. Our interviews took place at my home and later, at her parents home where she was residing during the summer. We sipped tea in the family kitchen while Emily reported on how her preparations were unfolding for her upcoming departure to Asia to teach English. She described her newly anticipated identity as being "a visible minority in another visible minority country." Since leaving Canada soon after our last interview, I have received several post cards from Emily.

Emily is twenty-seven and the second of three children. She was born in Western Canada and her parents arrived here from China via Hong Kong in the mid 1960s. Emily remarked that after thirty years, her mother was still working in the very first job she had in Canada, in addition to managing her own business.

Emily earned degrees in history and sociology and not long after, received her teaching certificate. After several years of juggling different teaching jobs and a hectic schedule, she returned to university to pursue a post-graduate degree in education. Emily has an avid interest in social justice issues, teaching and working with international students, all of which she spoke passionately about.

Early in our first interview when I commented that I was interested in hearing about her work in social issues, she described herself as "... sort of an ... anomaly on campus." In the following excerpt, Emily describes her work with that student organization and speculates on how her four year involvement has changed how she now sees herself:

> Emily: Yeah. I didn't know very much about other... what was happening outside of ... North America really. I didn't know a lot about the issues, social justice issues in Africa, and women's issues in South East Asia.
> E: And how would you say then if you were to compare yourself now to when you first started. If you were to say, okay from being in this group or whatever, I've seen these changes in myself as a person.
> Emily: Well I think I have a more global perspective now. ... I noticed that it's very hard for people to think [that way]. ... And I noticed that in high school students too. That's where I can relate it to teaching.
> E: Mmm.
> Emily: That they have a very narrow perspective of what the world is. And they don't realize that we live in a commun - like a global community and you know, that they, as consumers ... have a responsibility I think.. ... To me there's ... very clear things that you should and shouldn't do in terms of ethics. Things like you shouldn't support countries that violate human rights. You shouldn't support gold mining in Indonesia cause there the military are kicking people off their land and killing them. And Canadian companies are there and the Prime Minister's just [gone] over there to visit with all the Pacific trade. You know APEC and all those kinds of issues. ... Some people think that doesn't have anything to do

with them but you have to think of things in the big sort of global perspective. I think some, most people are very narrow in how they perceive like... They just want to finish school, get their job. That's it. (laugh) They don't care about what else is going on outside of them. They don't realize that things happen, ... have been happening outside in the world that's going to affect them in the future.

E: So it enables you to see beyond just ...

Emily: Beyond North America, beyond Canadian, Canada, I guess. Yeah. Beyond just being a Canadian citizen trying to get a job you know. (laugh)

E: Are there any other changes that you perceive in yourself since [being involved]?

Emily: Since getting involved? I think I've had a lot more confidence in myself and then a lot more... I've always been a very verbal person but I think I'm even more so now. And that's probably good. You have to be quite articulate in your teaching, so that's good.

E: So by verbal you mean more, as you were saying, articulate as opposed to just someone who likes talking?

Emily: Exactly. And I try to ... I think I'm a little better at describing how I feel about things. Like the language that I use which I'm always trying to find the precise kind of way to describe [things] so the other person doesn't misconceive it - doesn't ... understand it in the wrong way. ... Maybe a few years ago if somebody had said something to me that I thought was offensive, I'd let it go. Now I don't let things go. I sort of you know... I try to defend myself more if something comes up. So I think that's happening. So I think that my personality's getting more sort of stronger, more independent and more confident, I guess. And I think that a lot of that is ... I don't know if I would have learned as much of that if all I did was went to university and just got a degree. I don't know if I would have been ... because I think the work outside I do, outside my formal education has affected a lot of who I am and how I speak to people and how I think and feel about world issues and things like that.

E: So as far as ... if say we were to now look specifically at the classes that you took, different courses, different professors, would you say then that maybe the actual taking of classes didn't give you that or didn't prepare you or allow for that type of ... training?

Emily: No I don't think so because I think universities are very... They're not very adaptive I find. ... You know I came back to school in September and I had to sit back in the desk [for] five hours a day or whatever it is and just be lectured, talked at, right? I know that when I was teaching, that doesn't work. I'd never just talk at my students. ... You're just being talked at all day long. You're not learning anything. You're just memorizing things and you're not ... To me, I think, it's not just content.

E: Umm hmm.

Emily: You ... memorize names and dates and places but [there's] not enough emphasis on skills. ... Learning that it's important to research something before you just make a decision or make a judgment. It's important to weigh the pros and cons. Like how do you analyze information that [you] receive, not to take everything at face value.

Talking-Story
Women Writers' Voices: Visibility, (Self-)Censorship, and Agency

> I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here.
>
> (Alice Walker, 1982, The Color Purple, p.214)

There is a silence that cannot speak.

There is a silence that will not speak.

Beneath the grass the speaking dreams and beneath the dreams is a sensate sea. The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence. But I fail the task. The word is stone.

I admit it.

I hate the stillness. I hate the stone. I hate the sealed vault with its cold icon. I hate the staring into the night. The questions thinning into space. The sky swallowing the echoes.

Unless the stone bursts with telling, unless the seed flowers with speech, there is in my life no living word. The sound I hear is only sound. White sound. Words, when they fall, are pock marks on the earth. They are hailstones seeking an underground stream.

If I could follow the stream down and down to the hidden voice, would I come at last to the freeing word? I ask the night sky but the silence is steadfast. There is no reply.

(Joy Kogawa, Obasan, 1981, preface)

> Writing is above all releasing oneself from external censorship. ... Reading one of Annie Leclerc's manuscripts, Cardinal comments: "Sometimes it seems as if there is someone outside your text to whom you're accountable, someone who threatens you, who frightens you somewhere. You must not, this is no longer necessary" (p. 215). The need to justify (oneself) keeps the subject under supervision. ... For writing also means going beyond the internal censor - the censorship writers impose on themselves ... Rare are those who, like Artaud, know "at what point in its carnal trajectory ... the soul finds the absolute word, new speech, the interior land." (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1991, pp. 130-131)

... Say it say it say it Tell it like it is What breaks your heart What keeps you awake at night What makes you want to break the ties that silence and bind And tell it like it is Say you'll never cover your ears and close your mouth And live in a silent world Say you'll only run as far and as fast as you need to be secure ... Say it say it say it ...

(Tracy Chapman, "Tell It Like It Is", 1994)

> Writing is a form of prayer. It's a way to explore your deepest selves. And I do mean selves. I've made the acquaintance of my many selves. The selves have to be knitted together. It's what makes a person whole. When you absorb all your selves, you affirm yourself.
>
> (Alice Walker as cited in Christy, 1992, p.D13)

You who understand the dehumanization ... the humilation of having to falsify your own reality, your voice - you know. And often you cannot *say* it. You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf and you will be said.

(Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989, p.80)

> To be of value, an invented form must be a statement of truth, not abstract or general truth, but particular truth, sourced in the experience of a knower. ... The self is the world, and to deny the self is to deny the world. This orientation, I think, is important. It is usually not prominent, and not viewed positively, in the thinking of social science.
>
> (Susan Krieger, 1991, pp. 77 & 82)

CHAPTER FIVE
MAKING SENSE OF A COMMUNITY OF VOICES

> In the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself. Confronted with a mountain of impressions, documents, and field notes the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of what has been learned. I call making sense of what has been learned *the art of interpretation* . This may also be described as moving from the field to the text to the reader. (Denzin, 1994, p.500)

> [O]ur most powerful effects as storytellers come when we expose the cultural plots and practices guiding our writing hands. These practices and plots lead us to see coherence where there is none, or to create meaning without an understanding of the broader structures that tell us to tell things in a particular way. (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, p. 584)

In this chapter I present the major thematic findings of this inquiry which address the research questions on identity and learning among the five participants. To reiterate, the following two questions guided this research:

1) What kinds of negotiations and identity processes characterize women's ways of learning to live between different configurations of cultural "borders" and contexts?

2) How do Chinese Canadian women educated in Canada construct mirrors of learning in order to learn about "themselves" in a predominately euro-centric society?

The Metaphor of Learning Mirrors

The metaphor "learning mirrors" was selected for this inquiry to capture the range of processes, moments, and social activities that spurred the women to think about and possibly revise their understandings about themselves in various combinations and questions of identity and representation. Some of these moments are discursive, subtley sensed, or barely impinging on the particular participant while others are events marked by strong reactions or deep, reflective analysis that spawned a rethinking about themselves and issues of identity.

The findings are presented in three sections:

- In the first section, I present a discursive analysis of "Chinese Canadian" women's identity and representation. This analysis demonstrates the different contexts and competing discourses about ethnic, racial, and gender identity in our society and locates the participants' and my voices within different discourses. It also reveals some of the strategies that participants have developed in their lives to live across different borders both inside and outside themselves.
- In the second section, I describe the key areas and activities in which the participants engaged that enabled them to learn and think about matters of identity.
- In the final section, I utilize an analytical zoom lens to contextualize the inter-view site and research framework to demonstrate the identity negotiations that were being carried out between myself as a researcher and the participants.

Through the Eyes of a Woman Warrior: Crossing Discursive Borders of Identity

> Because the social and the psychological world - and indeed even the division into the social and the psychological - is discursively constructed, any particular arrangement that is found at any one time and place is more open, fluid and nonessential than we may typically believe.
> (Sampson, 1993, p.1222)

> [I]t is in the domain of language that the traces of a theoretical and political journey begin to emerge as part of a broader attempt to engage meaning as a form of social memory ... and social practices as sites in which meaning is re-invented in the body, desire, and in the relations between self and others. (Giroux, 1992, p.19)

> I have always been a black woman. I say that without, I hope, any arrogance or undue pride, for I know this was just luck. And I speak of it as luck because of the struggle others have trying to discover who they are and what they should be doing and finding it difficult to know because of all the different and differing voices they are required to listen to.
> (Alice Walker, The Temple of My Familiar, 1989, p.53)

The focus of this section is to analyze "Chinese Canadian" identities as a set of processes and discursive practices with which the participants engaged to make sense of how they perceived themselves in relation to different "stories" about being Asian/Chinese and a woman in Canada. Hoskins (1997) defines discursive practices as "the process of how language, symbols, ideals, images, and metaphors [have] become social and psychological 'realities'" (p.104) for an individual and group in their everyday lives and speech. In other words, discourses about identity can be understood as socially-embedded assumptions that frame what "stories" are told by the participants about themselves in relation to different contexts and meanings.

To study identity in terms of cultural and discursive psychology, I needed to become aware of the different discourses that I and the participants were embedded in as minority women in this culture. This analysis therefore, maps some of the emerging discourses I identified and locates the voices of the women and myself within them. The word, "dis-cursive" itself suggests that this analysis process is not linear (M. Hoskins, personal communication, April 21, 1998) but emerges from continually re-locating self and other within various discourses while simultaneously questioning and re-articulating those very locations themselves. As such, the analysis unfolded from dwelling in the intersubjectivity of the women's voices and my own. Brah (1992) describes the connection between identities and ways of being in the world as processes in movement:

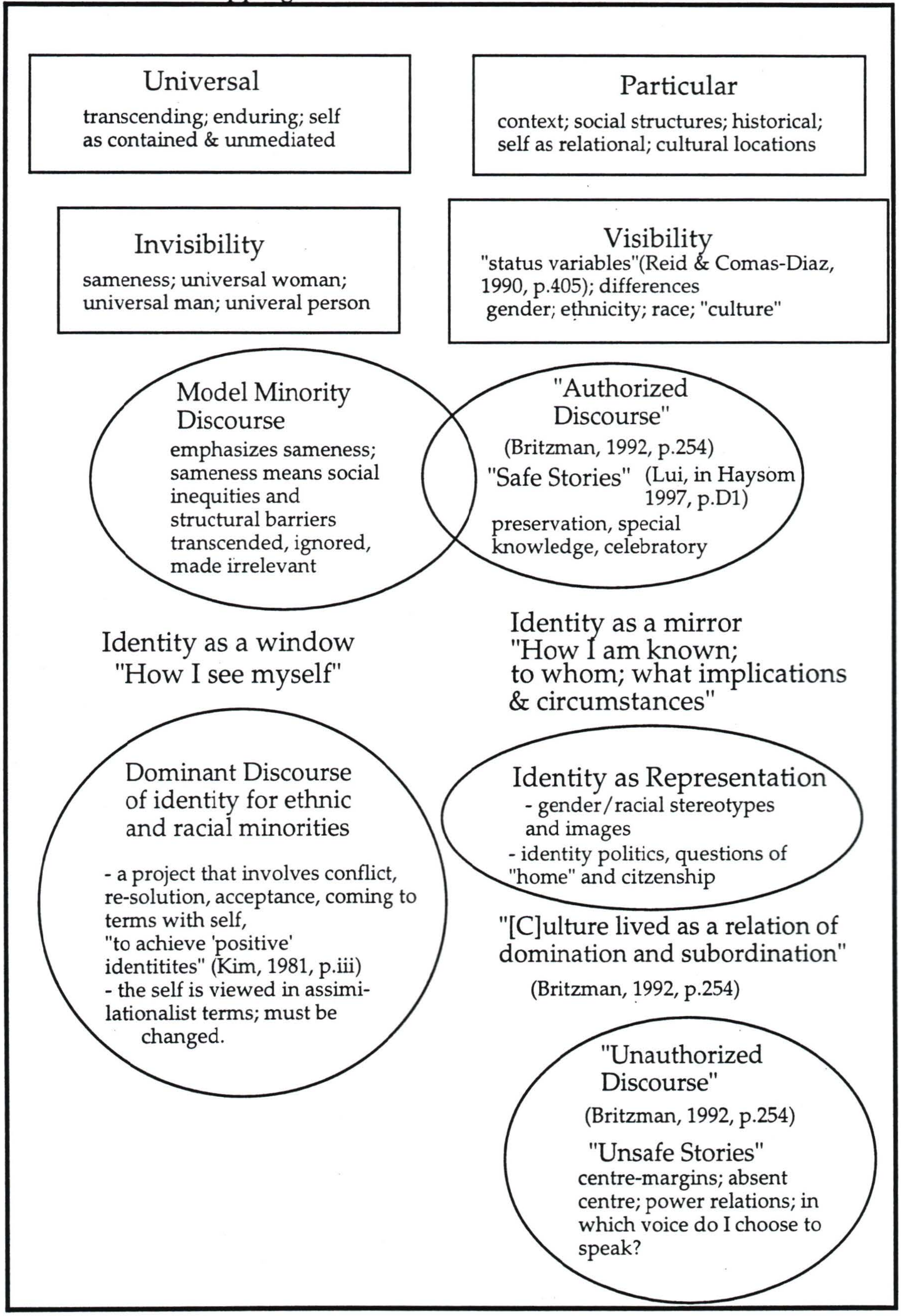
> Our struggles over meaning are also our struggles over different modes of being: different identities. Identity is never a fixed core. ... Our cultural identities are simultaneously our cultures in process, but they acquire specific meanings in a given context. (pp.142-143)

Mapping My Understanding of Identities and Their Discourses

My analysis maps the discourses and locations in which identities and representations coalesced and collided because they carried different investments and meanings about self for Chinese Canadian females. I also wanted to draw out dominant discourses that we tend to hear about in our everyday lives and contrast them with other, lesser heard discourses that are submerged and often unsaid. Foremost in the analysis were issues that had to do with the participants' own invisibility and visibility as minority women, and how they had learned to negotiate the challenges between self-recognition, stereotype and representation. I further distinguish between what constitutes the dominant, "safe stories" (Lui, as quoted in Haysom, 1997, p.D1) and "authorized discourse" (Britzman, 1992, p.254) with "unsafe stories" and marginal, "unauthorized discourse" (Britzman, 1992, p.254) when minority women speak about themselves and to their lives.

Together, these different and competing discourses come together to frame my understanding of identity and representation in this work. As a flexible framework of my own learning about the topic, it is not definitive, but evolving. The process of assembling a discursive "map" helped to articulate my understanding of the topic and my challenges as a researcher in writing about it. My current thinking is based on the map in Figure 1. The rectangular shapes denote theoretical considerations and structures that shaped my understanding of this inquiry. The circled portions represent the discourses within those structures which I use to guide my analysis in this section.

Figure 1
Mapping Borders of Identities and Discourses



Universal

transcending; enduring; self
as contained & unmediated

Particular

context; social structures; historical;
self as relational; cultural locations

Invisibility

sameness; universal woman;
universal man; univeral person

Visibility

"status variables"(Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990, p.405); differences
gender; ethnicity; race; "culture"

Model Minority Discourse

emphasizes sameness; sameness means social inequities and structural barriers transcended, ignored, made irrelevant

"Authorized Discourse"
(Britzman, 1992, p.254)

"Safe Stories" (Lui, in Haysom 1997, p.D1)

preservation, special knowledge, celebratory

Identity as a window
"How I see myself"

Identity as a mirror
"How I am known;
to whom; what implications
& circumstances"

Dominant Discourse of identity for ethnic and racial minorities

- a project that involves conflict, re-solution, acceptance, coming to terms with self, "to achieve 'positive' identitites" (Kim, 1981, p.iii)
- the self is viewed in assimilationalist terms; must be changed.

Identity as Representation

- gender/racial stereotypes and images
- identity politics, questions of "home" and citzenship

"[C]ulture lived as a relation of domination and subordination"
(Britzman, 1992, p.254)

"Unauthorized Discourse"
(Britzman, 1992, p.254)

"Unsafe Stories"

centre-margins; absent centre; power relations; in which voice do I choose to speak?

Most names of the identity themes which fit into this map were derived directly from the participants' speech in the coding process and were preserved according to a phrase or word uttered by a participant (Strauss, 1987). These words were useful in capturing the central meaning and intentions articulated across participants and are denoted by quotation marks. Identity themes which I named myself do not have quotation marks.

Identity as Seeing Sameness

> She finds herself thinking things she thought she would never think. "No wonder the government is so strict about border control..." She wishes she could forget that she is Chinese too. (Lai, 1995, p.120)

In some of the conversations, the participants emphasized to me how they perceived themselves as being "just like anybody else" or "everyone else." They used diverse markers such as ways of thinking, being fluent in English, and an impartiality to race and gender to illustrate how they were the same and similar to their friends, colleagues, and others who were "white" and Euro-Canadian. The idea of "difference" carried with it very little social or personal significance in this discourse. Seeing sameness enabled the participants to cross racial and ethnic borders, such that these borders were rendered non-existent in their life world.

Seeing sameness suggests a metaphor of a window in understanding the project of identity from this perspective. That is, the women's construction of themselves came by viewing the world through the window of their own subjectivity. What they "saw" provided the basis for how they saw themselves. Expressions such as "being reminded" and "forgetting" that they were Chinese made me think that this understanding of self was for the most part, dependent on that view remaining undisrupted and unchallenged.

"That Sesame Street thing"

A feature of this theme aligns with Kondo's (1990) two statements of identity and representation about the Japanese while she was engaged with field work there. "They are just like us," and "What's so Japanese about that?" (p.304). These statements were remapped in general terms as "I am just like 'them'" and "What's so [Chinese or different] about me?" What is often hidden in the these types of assertions are the underlying pressures not only to *be* "like everyone else" (e.g., the majority), but to *see* oneself like "everyone else." An assumption of seeing sameness was expressed in several exchanges across participants and opened onto diverse meanings and investments.

When Carrie discussed a cultural anthropology class where she and her classmates had to define terms such as "minority" and "Canadian," I asked her what she thought about herself as a "Chinese Canadian." In her response, Carrie did not perceive that she was any different from friends of hers who were mainly "white people" because she thought that she shared the same values, experiences, and ways of thinking as they did. As the conversation progressed, I felt this position erode somewhat, especially when I asked her what she meant by the phrase, "how people see me." Carrie addressed this by emphasizing that difference for her was registered in terms of its "visual" impact:

> E: .... If I were to ask you what your definition of yourself as a Chinese Canadian person [is] ... how would you decide what that is?
> C: I'm like everyone else in how I think. When I say everyone else, I guess how I think my friends are, like "white" people, I guess. I'm like them in how I think and how I react to whatever events and things like that. But I still have this difference that I'm Chinese, but it doesn't affect me that much. No matter how much I say it doesn't affect me, I'm still Chinese. ... You know there's still a difference. I'm still different, but I don't think differently. It's more a visual thing. People can see that I'm different but ... the way I react to things are probably a lot the same as how "white" people might react to things, I guess.
> E: Umm hmm. But it's interesting how you said how other people "see me as being different."

> C: I think maybe [that's] just first impression. ... You know, like that Sesame Street thing. "Which one of these people is different?" [chuckle] That I would be different. I would be the different one, but if they had interviews, I wouldn't think that I'd be that different [from them.]

As I talked to Carrie, she could have been virtually *anybody* sitting across from me sharing a conversation about herself. In this sense, being Chinese Canadian would certainly be a "Sesame Street thing" based on "first impression." I felt comforted that both she and I could see ourselves as being the same as everybody else. This seemed to be a very easy-going and perhaps unencumbered way to move through the world. That Carrie and I were both racial minority women, seemed to quickly fade in the research space created between us. The question of identity and its ethnic, racial, and cultural components seemed to evaporate, instantly, causing me to wonder if it was a non-question in the scope of everyday life.

The significance of this experience returned later when I realized that seeing sameness happened when I viewed both Carrie and myself outside of any social and historical context or community. As two individuals sitting across from each other in a room, gender and race could become irrelevant in that they could be "turned off" at will. The same could happen when anyone viewed anyone else, including oneself, outside of a context or set of relationships.

"It's strictly physical. It's not an issue of who I am anymore"

Context contributed to when Marie would "forget" then, all of a sudden, remember that she was Chinese. The statement of remembering "in that consciousness" that Marie refers to, captured my experience with Carrie. This perception occurred when her physical appearance was juxtaposed against her ("white") classmates and then was registered in the recognition of those "differences." While Marie's initial response showed that she did not want to look at the face that she knew others saw, her sense of self as being different was felt strongly in corporeal or physical terms. Sameness was momentarily disrupted and had led to her awareness of difference:

> M: .... What I do feel is sometimes I forget that I'm Chinese and all of a sudden, I realize that I'm Chinese.
> E: When do you realize that?
> M: In that consciousness.
> E: Okay. When does that consciousness sort of ... [happen?]
> M: You know it because it's in terms of the differences. Like I remember once ... it was just weird. I was seven or eight [years old] in elementary school. And it was cold. Coming from recess you go to the washroom before you go to the classroom. And I was looking at all my friends. Then I looked in the mirror and I saw *my* face and I didn't want to look at my face. I thought, "Oh my god, this is the face they're all looking at" because my features were so different from all their features. And I really had a hard time with ... Then I realized, "Oh wait. I'm different."
> E: So it was physical ...
> M: It's like a physical thing. It's strictly physical. It's not an issue of who I am anymore.

"I'm treated just like anybody else"

As I also listened carefully to the assertions of Suzette and Francesca, the reasons behind some of their perceptions of sameness revealed deeply-held investments underlying what it meant to be "like everybody else" in this society. A core stake revolved around being treated and treating others impartially regardless of their race, ethnicity and gender. When Chineseness and gender were seen as deliberately transcended, forgotten, and ignored by themselves and others, these situations were construed as evidence for impartiality. The examples and markers of identity that they used were, however, diverse in nature.

Francesca noticed that she often "forgot" and was rarely "reminded" of her Chineseness because upon reflection, she was treated with no less regard than her colleagues, friends, classmates, and neighbours. Despite acknowledging that she came from "an Asian family" and had a Chinese surname, being "treated just like anybody else" and having diverse friendships where nobody cared about what anybody else looked liked, caused her to rarely consider her Asianness:

> F: ... I work in a place that even though I am a minority, I am one of two Asian women working in a place where it's predominately white. Yeah. I don't feel that. I'm not reminded of that. I'm treated just like anybody else working on that faculty. Even though I have a last name that triggers, that comes from an Asian family, I don't think of myself as Asian. I really don't. ... I'm trying to understand *why* I don't.
> E: That great, because that's what I was wondering. [chuckle]
> F: I have a lot of friends. I have a lot of friends that are not Asian. I have so many friends that are not Asian and quite a few of them are of other ethnic [backgrounds.] And we get along. We speak the same common English language. I guess it's because of our schooling as well. We have a lot of similar likes and dislikes and commonalities. And we don't think of what we look like and where we come from. I'm not reminded of that. And then again, I guess ... once I came out here ... and went to university... I was one of many. We were all treated equally or people tried to treat us equally. And I forgot that I was a woman and that I came from an Asian background.

As we continued talking, I found it compelling that Francesca's view of being "just like anybody else" was strongly anchored in the recognition of her abilities to blend-in linguistically by speaking "perfect English," and the fact that she did not "have an accent" that could suggest otherwise. Both *how* she spoke and *what* she could speak about as an educated minority woman made a difference in telegraphing to others that she was the same as anybody else from "here." Sharing a local accent and complete knowledge of English were important markers of sameness. Language, specifically, not having a "foreign" accent, structured the idea of sameness and seemed to innoculate Francesca against thinking about herself as "a Chinese Canadian kind of person:"

> E: Now, you were saying about how you're the only ...
> F: Asian tenant actually in this building of predominantly ... Well, they're all white or Greek or Italian or whatever nationalities or ethnic backgrounds. And I think it's because I ... [chuckle] speak like anybody else. I don't have an accent. I'm educated, so I can carry on higher level kinds of conversations with whomever. And nobody would think twice to say, "Excuse me, um... whatever." I don't get much reference back to where I came from, how I look like or what racial group I'm from other than sometimes somebody would ask me if they were interested in wanting to know my origins. .. I know all the idioms [chuckle]. I have perfect English in the sense that it's native to this country. So I never

> think of myself as a Chinese Canadian kind of person other than those circumstances when someone asks me, "What generation are you?"

Impartiality structured Suzette's position in relating a story about an election in which a high profile Chinese Canadian female candidate was running for office. If elected, the candidate would be the first Chinese female to gain a political seat at the provincial level. Given these circumstances, Suzette was cast in a similar position by a reporter who was interested in interviewing "possible future politicians" who were Chinese and female. To maintain a stance of impartiality, Suzette argued against an endorsement of any candidate on the basis of race and gender. Central to her position was that, to do otherwise would be considered "reverse discrimination" or evidence of preferential treatment toward someone from a minority group to which she also belonged:

> S: [The reporter said,] "[This candidate] is up for [a political seat.]" "Looks like she's going to get in." "What do you think about it?" And I said, "That's great." And they said, "Would you like to tell our viewers that on election day they should vote for [her] and have a Chinese woman elected ...? And I said, "No, I won't." "Why not?" ... I said, "I would like Chinese people ... I would like *all* people to go out and vote for the best person for the job. If she's a Chinese and if she was a woman, that's a bonus, but I hope that people won't vote for someone because she's a Chinese and she's a woman because [doing] that is reverse discrimination and that is not what we have strived for as Chinese Canadians.
> E: Umm hmm.
> S: I said that it's important that more Chinese Canadians run for government because the more that run, the higher quality they're going to get of Chinese Canadians in parliament. But I would never say to vote for someone because they're Chinese Canadian.

I interpreted Suzette's stance to mean that she was striving for Chinese Canadians and Chinese Canadian women to be viewed as being the same as everyone else. That is, that she would not regard them with any special treatment. Just as Francesca had explained that she was treated as well as anybody else, Suzette's assertion was that she was not going to treat a Chinese female any better than a non-Chinese female. These two stories or positions were flip sides of the same coin. I understand this coin in terms of maintaining a "colourblind," and gender-blind, impartial stance within a diverse, multi-racial society. Carrie, Francesca, and Suzette's conversations suggested that they necessarily operate in a colourblind and gender-blind way when doing otherwise disrupts a vision of sameness and impartiality.

Recent government posters I have seen promote the message, "Don't be *blinded* by colours" (italics added). In other words, if we can look beyond "colour" we can act as if race has no meaning except as a visual palette of pigmentation. As articulated by Carrie and Francesca above, questions of race and ethnicity seemed to be experienced innocuously, maybe even quite comfortably when a minority person herself can be blind to colour. On the one hand, such messages to be impartial to colour are an important reminder that racism is a social reality. On the other hand, the one-dimensionality of the message can inadertently trivialize, negate, and make irrelevant, racialized and gendered realities that minority women (and men) can experience.

The caution in understanding sameness as a discourse of identity is that, taken as a dominant discourse, it can inadvertently render a condition of Asian and Chinese Canadian women's invisibility. I experienced this while listening to Carrie with the Sesame Street idea as I switched from one mode of seeing the two of us as decontextualized individuals, to another mode as gendered and racialized individuals in our society. I had never considered this as a way of being and seeing that I had learned and taken for granted. Listening to Marie's description of re-cognition suddenly happening in what was likely a "white" context that she did not have to point out, explained the physical side of understanding this double consciousness.

Seeing sameness and not seeing difference was important for some of the participants. Sameness and impartiality are powerful visions and discourses in a pluralistic, "multicultural" society such as ours where pluralism and "equity" are rarely seen to pose tensions, incongruencies or imbalance. It is also difficult to get away from the model minority discourse that encompasses many (educated, middle-class) Chinese and Asian Canadians because it is appealing that being "just like anybody else" is easily equated with unconditional racial acceptance and being treated impartially. As shown in Francesca's excerpt, however, speaking without an accent and having the ability to engage in conversations which showed her education level were significant markers in that project of sameness. What if Francesca spoke with a strong "foreign" (e.g., Chinese) accent or did not speak "perfect" English? These are behaviours that seem to make a difference in being treated "just like anybody else." In Suzette's case, I wondered whether or not a white male endorsing another white male candidate would have had to consider all the ramifications she did. Being impartial was one way that she had learned to address the possibility of "reverse discrimination."

Seeing themselves as being the same as "everyone else" made me think that many of the participants did negotiate successfully between different contexts that they might not have recognized in themselves. Because it was, for the most part, something they seemed to do with considerable ease, I wondered if they were aware that they were silently crossing various racial, cultural, and gender borders in their daily lives.

Identity as Re-solution

Another discourse in which participants engaged to speak about themselves as minority women was structured by the perspective that the project of identity for ethnic and racial minority individuals in this society is the eventual re-solution of psychological conflict and the achievement of ethnic and racial self-acceptance. This is the dominant discourse that resides in most positivist psychological theories of ethnic and racial identity models (see for example, Cross, 1978; Kim 1981; Parham, 1989; Phinney, 1989; Sue & Sue, 1990).

While I do not discount that identity issues do pose real and gut-wrenching challenges to minority individuals' mental and emotional well-being, I am questioning the assumptions upon which this pervasive construction of identity rests and why it is often portrayed as the only angle.

In this discourse, identity is framed and re-framed as a one-shot, personal project of conflict and incongruence with the goal of moving toward a re-solution. In other words, an ethnic and racial identity in North America is constructed chiefly as a state of pathology and crisis. The racialized man or woman needs to over-come and come to terms with beliefs and attitudes about a minority "self" in the dominant culture. The self must essentially be fixed, modified or become "balanced" and "culturally blended" to survive. The recent interest in popular minority fiction has also perpetuated this one dimensional discourse by the liberatory language used to define *the* "Asian North American identity experience:"

> Many reviewers are comparing [Liu's book, Cloud Mountain] with Amy Tan's Joy Luck Club and David Guterson's Snow Fallowing on Cedars as a further *unlocking* of Asian identity for North Americans. ...
> The Asian novel - usually features *conflict* between *traditional, old-world* values and *new world liberation* - is increasingly irresistible for North American readers and writers. ...
> Eating Chinese Food Naked, a new novel by Mei Ng, deals with a young Chinese-American woman trying to *break free* from her *stifling* traditional upbringing and questioning *old-world* values. (italics added, Haysom, 1997, pp.D1 & D9).

In my interviews, a couple of the participants engaged in this discourse of identity conflict and re-solution in revealing and sometimes painful ways. Usually these stories were marked by poignancy and courage. Some participants remained in this identity discourse for longer periods of time and talked about how they had coped and found strength, while others opened up new questions for themselves.

"Being self-conscious that they were not 'white'"

Marie, for example, started to probe deeply about how being conscious of her own Chineseness did not have to be linked to feelings of wanting to "lose" or re-solve that part of herself. Elsewhere in the conversation, she had told me about an exchange she had had with her Chinese Canadian sister-in-law about racialized minority people who were conscious of their race and the fact that they were not "white." I could see how Marie was trying to describe the feeling of not being "white" and being self-conscious about it. We wavered together between expressing it as "that disenfranchised experience" and "a consciousness about difference:"

> M: ... Just off the cuff... My little brother and I were just kind of commenting on maybe some people being self-conscious that they were ... not "white." And my [sister in-law] kind of heard a bit of that conversation. She said, "That's silly." And I thought, ... "She said it like she never experienced that [before.] And yet, she's not "white" either.
> E: ... So I guess what it is, is a kind of consciousness about difference?
> M: Maybe it's just being conscious of difference. And let's talk about that disenfranchised experience ... I just always assumed it was a matter ... that people looked at me *because* of these things and not realizing that maybe ... those differences were my self-perception. ... Yeah, you're right. I think you're right there.
> E: Oh, I don't know if I'm "right." ... I mean, these are, to me at least, very complex questions.
> M: They are.

For Marie, "being Chinese" was an integrated part of self that she realized she need not "apologize" for even though she was conscious of it. Her inventive use of "apologizing for [an] accent" as a metaphor for how some minority people perceive their race was powerful:

> M: ... And I don't know if it's being a child, but I remember when I didn't think about being Chinese, I didn't worry about how I was perceived. I was just me, you know. And now ... I'm outspoken. I can talk to people. I can do all these things; yet maybe I would have done these things anyways and still not worry about how I was perceived. But I am. I do. I am very conscious of how people look at me.
> E: Umm hmm.

> M: Or how I might come across to people and I don't know how much of that ... is [chuckle] being a child, into being [a] self-conscious adult or being ... you know, Chinese.
> E: You're almost saying ....
> M: I'll tell you something. It's kind of like [when] you meet people with an accent. Have you ever met someone with an accent who's always apologizing for their accent? And you go, "Why are you...?" I have. And it's like you don't need to apologize. You speak so well. I understand you. And yet, some people are so self-conscious of their accents cause they want to lose that part of them[selves].

When I asked Suzette how her identity as a Chinese Canadian female had changed in the last few years, she described how, as a younger woman, she had associated her Chineseness with "being chosen second." Compared to her peers, being both female and Chinese had meant having "less options" when it came to romantic relationships and jobs. In this exchange, Suzette shows an awareness that the intersection of gender and race had significance for her in the social world:

> S: Well, it's undergone a lot of change because ... in high school, I would have hated the acknowledgement that I was Chinese because I rebelled against it so much because I thought that it closed doors to things I wanted. Being Chinese in the school system to me felt like I was a visible minority in the negative sense. Where dating was concerned, I had less options because I was Chinese.
> E: When you said ... that it closed doors to opportunities ...
> S: To opportunities. I felt it did in high school. I felt that if it had to be to choose somebody for a job or a date or a whatever, I would be chosen second because of being a visible minority.
> E: So you're almost saying it was like a liability?
> S: Yes. It's a liability. Yeah. It was a liability.

In an exchange in which Marie started telling me about being the only racial minority person in her group of friends, she began to discuss how fitting in had been a learned behaviour that she had had to acquire over the years. As the conversation unfolded, it became clear to me that she had thought about and had strategically sought specific skills that had enabled her to move comfortably between racial and "cultural" borders in order to "integrate herself":

M: ... I think that if I was in a group of people I could make myself fit in or feel ... or look like I feel very comfortable or maybe even feel comfortable. But at the same time I feel ... I'm quite sure that this is not something that comes natural to me. This is all learned behaviour.
E: Umm hmm.
M: Like I mean, we just went out for a beer with supper. That is something that would have not been natural to me if I had not been exposed to that and learned how to accept beer as a normal part of life. Like my dad would have beers. But if I said I wanted one, he always says, "Why do you want one?" But in the breath before he'd say, "Oh you can have it at our house." [laugh] He does not expect us to take him up on it. Do you know what I mean?
E: ... This is what I think you said. That there are things that you do now that you had to somehow acquire or ... that learning ...
M: I think that there are a lot of behaviours and the way I socially integrate myself ... I can almost look at very objectively because they are acquired skills. And when I see people that aren't as outgoing or shy or don't have a good self worth ... It's like all those kinds of things you have to work at. I think maybe some people just do it and don't think about it or don't talk about it. And some people don't get it. They always feel bad about themselves. [chuckle] I'm not better but ... maybe I am [chuckle] because I understand that part. But also what I'm doing is putting my experiences on those people.
E: So you are saying those were skills that you consciously decided you wanted to acquire.
M: That I needed to acquire.
E: Yeah. Okay. Where did that need arise from?
M: Well, when I went to university. And I made a point too, to leave home and go to university.

These exchanges with Marie were both revealing and eye-opening for me. I recalled how she described herself as "speaking close to my heart" and I was appreciative that she seemed to have done just that in our conversation. Speaking close to the source had touched so many things that I too, had felt in my life and had never voiced to anyone else for fear of what that might indicate about me. For what Chinese or Asian Canadian who was raised here wants to admit that she has had to *purposely acquire* behaviours in order to be and look comfortable enough to "fit in" socially? Many of "us" could not learn these skills from our parents who were never raised here. I too, remember learning the fine points of going to a pub and ordering beer in my twenties without wanting to look as if I felt awkward or out of place even when I did. I also have been in many social situations where I was the only minority person and wondered if my actions or behaviours betrayed my self-consciousness. In many ways, I have scrutinized myself and studied others in an attempt to learn how to belong here.

"Caught between the two worlds of being Chinese and being Canadian"

A strong feature associated with this identity theme of conflict and resolution was a construction of self that was divided into two worlds and two identities. Francesca and Suzette both saw themselves in dichotomous terms when talking about some of the challenges they had faced or continue to face as minority women.

Francesca poignantly described her upbringing and perception of herself as a child as being "caught between the two worlds of being Chinese and being Canadian." Her parents' lower socio-economic status, limited English, and "fear" that their Canadian-born children "would become truly more Canadian" all culminated into psychological, familial and social cleavages. These cleavages inscribed the lines between two worlds and two identities and resulted in stress for her as a young girl. In the following passage, Francesca reflected on her upbringing. She saw her family consisting of one world and "white society" as "the outside world:"

> F: ... [W]e hated being in this family sometimes because it was so strict and didn't leave us much leeway for experiences in the outside world. And I think my parents did this because they didn't know any better. And they were fearful. They didn't have much trust with the "white" society, let's say.
> E: What do you think was their greatest fear?
> F: That something bad would happen to us or that we would become truly more Canadian than they would have liked us to be.

Later, as she was preparing dinner, Francesca had used the word, "betrayal" to describe her assessment of the immigrant parent-child relationship. At first, I was not sure whose actions and expectations (parent or child) she was referring to. I realized afterwards that the betrayal was a kind of cultural and familial one in that it might have meant becoming "truly more Canadian" than what was anticipated by her parents.

Throughout our conversation, Francesca spoke at length and with crushing detail about the challenges of her family life and what it was like to be "caught between the two worlds of being Chinese and being Canadian:

> E: I'm wondering if you could talk more about being caught between two worlds. What's that like?
> F: It was not a good feeling. [chuckle]
> E: How do you know that you are [caught]?
> F: Well, I don't feel caught so much now cause I'm an adult and I'm much older. But I remember as a child, not understanding the Canadian ways because I wasn't allowed to have that experience. I didn't understand how Canadian kids were because I wasn't allowed to have the experiences that other Canadian kids had and continued to have.
> E: So by "Canadian," specifically, who do you mean? What do you mean?
> F: .... Doing things that normal kids do. ...
> E: Were these Canadian people like white kids?
> F: I would say other ethnics as well.
> E: How long did you go through this feeling of being caught in between [two worlds?]
> F: I think probably till about grade eleven, grade twelve. Actually it was a long time. Even then I wasn't allowed to do much. Even as I was getting older and becoming a later, older teen-ager, I still had responsibilities at home. ... Those were the expectations my parents set and I was expected to live up to them. ... [L]ater I realized what I was missing and I guess I thought that was important that I had those experiences so I started to think, "Wow, not everybody lives the way Francesca does." "And they don't have to live the way Francesca does because there are several different ways to live, you know." "And I started to think, "You know, there is an outside world."

Francesca was conscious that she "acted differently" from her peers on account of not knowing how "to be natural in English." As a result, she saw herself as having developed "two personalities:"

> F: ... I always remember being different. I looked different in some respects. And I acted differently because I didn't know how to act and be natural in English. ... One of my goals was to learn how to be natural and to speak naturally and to just be kind of carefree in English. And that was certainly a total opposite to some degree to the kind of person I was at home. Yeah. I had a lot of responsibility as a child which you could say is either good or bad.
> .....

> F: [My upbringing] was very strict [chuckle] and ... not very enlightening for a person. I found it very difficult. I felt I had two personalities. One, "the home Francesca" trying to obey my parents so my home life would be tolerable ... and then I was somebody else, somebody trying to emerge.
>
> .....
>
> F: .... I never was involved with any of the school clubs, any of the school activities. ... I became a cheerleader, unbeknownst to my parents [chuckle]. I did this on the sly. [laugh] ... I got away with it, but certainly in the earlier high school years I was not involved in anything. I felt like an outsider. ... So, again, going back to the dual personality .... it was hard for me to be the kind of person my parents wanted me [to be] and not ... sometimes feel that I had a split personality or a bit of a schizophrenic [chuckle] ... because I would change as soon as I walked into the school and try to be like my other friends or people who I aspired to be. I would watch all the other girls that were the popular ones or seemed to have a lot of friends and I would try and sort of copy what they were doing.

As a girl, Francesca had begun to bridge the gap between the two worlds by learning to develop a sense of humour. She saw this as one way she could, as she put it, "be more Canadian." Calling herself a "late bloomer," learning how to socialize with people was a slow process that continued into Francesca's adulthood:

> E: What things did you have to change about yourself - from the Francesca who left your parents house to the Francesca who entered the school door?
>
> F: I needed to know how to have a sense of humour and how to joke. I never knew how to do that because I grew up in ... I would say a ... solemn ... and because of the situation with my brother there weren't a lot of happy times in our family. So I would say that I was quite a solemn person and I didn't know how to feel light about anything. .. And that was very, very difficult for me, extremely difficult.
>
> E: It sounds like at that young age, you were really conscious that you wanted to be that other person too.
>
> F: I think that ...
>
> E: Would you say that?
>
> F: Perhaps. ... I saw how other kids behaved and they were happy. ... I thought, well, to be happy, you have to be more Canadian and learn how to talk to people and have fun. ... It took me many years to learn to have a sense of humour and to just laugh at people's jokes and to make jokes myself.

An example of Franceca's cognitively ordered "two worlds" surfaced in several parts of our conversation in which there were discursive shifts in how she constructed Canadian society. Her descriptions were dependent on how she conceived the nature of both her position and her parent's position in this society. When the context was acceptance, racial difference in "red-neck communities,"and seeing herself as no different from the dominant culture, the social world was constructed as a "mosaic society" and a "multiethnic society." When the context shifted to her parents not letting go of their beliefs and herself not being comfortable in a "Chinese environment, "Canadian society was rendered as "western" and "the western world." While the dichotomous constructions are not opposing nor mutually exclusive, they illustrate shifts in how she saw herself in diverse contexts which carried different investments and loyalties.

"Good Girl" and "Bad Girl"

> "I'm not a bad girl," I would scream. "I'm not a bad girl. I'm not a bad girl." I might as well have said, "I'm not a girl." (Hong Kingston, 1977, p.48)

The conditions which established a dichotomous identity for Suzette were quite different from Francesca's. Suzette's perceptions were mainly forged in her community work with local Chinese organizations. Suzette described herself in a split identity persona of a "good girl" and "bad girl" or "rebel." Her "bad girl" persona was established in the Chinese community groups in which she was involved. Lifestyle choices and personality characteristics branded her a "rebel" among her Chinese women's group. This exerpt displays her knowledge of a multilayered self that moves between two contexts. The rules and expectations of what is acceptable and not acceptable for a Chinese female were seen differently between her colleagues at work and members of her community group:

S: ... Okay, in my workplace I'm considered so ... goody-goody, right? In my work place, I drink very little. I don't smoke. I very rarely swear unless I'm really pissed off.
E: Well, you can't [swear] in front of your customers.
S: Yeah. I go home after work. I do community work and stuff like that. To them [at work], I'm up for Mother Theresa's job after ... [laugh] she's gone. At work I'm so goody-goody. It's funny. In my [Chinese women's group] I tend to be the bad girl. Because I maybe have a drink occasionally when they don't drink at all is that I'm a bad girl. ... It seems that I'm the rebel because I ... married [a] non-Chinese ... We very rarely discuss sex at [the Chinese women's group] but when it's come up [in conversations] it's been a very closed subject you know. [With] some of my non-Chinese girl friends, we talk about it quite openly but it's not talked about. ... And the [Chinese] one's I've talked about it with, for some particular reasons, it's always been, "Oh, well. No. I've had my children." That's it.
E: Umm hmm.
S: I'm ... in shock. What? Yeah. So I'm considered a rebel in the group. It's so funny.
E: So you're saying in a way that the context or ... whatever group that you're in somehow ... I don't want to say the "standards" or the "rules"...
S: ... are different or ...
E: Yeah. ... How is it for you when you move back and forth between those two contexts?
S: I'm just humoured by it. Like I have found that with the Mother Theresa image I have at work, I just say, "Oh, maybe I'll get another ... halo on my head today." And on the other side, I'm just ... sometimes totally in awe of their [the Chinese women's] lives and can't imagine being such a dutiful wife. That whole term, "dutiful wife" is not something I [relate to.]

I wondered which female identity (the "good girl", "dutiful wife" or "bad girl", "rebel") if either, Suzette preferred. Both were tying her down to two different sets of culturally incongruent representations that she clearly wanted to resist, but nonetheless, seemed to put up with. Finding the humour in these constrained images of herself was one way Suzette had learned to live with them.

While Francesca and Suzette's experiences are diverse, it was striking that they both made meaning of those experiences by constructing two worlds and two identities. This way of seeing may have helped them to hold the differently lived tensions and contradictions they felt. While Suzette responded to my curiosity about her dichotomous identity with a sense of humour, Francesca's situation had been more long-term and complex. Even as an adult, Francesca continues to direct emotional energy toward re-building her relationship with her parents. Being "caught between two worlds" as a child and adolescent was embedded within her emotional relationship with her immigrant parents who themselves lived on the margins, linguistically, economically, and racially. Francesca knew that if she did not do something to reconcile the situation, she was going to experience more emotional strain. As a result, she moved from her parents house and came to the West Coast:

> E: Did you feel like you were going to go under?
> F: [laugh] Well, a couple of times I did. ... You know, there were times when I was quite melancholy and depressed. Yeah. I would say that. I don't feel depression now. When I was living at home I certainly felt depressed. Yeah.
> E: So that was before you left at nineteen?
> F: I knew I had to make the move or else I'd be permanently ... suffering from long-term depression or some kind of depression. Yeah. So I did this to save myself, in a sense.

The second time Francesca and I met, I pointed out to her that she used the verb "rebel" to describe her relationship with her parents and asked how she made sense of it now as an adult. Rebellion was associated with the complex relationship between her Chineseness and her parents:

> E: How do you look back on that rebelling?
> F: Off the top of my head, I look back on it as something that I had to live through, something that was inevitable because of the ... Well, I know that being a teacher now, I think most children who don't have a close relationship with their parents rebel somehow, some way, shape, or form. And that was exactly what happened to me with my parents. ...
> Maybe also rebellion ... I think ... We were so different. What my parents experienced in their lifetime and what *I* was experiencing as a Canadian-born person of immigrant parents. And it was so tough to understand one another and because I didn't have excellent or even passable Chinese oral skills, it was very hard for me to explain myself and my needs and concerns, just troubles to my parents as I was growing up. So I acted out. Yeah. My unhappiness and discontentment for what was happening in our family at the time resulted in me acting out and turning away from the Asian culture and basically my parent's wishes and their .. efforts to

> bring me up as a fine person. I think I couldn't handle it. I just didn't want to accept anything they were trying to offer even though they did it in the way that they knew. I think they had good intentions.

Re-reading Francesca's reflections about her up-bringing and parents was often heart-breaking because in my mind, her experience could not be boiled down to a simple, one-dimensional matter of "culture conflict." The dominant discourse of culture conflict and re-solution side-steps the entire question of socioeconomic status. This was part of Francesca's struggle with what Chineseness meant in the border zones between herself and her family and between her family and a "white [English-speaking] society."

In Francesca's case, "turning away from the Asian culture" and rebellion had been an agentic way for her to collapse the borders between the "two worlds of being Chinese and being Canadian" and the pain that "being caught" had caused her. Despite the aftermath, Francesca's actions, at the time had helped to preserve her sense of self when the tangled pressures of familial economic, linguistic, and racial marginalization collided against the person who she wanted to become.

Safe Stories and Authorized Discourse

In the same way that Heilbrun (1988) argues that women's lives in the Western world have been scripted according to the template of a patriarchal society, I began to notice that there are two versions of stories that women of Chinese descent can speak about to be visible. One is by telling "safe stories" (Lui as cited in Haysom, 1997, p.D1) about themselves that focus almost exclusively on "cultural heritage", values, and preservation. The other discourse of visibility is activated through the telling of "unsafe stories" that cast a critical gaze at the power structures in which minority women live and move. Safe stories position the "spotlight" on the teller, while unsafe stories turn on the "stage lights" to reveal the background or context which becomes the site of critique and questioning.

The idea that some stories about Asian North American identity are "safe stories" developed from reading a newspaper article about the evolution of Asian North American fiction. The author Amy Lui points out that Asian North American writers are now delving into themes that boldy deal with issues that are controversial and contentious for the "general" population:

> I think North American Asian writers were once reluctant to develop difficult themes of racism because of a sense of shame. There was always a sense of apology for who and what you were. Pearl Buck wrote safe stories about Asia, and people enjoyed them without wanting to or having to live next door to an Asian. That's changed.
> (As cited in Haysom, 1997, p.D1)

Lui's use of the words "safe stories" flew out and right into me. She was suggesting that these writers did not want to restrict themselves to writing versions of their lives from the perspective of an audience that constructs Asians as the "model minority" and "wonderful" Other. Kondo (1990, 1996) is emphatic about not falling into a discourse of the "nostalgic" in writing about Japanese and Asian American gender identity and representation. Safe stories do not easily violate the perception that when a minority woman talks about or is asked to talk about "her culture" or herself, she can be reproducing an image of herself within the realm of the (multicultural) celebratory or festive, and therefore, reinscribe herself as the nostalgically soft and pleasing female.

I maintain that "safe stories" cannot be the only discourse in which Asian North American women should be visible to themselves and others because of its representational concerns. Nonetheless, I believe that it may create one vital space in which women can consider and possibly re-imagine diasporic identities (Fischer, 1986) if it is not taken as the dominant discourse of visibility.

"A strong cup of tea"

One way that the participants made themselves "visible" as minority women was by speaking about themselves as preservers of "Chinese culture" and "tradition." The women's identities as both preservers and enactors of "Chinese culture" and "tradition" were embedded within the contexts of their family. What strongly structured this identity were common assumptions that blurred culture with tradition.

On the subject of role models for young Chinese Canadian women, Emily emphasized the role of language as an indicator of whether or not a person "maintained some of her culture" by an ability to "still speak" the language. Being a preserver of culture relied on the maintenance of relationships with her family:

> Emily: ... I guess there are going to be people that have denied ... a lot of their cultural upbringing for whatever reason. ... I think if the role models maintained some of their Chinese culture ... kids would proably open up to them more.
> E: What sort of ways does the person "maintain" [culture]?
> Emily: [laugh] Their entire culture?
> E: Part of their culture.
> Emily: They can still speak their language.
> E: ... [H]ow do *you* maintain your culture?
> Emily: You can still speak the language. Yeah. I think it's basically [that] you can still speak the language. You still have a good relationship with your family, with your parents or your sibling. You still celebrate Chinese New Year. ... You still have things that you still practice. The language thing is really strong, I think.

Suzette and I had a conversation about her concern that, as a third-generation Chinese, "tradition" was "fading away." She thought that one reason she and other second and third generation women joined their women's group was to "find some of that tradition." Suzette used the metaphor of "a strong cup of tea" to articulate her thoughts about "Chinese tradition" becoming "a weaker cup of tea" with each successive generation in Canada:

> S: In [one women's group I'm involved in] I would say fifty percent make up what I would consider a more traditional role model of a Chinese

> woman. And then the other fifty percent - some of those that do join are like myself who are second or third generation and who are looking for ... Maybe we actually join it to find some of that tradition.
> E: But is it a tradition that would be the same, like just carrying on? Or is it a different type of tradtion that you're trying to create out of the fact that you are third generation?
> S: I don't think that tradition ever stays the same. I think it's always constantly changing. I think that was my realization this morning. That was that, it's slipping away, you know.
> E: But out of that slipping away, something might take it's place that would be a different type of tradition.
> S: I see a cup of tea - a strong cup of tea. And that's what tradition in my family is now. I see the next generation being a weaker cup of tea. Does that make sense?
> E: Yeah. Okay.
> S: And I think [in] my parent's and their parent's days was even stronger. As each generation goes, you hold onto some of the real important ones or what you see as important and some of the smaller, less important ones start to disappear, fade away.

In Emily and especially Suzette's excerpts, their identities as cultural preservers were held by an assumption that "culture" was equivalent to "tradition" and as such, required maintenance and work. A corollary to this position was that both were therefore, construed as something which held the risk of being lost, or fading away.

The conversation with Suzette touched me deeply. I asked myself, "What is 'tradition'"? As Suzette had mentioned, half of the members in her women's group were what she called, "a more *traditional* role model of a Chinese woman" and the others who were second and third generation Chinese women like herself, wanted to "find some of that *tradition*." Do disasporic people embody tradition by just *being in the world* or do they *take up a way of being* that they may have never lived before and thereby, *recover* tradition? In listening to Suzette, the images of "slipping away", "hold[ing] onto [something]" and "a weaker cup of tea" evoked feelings of futility and even sadness. Later, as I thought about our exchange, I wondered if Suzette had thought about changing or refashioning the shape, size, or colour of the "cup" which held the tea. By doing so, might she be constantly creating a way of being Chinese that was unique and rich to *this* place and time? (Anzaldua, 1987; Fischer, 1986; Kondo, 1996).

As women whose parents brought over a cultural seed to Canada, the loss of a parent can also represent the loss of a primordial connection to the "Chinese culture." This was Marie's initial stance when she reflected on how her mother's passing was related to "losing [her] language." As she had always conversed with her father in English and her mother in Hubei, a dialect of Chinese, her mother was her main connection to Chinese. Although her mother had passed away when Marie was a young woman, I thought it was striking that the memory of her mother or a matrilineal connection was significant when she talked about culture. "We don't maintain our Chinese culture through our dad, maybe our mom." While telling me how her identity as a woman had changed, Marie's cast herself more as an agent of culture rather than as a preserver:

> M: ... I can appreciate the quirkiness of me and my imperfections and certainly my Chinesesness has a lot to do with that. That's something I *know* I want to explore some more. In fact, I'm not really even worried about it. Cause I was worried about how I'd be losing my language and .. I know it's something I can do later in my life. I was actually quite sad when my mom died cause I was thinking, "Oh my god. My kids are never going to learn Chinese now. She's not going to be there to teach them. You know, that's the first thing that occurred to me. It was really terrible. But ... I can learn and I mean, ... [my partner's] not Chinese, but he'd be happy to learn Chinese with me and I'd be happy to learn German with.

In Suzette and Marie's excerpts, I noticed how women (e.g., mothers and daughters) were highly involved in the work of language and cultural preservation in the family and in the ethnic community (Lee, 1996). Francesca had mentioned that her grandmother's role in the family had been to instill "Chinese values" among her and her siblings as she looked after them. Moreover, it was Francesca's mother, rather than her father, who tried unsuccessfully to introduce her to perspective Chinese male suitors. In my case, my mother had worked at teaching both my brother and I Chinese writing and reading on the kitchen table during summer holidays until she and other mothers in the area established a language school in a predominately "white" part of town. When I rethink the circumstances of that community school and the neighourhood *where* it was established, an exchange with Marie revealed a different meaning to preserving culture that had been submerged in any of the other conversations I had with participants on the topic.

Marie's identity as a cultural preserver was articulated on the basis of racial and cultural difference. By appearance, she was Asian and as she illustrated to me in our exchange, this meant that a Chinese person was expected to be able to speak Chinese. Further, Marie was aware that she was both "a non-European person " living "in a culture that's dominantly European based." Cultural preservation was both considered a "responsibility" to her family to know about herself as well as a way to consolidate her status in a "western" society:

> M: It's one thing about not being European and being in a culture that's dominantly European based because ..... a western [culture], right? You look at me and ... You're Chinese. Did people assume you could speak Chinese?
> E: Yeah.
> M: Because you're Chinese. It's like that. And it's like no matter what, you look Chinese, right? And I feel like I have a responsibilitity to ... I guess my children but also to my parents ... to know where I came from. I know a lot about western art and Canadian history. And yet these things are valid for the politics of *our* day. The vote *I* make. The next election. The art that we value with a lot of money. But it's like, where do *I* come from? There's something very rich that is ... why I'm here. And part of it has to do with ... being born in India, but a lot of it has to do with further back from there, right?

The case of Francesca emphasizes the pressures under which she was expected by her parents to preserve culture by "retain[ing] the old Chinese ways." In listening to Francesca, she was suggesting that it was not "Chinese culture" per se, that imposed boundaries on her as a female member of her family, but her parents' belief that culture *as* tradition was immutable. As a result, Francesca felt stifled because she could not "deviate" from those "old Chinese ways" which were not always easy to define except in terms of what her parents preferred:

> F: ... I think my parents operated on what they thought was best for their family and what they thought their goals were. They wanted all of us in some way to be successful ... in Canadian society, meaning that we have the good education and we are able to support ourselves, yet retain what they, in their terms, would call the "old Chinese ways," to some degree. And I believe that they are somewhat disappointed in that. Most of their children [laugh] have not really done that. They haven't really retained the Chinese values or the Chinese customs to the degree that would please my parents. And I think a reason for that is that they were so strict in what they expected from their children and they didn't give us very many allowances to deviate from their high expectations. So in retaliation [chuckle] I guess we all, or especially myself, being the second oldest and quite strong-willed ... I believe the move to the West Coast was caused by the fact I wasn't given much freedom. And I didn't really have much say in revealing or expressing how *I* felt.
>
> ....
>
> F: ... But I think what would make them *really* proud is if we were a little bit more.... traditional, I guess. In meaning that we would ... work more as a family together instead of for our own individual gain. And for pursuing our own individual goals.
> E: What would your family be working together for or [working] on? What would that look like?
> F: Oh, just learning Chinese and ... following some of the Chinese ways which I don't ever know [laugh] because I kind of blocked them out of my head. [laugh]

In the exchanges, the participants had different beliefs and ways in which they sought to preserve "culture." This appeared to be tied to how they understood "culture" and "tradition" as well as how these were communicated to them by their parents. Either it was something one "had" because of Chinese origins and could lose, or it was a way of being that could be reproduced under different circumstances and locations. The theme of cultural preserver had impacts on how the women viewed themselves within their families and Canadian society.

"Being a visible minority, I have a cultural experience"

A second way that some of the participants talked about themselves within a discourse of safe stories was by describing themselves in the role of a cultural "insider" who could inform Euro-Canadian and non-Asian "outsiders" what it was like to be an Asian immigrant, an English as a Second Language student, or visible minority. Kondo (1990) captures the core assumption of this position gleaned from her field work in Japan: "How can someone who is racially Japanese lack cultural competence?" (p.11) This question can be recast as, "How can someone who is racially Chinese lack cultural experience?" Within the frame of safe stories, participants' identities were constructed as human resource assets and epistemic insiders especially in the teaching profession. In the context of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to immigrant students, many of whom were from Asia, some of the participants perceived that their Asian and Chinese background made a difference in how colleagues, students, and students' parents perceived them in their work.

Francesca felt that having a "cross-cultural background" and "being Chinese" was "an advantage" in understanding her students who, like herself, also came from an "immigrant" background. She saw herself connected to students on this basis:

> F: ... I've come ... to a better understanding of what being Chinese can bring to my life and I understand my students much better. That's why I chose to go into ESL. Having a cross-cultural background is an advantage. And I understand that now. And it helps me do my job a lot better. And I think that's what propelled me into leaving [the area I was teaching] ... before and I felt there was a need. A need for someone like me who came from a background that I came from to try to help these kids, these immigrant kids.

When Francesca spoke about her teaching work in a second interview, she had shifted her position and described herself as "Asian woman" in relation to staff, students, and their parents. I think this occurred because her visibility at school and people's view of *her* fit both the *kind* of work she did and perceptions of herself within that work.

> F: ... I think I can better understand, some of the problems that are inherent in the experience that they're living and I can really empathize with the struggles that they are having and I know their parents are happy to see me because they see that I'm Asian and they certainly seem relaxed with me anyway even though I don't speak the language - and I apologize for that - they're happy to see me. That I'm the only Asian woman, well, the only Asian teacher in my department. All the rest of them are Caucasians. We have very few Asian women on staff. I think [the parents] feel comforted that somebody of their culture or of their race is represented.

Francesca's relationships with her students and the staff at her school were indicators to her that she was part of "another culture" and simultaneously could "break down barriers" because of her Chineseness. She "looked like her students," and could light-heartedly "fool" them into believing that she could understand what they were saying in Chinese. Moreover, being Chinese also meant that she would have insight into the possible challenges that her students could face in regards to having immigrant parents. In listening to the easy-spirited and uplifting way Francesca spoke about how she saw herself at work, teaching seemed to give her the opportunity to be "visible" as a minority woman to herself and others in ways which were both generative and fulfilling:

> E: You were saying, "I have another culture." ... How do you identify that you have that other culture?
> F: I think it's because my kids [students] accept me readily. I look like them. They say, "Do you speak Chinese?" I always fool them. "Oh yes, I understand everything you're saying, right?." And they feel at ease with me, even the parents.
> .....
> F: But I think it helps, especially in my position that I am Asian. Yeah. They seem to think that they can relax more and maybe just sort of be themselves and they think I must understand them and their kids better because I've come from an Asian culture. I don't know why. Oh! I get that. "You're Miss (Thom)! I'm so glad!" Well, what did you expect?
> E: But you don't even ask them.
> F: No, I don't bother asking them.
> E: What are they glad about? [chuckle]

> F: And they're always smiling, shaking my hand and I'm going, "Oh." And even the staff, I don't know why, they're happy that I'm doing ESL. I guess they like my work. I don't know what it is. ... I haven't really asked them. I'm too scared to or I haven't thought of asking them but I know definitely the kids feel more at ease when they find out who I am. "Oh I'm going to go meet the ESL teacher now." They think I'm a student [laugh] first of all. [laugh]
> E: [laugh] Is it cause of height?
> F: Yeah. "Which one is she?" When we all sit down and I sit beside them, we're all head bent. We all look the same. "Oh, where's Miss (Thom)?" "Yes?!!" And they think, "Is that her?" I'm not an old... older, really old person and I have sort of youngish kind of ways - a young spirit in a sense. They really feel pretty comfortable other than not having the language. So I kind of try to put them at ease and I think that helps. And I know because I come from the Chinese background or have a different culture I understand what they are facing or what will probably face [with their parents].

As a teacher, Emily also thought she could offer the majority of Asian students the understanding and insight that non-Asian teachers might not be as well-equipped at offering. Emily's "most powerful learning situation" came from being a substitute teacher for an ESL class where many of the students had never "had a Chinese teacher" before in Canada:

> Emily: It was a junior high so it was grade eight, nine, ten, but I mostly taught nine and ten ESL. And some of the students mentioned ..... this was the first time they'd ever had a Chinese teacher. So to them, it was a great impact on them.
> E: What do you think that impact was?
> Emily: ... Maybe they thought that the teachers they had before [who] were all white, were kind of out of touch with how it must be like for them at home to feel pressure, to do well. Like to get good ... to plan their career already to become an engineer or whatever.
> E: So that's what they told you?
> Emily: Yeah. That's what they told me. That they thought I would understand more if they had a problem at school or at home and how that would influence their work in school. And that I would understand more about how difficult it is for them to learn and how their [learning] style is influenced by their culture, right? That's what they told me. And they were really happy to have me. [chuckle] ... And they felt very good that I was a good role model. So I thought that was one of the times ... that I was making a really big influence on other Chinese students.

Marie's teaching observations about relationships with certain students on account of "where we come from" took on a different meaning from Francesca's and Emily's examples. Marie came to a conclusion that a perceived "connection" between herself and Asian Canadian students was forged less from simply a shared ethnic origin and more from her inclination to "empathize" with their sense of "alienation" in the school. This suggests that Marie was more cognizant of the social location that she and some of her students occupied rather than assumed affinity because of Chineseness:

> M: ... I was remembering a girl very recently called Tess. She was obviously born here. She's Chinese Canadian but she's also .... She's a funny girl. She's quiet. She was very reticent to come up and talk to me. Unless she had her group of friends [then] she would. ... She got my ideas right away. When she *really* didn't understand [something] she'd come up and talk to me but she didn't like to do that. ... That was very interesting because if anything, we'd be very much alike. ... But we're not. She could possibly look at me and say, "Oh, here's a woman that can relate to you." But definitely, that wasn't the case with her.
> E: So are you saying that you would almost ... not expect that .... I don't know if "expect" would be the right word. Were you almost saying, "Gee, you would think there'd be some kind of "connection" there?
> ....
> E: Umm.
> M: And with this kid Tess. Didn't wear all the latest fashion trends. She was not one of these really hip kids that was the loud one. She was just very happy to be ... in her own space and doing her thing without drawing a lot of attention to herself. ... With the kids who are from a different country and stuff ... there's that alienation. Like I can really empathize with that. So I think there's a little more of a conection *because* of that opposed to because of where we come from. Because she's Chinese Canadian. I'm Chinese Canadian and she should relate to me because at that point, we're just two people, which is kind of funny, isn't it?

While each of the participants spoke passionately about how they saw themselves in their work as professional educators, they also seemed to perceive their role in the classroom from the added perspective of what their visibility as minority women could bring to the practice of teaching Asian Canadian students. In other words, they were aware that their race and to a lesser extent, their gender could influence how their Asian Canadian students could respond to them. While only Emily described herself as being a role model for Chinese students, I viewed their presence in the lives of their students as providing what Fong (1995) calls, "a sense of ownership and legitimacy" (p.111) of both the participants'and their students' Chinese and Asian Canadian experiences.

Seeing oneself as an "insider" to "cultural experience" was also met with challenges. When Emily applied for a position working with international students, it was the employer and not Emily who determined when racial and cultural differences were to be considered an asset or not:

> Emily: ... And I called the guy up and I said [to] the person that was ... in charge, ..."Can you tell me how ... you finally decided who you were going to hire?" And he goes, "... We had a lot of qualified applicants, but we were looking for people who had cultural experience. And I thought, "Oh, does that mean that *my* cultural experience is insignificant?" I was just ... wondering who are the people that they ended up hiring? Were they white people or [had] they done extensive traveling? I would understand that. But at the same time, they had ... supposedly had a policy for equity hiring, right? So obviously, that's not really being followed. So I'm sort of curious now about how I would ever find out who did they really hire?
> E: How did the person [you spoke with] define "cultural experience" anyways? Did you ask him?
> Emily: He said they were looking for people who had experience ... working with other cultural groups, I'd say. I didn't even want to talk to him after that. Like I thought there was no point. It's already decided. ... If I was going to have that conversation with him again, I would say, "What's your definition of 'cultural experience'? ... I mean, being a visible minority, I have a cultural experience. Someone who'd done extensive traveling has a cultural experience. .. Obviously we had a different definition of what it meant. [laugh] I mean, if anything, I would have ... I would understand what it's like to be a second language learner. ... And I had an education background. So it sort of makes me wonder what happened.

In listening to the different safe stories, the women were making themselves visible and their experiences meaningful. For many participants, safe stories provided an opportunity to both see and think about identity as more than a construction of their own subjectivity as suggested by the earlier metaphor of a window. Their stories here indicated a different understanding of identity which I saw as being a mirror. That is, their perceptions of themselves included the question of how they were seen by others. This perspective extends the idea that identity is not only based on how one sees herself, but is confounded and inter-related to representational issues of how one is known to others.

How one is known to others became a central issue when I started to examine the assumptions of having a "cultural experience" because of one's ethnicity and race. What does "having a cultural experience" mean in our society? As a minority female, would another person (e.g., a teacher, a friend, a colleague) *know* what it was "like for me" on the basis that she shared the "same" cultural and racial background as myself as some of the participants were suggesting? Or in Marie's case, could the "connection" be based on social positioning rather than ethnic origins?

These emergent questions caused me to continue rethinking my place as a researcher in relation to the participants. While I might be able to compare my experiences with the participants' and find resonance and empathy with them as a female, I was always careful that I could not assume shared knowledge or experience based on the markers of race or ethnicity. Why? In research by and about Chinese Canadian women, being represented as an epistemic "insider" by the academy on the basis of my "Chineseness" framed my "cultural experience" as problematic in that I could, at any time, be a potential "contaminant" (Richardson, 1994, p.517) within the research.

I recall how a professor had suggested that I find another person to work with me in analyzing the interviews so my interpretations would be more sound (e.g, not a direct product of me as a Chinese female). Months later, this professor asked a Chinese Canadian female student to talk to a class about what they should know about "Chinese Canadians" as a group and the related "cross-cultural" kind of information. These two situations made me wonder when being constituted as an epistemic "insider" meant being "biased" and "subjective," and when it meant being a(n) (welcomed) "expert." The point to be made is that both illustrate the casting of "Chinese culture," "Chineseness," and "Chinese femaleness" in essentialist terms.

Krieger (1991) has advocated for the inclusion, meaning the visibility of the self, or researcher in social science studies. The irony of my situation seemed to be that the *more* invisible I was in the analysis because I could not separate out my gender and "Chineseness", the *less* credible I might be as a researcher.

In reflecting on my observations and some of the experiences of the women, I thought that there were different assumptions and stakes involved when "culture", ethnicity and race, are essentialized in different spheres of everday life such as teaching, research, and employment. As a result, I began to feel directly some of the limits and problems of identity and representation as contradictory messages in the world around me.

Unsafe Stories and Unauthorized Discourse

The intertwining between self-recognition and representation was key to shifting into an "unauthorized discourse" (Britzman, 1992, p.254) about how the participants saw themselves as minority women in this society within structures of sexism and racism. I noticed how Marie, in particular, prefaced launching into this discourse by phrases such as:

> "I don't want to talk too much about racism, but... "
>
> "Sexism is not a cool thing to talk about right now. And people would just assume that it doesn't exist."

I later realized the significance for me of her saying these phrases. As speech acts, they indicated places of risk and difficulty when crossing into a critical and "unauthorized discourse" to talk about herself.

The identity themes associated with unsafe stories revealed an understanding among participants of how social arrangements and practices structure how self is known to others and the ideological and political implications. When some of the participants were telling unsafe stories, they paid careful attention to the context that assigned meaning to gender, race, and ethnic differences in their social life. "Crossing over" to an unauthorized discourse meant the participants needed to situate themselves in historical and social contexts to express relationships that were felt to be uneven and influenced by power imbalances.

"Something you swallow all the time and you don't even think you're swallowing it.

In this section, some of the participants reflected on examples in their lives which made them think about being both a women and a racial minority in this society. The most moving accounts were those where participants spoke about how they had begun to question their own taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about gender and race which they had unconsciously absorbed and accepted.

On the topic of dating, Marie tried to understand why she had never considered dating a Chinese male. She proceeded to link this question to her taken-for-granted assumptions about race privilege in her extended family with two generations of Chinese ethnic roots in East Asia. It is important to note that Marie's acknowledgement of "internalized racism" was not only a function of her recognition of race and difference in a Canadian context, but that her family's understanding of race had stemmed from living under several generations of British colonial rule. She realized that degrees of "whiteness" held significance among the Chinese in East Asia and that the resulting social constructions of

"Indianess" and "Chineseness" had been unconsciously adopted by members of her family:

> M: It just never occurred to me that I could get into a relationship with a Chinese guy. Never even considered it. ...
> ......
> M: ... And it's very interesting especially with our branch cause we're all from [East Asia]. The Indianess is like something you don't want to talk about. It's like [its] dirty. ... [Indianess] kind of lowers your value to some extent. But the Chineseness is valued a little more. It's kind of ... I don't want to talk too much about racism, but there's that ... There's a racial acceptance, right? The "whiter" it is the more acceptable it is.
> E: Okay. [I understand what you're saying.]
> M: Or within my family. Maybe it's not a fair thing to say, but that's what I would expect. That's what I would suspect. So there's kind of like a racial hierarchy there. So it's kind of interesting that this aunt [I have], all her kids have married white men or white women and only date white women. So what is that? Why? This is very interesting to me because one question I've been exploring is ... I don't think this is the right term. ... Something about "internal racism." It's basically taking in the cultural norms attributed to yourself. It's also that kind of thing that is something you swallow all the time and you don't even think you're swallowing.
> E: So you've internalized it.
> M: Internalized. Internalized racism. That's it. Yeah. So that was kind of an interesting question for me.

In a compelling exchange with Suzette, she began to compare her experiences of being a woman of Chinese descent to that of her two older sisters. In considering the issues of "discrimination" and opportunities for women, she felt that women of her age group were able to make more decisions about their lives than they could thirty years ago. As the conversation unfolded, Suzette began to move from talking about women to being a "visible minority." While the conditions for being a female had improved, she was less confident that the same was going to happen for Chinese Canadians because we were beginning to "drop a bit" in "the hierarchy:"

> S: ... But for a Chinese Canadian woman I think I'm born in just the right era for opportunities. I look at my older sister and ... hers was the worse when it came to discrimination.
> E: She's how many years older than you now?
> S: She'll be fifty this year. So you know ... there [were] no inter-racial relationships then. ... It was the sixties. She was expected to be a

hairdresser, a housewife, or something like that. So I don't see that as an opportunity era for women. My other sister's just turned forty. [It] was a little ... easier for her to do what she wanted to do but still, her choices were ... to get a government job or [be a] teacher or something. With my era, and I think the one following, I think women are told they have an opportunity to be anything. I was told if I wanted to be a doctor, a lawyer... I could [also] marry whomever I wanted. I don't think there's any era better than [now].
S: ... Right now, also ... the doors that welcomed multiculturalism [are] very big. And so people welcome visible minorities. Now, as more visible minorities are moving into the country, there's a lot of animosity towards them. So whether [or not there's] now going to be a backlash and that's not going to be as open...
E: Do you feel that..?
S: Yeah. ... Like there is a backlash right now especially in [two towns]. I know a lot of people [who live there] that are non-Chinese [who] are very unhappy with these monster houses that the Chinese are building where they have three generations of family living [together]. So I think we have reached a certain degree where we were just the top of all the visible minorities, you know.
E: What do you mean by, "the top?"
S: You know, where visibile minorities are concerned unfortunately, there's almost like a hierarchy. Like Chinese people. "Oh, well. They're great. They're hard-working. They bring something to the country. They always look after their own." And then it goes down the line. ... [S]ay the Japanese, all the Asian countries. And then of then of course, we have say, the Indian countries. East Indians are respected because they're hard-working but then... There's probably "buts." Of course, the lowest, unfortunately, tends to be the First Nations people. So there's always this scapegoat but there's this hierarchy, like what's accepted. I think the Chinese are beginning to drop a bit because people have the feeling that we're taking over the country. So I think that backlash will be that Chinese are not as welcome ... in the next generation, I think. I think where I am right now is probably the most fortunate. You know, look at ... this generation had ... writers ... Amy Tan, Denise Chong. ... People are just taking in all these books because people are looking for these books rich in Chinese culture. You got Adrienne Clarkson.
....
S: You look at politicians. It's the first time we've had ... Chinese politicians.
E: Umm hmm.
S: So ... the best time I think for any Chinese [is] the generation I'm in now. For women, I think so ... too. I don't think it'll be as welcoming in the next generation.

In reflecting on my conversation with Suzette, it seemed as though she was charting two separate courses for women and racial minorities. While being female was getting progressively easier in our society, the status of being

Chinese was less stable and more dependent on where "public" sentiment situated us on a hierachy of "visible minorities" without our consent. On which trajectory could we locate ourselves in light of the backdrop of racial tensions and sentiments in Southwestern B.C.? I also wondered where that left future generations of Chinese Canadian women. Could we just think about ourselves as women and forget about (being) the Other?

The exchange I had with Marie made me recall experiences of racial hierarchy and my first encounter with it. Unlike Marie, I did not have the words to name the feeling, nor was I in Canada at the time. As a university exchange student studying in Japan for a year in my early twenties, and later, as I worked there in the public school system, I noticed how being "white" carried privileges in that part of the world and in other Asian countries. Female and male colleagues from North America often remarked how they too, had felt as though their Asianess rendered them in a position of social ambiguity and ambivalence in Asia. Back home in Canada, I began to see imbalances and unevenness operate even when I tried to convince myself that I had to have been mistaken. Some of the situations were as subtle as who was and was not being listened to in a gathering or a meeting and differed according to race and/or gender.

Otherness

The theme of Otherness was expressed in situations where the women talked about an awareness that their race set them apart from the majority Euro-Canadian population. They usually acknowledged that they could not avoid their own and others' perceptions of their "ineradicable foreigness" (Kondo, 1996, p.98) even when they would have preferred to "e-race" (Jhappan, 1996, p. 15) it from their own view, suppress it, or have others refrain from bringing it to their attention.

Several of the women recounted incidents where they had been positioned into an identity of Other on account of their race and sometimes gender, even though the situations were devoid of overt, direct actions such as slurs or blatant face-to-face encounters. This suggested that Otherness was established through a process where self-recognition and representation (e.g., recognition by others) did not correspond. The meaning of non-correspondance was registered by an attunement to the gestures and words of others that "set" or foreclosed their identity. Moreover, in Otherness, "Chineseness" held social meanings which were not on equal par with "Euro-Canadianness." Kondo (1996) describes this feature of identity as experienced by many Asian Americans on North American soil:

> No matter how many generations Asian Americans are resident here, no matter how "articulate" we seem, inevitably we attract the comment, "Oh, you speak English so well," or its equivalent, "Where do you come from?" - which somehow never seems to be adequately answered by Oregon or Illinois or New Jersey, for the question, "Where do you *really* come from?" is sure to follow. (Kondo, 1996, p.99)

On a recent trip to the Eastern United States to attend the "Where is Home" conference, the exact comments and questions were proposed to me as I waited to board a bus from the bus depot in Victoria. (Irony is a part of research.)

Implicit to Otherness is the tension of having to justify where "home" is. Being asked to explain where home is, according to Kondo (1996) a reinscription of one's marginality:

> "Home," for many people on the margins, is, to paraphrase Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, that which we cannot want. It stands for a safe place, where there is no need to explain oneself to outsiders." (p.97)

Marie described in detail a story involving her partner and his mentor at a so-called "Asian" banking company. Although her part in the story was small, it nonetheless signalled to me that Marie had been perceptive about the how being a Chinese female was perceived by others that linked gender to race:

> M: I'll tell you something. Sexism is not a cool thing to talk about right now. And people would just assume that it doesn't exist. But the fact being a Chinese woman is just kind of ......
> E: ... Well sexism, but what about racism [too] then?
> M: Probably not ... Can I tell you a story?
> E: Yeah.
> M: [My partner's] away in another city doing his MBA. ... One of his mentors is the vice-president of a large international bank.
> .....
> M: ... It's not an [Asian] bank, it's a [European] bank. [My partner] said he didn't realize this fact [until] his mentor goes, "What do you think? We're owned by a bunch of slant eyes?" ... Not realizing that [my partner's] got a Chinese girlfriend. And so [my partner] was just appalled. Didn't know if he could like this guy and so he didn't say anything. What do you say to someone like that? [laugh] But maybe he could have said something. When I was in [that city] visiting last month, there was a social function by the bank.... and [my partner] and I were invited to go along. ... The next morning he had an interview with his mentor for a group study with his classmates. The first thing the mentor says to him is, "Hah. You got one of us, eh." The mentor was referring to the fact that my partner had a girlfriend who was Chinese. That is, more so than the bank itself.
> E: Oh.
> M: So for them, it was enough. It was still worth mentioning. [laugh] And I was kind of like, "hmm." It's just basically very ignorant. I don't think that's racist but I think there's a clear line there that these guys are on the other side of.
> E: Umm hmm. It's almost ... viewing people as ...
> M: *What* they are.
> E: I was going to use the word, "commodity."
> M: It *is* kind of that.

As the conversation unfolded, it struck me that Otherness could only be perceived if both Marie and I made sense of the situation by recognizing that we were standing at the margins gazing toward the centre:

> M: ... You know what? I wouldn't hear about it but where my partner used to work, he'd be like, "Oh, yeah. We're taking these clients around and I met this guy from this company and he said this comment about ... probably racist comments about Chinese Canadians. *Chinese* Canadians, especially because in the last few years in [B.C.], a lot of people have come over from the Pacific Rim. I don't think you or I would hear such comments. Or your husband or [my partner would never hear them either] if people knew that their partners were Asian.

The recognition that both Marie and I (and anyone) could be positioned into being Other in a conversation by a speaker we did not know or might never have direct contact with was a startling revelation. As a result, I later recalled mundane events where I had discounted that anything was "wrong" because I could not see anything unusual happening directly to me. In those situations, nobody was being rude or shouting at my face, but somehow, I was put in a position of having to explain to somebody something about myself that may not have fit their perceptions. More often than not, I felt I had to simply be gracious about it without considering why I should. I remember walking away from innocuous situations, conversations, and glances not understanding why I had an unsettled feeling which I was unable to either make sense of or shake off. Like Marie's partner, I have also noticed that my husband articulates his observations of situations that were previously invisible to his social reality.

In listening to some of the women I began to think that the issue of "home" and where someone "is from" is problematic in that it can reinscribe mixed feelings of Otherness in subtle and unanticipated ways. At a workshop I attended last year with the theme of multiculture, volunteers from the audience formed a line on the stage and then were asked to say where they were "from" and how long they had been "here." The sequence of people was arranged according to the number of years they had lived in Canada. When it was my turn to tell people where I was from, I did not know what to say because having recently relocated to this city, I was only ever inclined to give the name of the Canadian city where I had spent the majority of my life. Most every person ahead of me had named a country and not a city. In a moment of confusion, I muttered that I was from Hong Kong and had been "here" for thirty-two years. Something inside me cracked. "Here" and "there" were mixed up. I had never made such a statement before in my life and the "false" but "true" declaration was both simuntaneously distressing and illuminating. I recall walking "home" with a strange feeling of self-betrayal. Reflecting on it now, I realize that in the moment I spoke, there was no alternative discourse available to articulate the deep incongruencies between geographical fact and emotion although I had felt the rush of complexity inherent in "home." Standing in the line, I had to be from somewhere else if not from "here." Could I have positioned *myself* into a discourse of Otherness?

"So why can't we share the power?"

A core feature of Other has to do with asymetries of power which construct the margin and centre relationship. In an exchange with Emily in which she spoke about being a teacher, we began to discuss how (under) representation and power are connected in different professions. Although Emily had been talking about race and power in her example, I noticed that she used two professions, teaching and the RCMP, that were themselves also characterized according to distinct gender lines:

> Emily: Yeah. And that's being a teacher and showing [students] ... There's not that many Chinese people that are in teaching, I think. There's more and more but I just think cause teaching is a very public image job - you're sort of out there and you're in front of the classroom and people know who you are and parents meet you, administration meets you - there's not enought representation I guess of Chinese people in authority positions or power positions.
> E: Within teaching?
> Emily: Within teaching and within a lot of other fields as well. Like the RCMP is ninety-five percent white males, right?
> E: So you're specifically saying that for your own students or for people who would be your students ...
> Emily: Yeah. Canada's supposed to be a multicultural country so why can't we share the power? It's not as if we want to take people's power away, we just want to share the power. The other night I was talking to people about the RCMP. They're ninety-five percent white males even though they're actively trying to recruit more visible minorities and somebody said to me maybe it's because the visible minorities don't have the abilities or are not interested in it and that's why it is ninety-five percent white. And I said that's not true at all. I know many people who've applied that are very qualified so I think there's a lot of

> discrimination still. The RCMP are supposed to represent all of Canada which is to protect us and represent law and justice and order, right? So there are those sorts of things that are still around that need to be changed. So I think that would be good to have more visible minorities in power positions where you see them.

"If I say it in a certain way, then there will be people to listen to it."

Many of the same participants who told "unsafe stories" were the ones who had also referred to having learned the finer distinctions around knowing when and where not to speak to different "listeners" and if so, how. For example, Marie and Suzette both gave similar examples around speaking and silence that suggested they had developed ways of knowing around reading context and speaking that enabled them to negotiate across different borders in their lives. When telling me how she had developed as a learner, one area Marie specified was that learning had "to do with relationships" and sensing that "people come from different 'directions'." Knowing their world view in comparison to hers determined whether she would engage in conversation or be silent:

> M: Being willing to talk to people and have conversations with them and things. Although there are certain kinds of people that I now don't even bother with because I realize tha people come from all different "directions." And you don't always appreciate this. I guess the assumption is that if you function in one way, then everybody does. And then you realize that people function in all different kinds of ways and they present themselves in all kinds of ways and there is just appreciating the differences in or what people I choose not to, I guess.

When I asked her how her "identity as a woman" had changed in the past few years, Marie pointed out that she had learned that if she voiced her perspective in a way that was not associated with "blaming", she felt she would be listened to more readily:

> M: ... I feel very valuable as a person. I feel like I've got a lot of very valuable things to say. And if I can say it in a certain way then there will be people to listen to it. And I say it in a certain way because if I say it with blame, not a lot of people want to listen.

Similarly, when I asked Suzette how her identity as a woman had changed, she described having learned both *when* and *how* to communicate her position so she would have a better chance of being heard. While she was aware that being both a female and a visible minority meant that she always lived with the possibility of sexual and racial discrimination, being "too outspoken" and "angry" were not effective if she wanted to make her "strong beliefs" known to others. Suzette's excerpt shows how race and gender have both been integral parts of her experiences:

> S: ... As a woman ... when I was in early university I was more of an angrier woman. I was learning more about feminism and I was more angry about stuff like women's issues, rape, pornography. I still have very strong beliefs but I've mellowed about it and there's some people ... whereas I used to argue all the time about it, now I choose when it's appropriate to make a point, who I choose to make a point with. I don't waste my time with people that are not of my ... that are not worth arguing with. Maybe I've mellowed in that way although my beliefs are more formed. I actually live those beliefs now ... Yeah. I think the main thing is my feminist issues as a woman have mellowed. It's funny because my husband and I watch [TV] shows and he is ... I always find it interesting that he has trouble dealing with violence against women and discrimination far more [than I do] ... He gets really angry and he says, Why aren't you so angry?" I think that when you're a woman you live it day to day and some of the discrimination. As a visual minority you live with racism even if it's not outward racism, patronizing. Like for example in my day to day work people will say, "Where are you from?" And I'll say, "I'm Canadian." "Well, no, no, no. Where are you from?" I'll say, "I'm Chinese." They say, "You're Chinese? That's great. We have Chinese people living on our block." And I go, "That's nice. (chuckle) There are white people living on our block." They don't realize that ... Basically they don't see it as overt racism, but I get that on a day to day basis. And so you learn to turn the cheek, whereas [my husband] being married to a Chinese person and who is now open to ... or has been made aware of a lot of discrimination against women he's the one that tends to be more angry. ... Because [as women] we live it.
> E: What do you think led to some of these changes in how you see yourself as a woman?
> S: Mmm. Maturity. Mellow. [pause] I don't know. Also some of the role models that are too outspoken that sometimes when you over do it you stop being listened to too. Sometimes the quiet ones... The quiet way of communicating, you're listened to more. Recently the politician, Jean Russo from the Green Party, I watched her on a political debate and she was just like angry. She was so outspoken that she stopped being heard,

> you know. Sometimes when we're not quite as vocal you're heard far more. So I don't like the very strong, angry, radical expressions depending what you're trying to express.

Both Marie and Suzette's ways of reading a social context and deciding on a strategy of silence or speaking so that it did not sound "angry" or "blaming" were powerful mirrors for me when I linked these skills to the risks of engaging in "unauthorized discourse" as both females and racial minorities in this society. I recalled hearing the word "blame" when males discussed their difficulties with understanding "popular" feminism. This was also the same feeling I felt when trying to write about critiquing the "centre" from a place in "the margins." In the course of carrying out this inquiry, I discovered that I was often better off if I *chose* to be deliberately silent or give a "safe story" version of my research rather than engage in conversation with someone who, as the conversation unfolded, was uncomfortable about discussing the *idea* of power differences. These were deep lessons I had learned about "unauthorized discourse" that resonated with some of the experiences the participants had talked about. Hurtado (1996) describes the use of both "silence and outspokenness" (p.382) as tactical strategies employed by feminists of colour in their development of many voices so they can represent the varied positions of the communities to which they are allied. She maintains that for minority women, the "struggle is to make congruent all those 'voices' while being true to themselves" (p.382). The strategies for deciding when and how to speak were also ways to move across the borders between telling safe and unsafe stories about "ourselves" in contexts ordered by different configurations of margin and centre.

Identity as Representation

There were places in the interviews where the participants began to reveal the representational difficulties and constraints they had experienced in their lives in a society that "lumps" all Asians and all Chinese together. Fowler (personal communication, April 25, 1998) calls this "being belonged to" a group on account of appearance, essentialist notions, and who draws the line. For some of the women, the "line" could be inaccurate and they were extremely attuned to being grouped together with people who they perceived themselves as being different from even though the designated group was Chinese. This theme opened onto diverse meanings and markers of identity.

"Did he think that I wasn't from Canada or something?"

Carrie told me about an incident in which a classmate had assumed that she could answer a question about the experiences of people in Hong Kong and China. As she recounted her story, Carrie's main concern was not that she could or could not answer the question, but that she interpreted the question as one about where she was from. She was surprised and confused that anyone would assume that she was not from Canada. Carrie was still endeavouring to make sense of the situation:

> E: ... Did you ever have a situation that was really not difficult in a full-overblown way, or any inkling or feeling that made you think there was something around difference or.... that just made you look at something?
> C: I think this happened actually this year. It wasn't too long ago. We, in one of my classes, were doing presentations. And we were talking about ... oh yeah, it was stress, and how you deal with stress. And they wanted to know cultural aspects of how different cultures dealt with stress and this one guy said to me, "Well, you must know what it's like for people in China or Hong Kong, like how they deal with stress." And I [said], "No, actually no. I was born here." ... I was just kind of ... [pause] I don't know, did I ... Did he think that I was from, that I wasn't from Canada or something? ... I guess that it was just natural because I look Chinese for him to think that maybe. I never really thought of myself as being that different from other people that he might pick up on that. So maybe, he just picked that up from the way I look or maybe it's because the way I act. Or if it was because of the way I act. I didn't know because it was a certain way that I acted that would make somebody think that way.
> E: So when he posed this question to you, how did you react?
> C: "Oh, I've never been there. I don't know what it's like there." And then that was it. And then when I went home to think about it, I was just kind of ... I guess I wanted to know why he would think that. I guess I'd be fine with both. If it was just the way because I look. That [it was because] I look Chinese that he thought that. Or if it was because the way

> I acted. I don't really care which one it is because it's still ... just me. But I just didn't know. I never really thought that I acted any different than someone who was born here and who was English ... or "white", or ... you know.
> E: Umm hmm. But you didn't ask him or anything?
> C: No. ... It was just during our presentation and I didn't really ... think about it ... until afterwards.

The classmate had assumed that because Carrie was Chinese in appearance, she would know what it was like to be Chinese in another part of the world. Moreover, Carrie interpreted his question as an indirect question about "home." Was home Canada or somewhere in Asia? While her classmate did not appear to entertain the possibility nor distinguish between being a Canadian-born Chinese and a Chinese who had emigrated to Canada, this distinction had been an important marker for Carrie.

"I feel like a minority even though I don't look like a minority"

Some participants indicated that they perceived themselves as being different from other Asian Canadians and Chinese Canadians. The women based this assessment on indicators such as proficiency with English and Chinese language, appearance, interests, and competencies that differentiated them from other Asian Canadians, and in some cases, other Asian Canadian women.

Francesca told me how she used to avoid what she called, "a really truly Chinese environment" such as going to "dim sum" [Chinese brunch] because she never felt comfortable in these kinds of settings. Avoidance had been one way that she had learned to adapt to this discomfort. In exploring why she did not feel comfortable in "an entirely Asian setting," Francesca admitted that whenever she was in one of the shopping malls in Bloomfield[7], she saw herself as "a minority" and felt that she "was different:"

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[7] Bloomfield is a ficticious name of a city with a large Japanese and Chinese population. This community has been experiencing a growth in people from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and The People's Republic of China.

> F: ... I know I'm not truly comfortable in an entirely Asian setting and it's somewhat true, even now, I believe, because I know I certainly don't want to go to [Bloomfield] (chuckle). I certainly don't have the desire to go to [Bloomfield] cause I feel like a minority even though I don't look like a minority. And I find I'm overwhelmed by some of the activities that go on in there like in some of the malls and it's just too much for me. I don't know why.
> E: What do you mean [when] you said that you "feel like a minority but you [don't look like one?]
> F: I know I'm different.
> E: Even though you don't look ...
> F: ... look it.
> E: Okay.
> F: When you go to any of the Chinese restaurants or when you go to [Bloomfield] Mall or any of those places where there is a huge number of Asian people and they're all speaking their first languages and I can't share in that. I don't understand it. It gives me a headache sometimes and I don't really want to be there. ... I guess subconsciously, I learned I don't want to go to [Bloomfield] because of that. (chuckle) Or I don't need to go to [Bloomfield]. I don't need to be immersed in that world because it's something that doesn't interest me in a sense. It makes me uncomfortable cause I want to know what's going on. I want to be able to communicate and I can't ... and it bothers me so I leave. ...

When I asked Francesca if there were places where she could feel comfortable, she mentioned being in a "smaller setting" with other Chinese Canadians including her Chinese Canadian female team-mates from a sports team. In comparison to being in the mall, language was once again important in determining how she felt about herself in different settings. Meeting Chinese people of her parents' age who, from her perspective, "spoke perfect English like [herself]," was significant in Francesca's process of becoming comfortable with her own Chineseness:

> E: Knowing that you don't want to be in [Bloomfield] and be there with other people who might share your ethnic background, are there ways that you can still do that a little bit more comfortably?
> F: I think in smaller settings. Yes. For example, in August ... all the girls I mentioned earlier [from my sports team] attended the premiere of the film "Under the Willow Tree." This film was a documentary showing interviews with five or six women. .... They were asked questions about what it was like to be daughters of the first ... pioneer Asian women to B.C. or to Canada. ... And so it was a rather interesting film and I wanted very much to see that. I wanted to see if I also feel what these women felt. It was something that was just intriguing for me on a personal level.

> ... In the auditorium of [Harrison] School[8], there were thousands, it seemed like - although it wasn't thousands - but ... a great many ... Asian people, whether they be first generation, second, third or what. But it was okay. I think it was also because I was with my friends. I didn't know any other people. ... Being in the audience was fine. Actually, it was kind of neat cause I sat next to older people, people of my parent's generation and older who spoke excellent English. That to me still, is quite remarkable cause when I think about people of my parent's generation, they speak broken English. And it was like, "Wow, you have excellent English, just like I do. How did that happen?" So it was quite fascinating for me to hear and see that. I quite enjoyed that evening. ... I think if I do more and more of those things, I think I will continue to make little steps in the progress of accepting who I ... my background, let's say, and my parents, and their whole story.

Francesca's back-to-back exerpts highlight the importance and nuances of both Chinese and English language in ascribing lines of comfort and discomfort which were connected to seeing herself as a "minority" even among other Chinese. Moreover, *how* language was seen to be spoken (e.g. "perfectly", "excellent[ly]", or "broken") had a hand in defining both her's and others' racialized identities.

"Anomaly"

Emily also described herself as being different from other Chinese Canadians, but her basis for registering this identity was on account of seeing herself as one of very few Chinese Canadian students on her campus who were "politically active." At the interview, when I first expressed interest in learning more about her volunteer work in social justice issues, she remarked that, "I'm sort of an anomaly on campus." Emily's identity as an anomaly was anchored in a strong desire to make contact with other Chinese Canadian women who shared her interests:

> E: ... What does that mean, "Being an anomaly on campus"?
> Emily: I meant that there's very few Chinese Canadian students on campus who are politically active. Like interested in social justice issues, minority rights, women's issues. I know two other women.

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[8] This is a pseudonym for a school which has always had a large Chinese population and is located in what has historically been an immigrant community.

E: How do you get that impression? By involvement in the group you're in?
Emily: Well in the group that I'm in, I'm one of two Chinese people there. (chuckle) I've gone to [student society] meetings and different things like that and there's hardly ever any Chinese people at those meetings. Ever. I'm usually the only one. (chuckle) .... That's what I meant. It's kind of like I feel like the only one. (chuckle) I met a few people in (a visible minority group) who are active. ... It would be great if one day I came back from (Asia) and started my own group for Chinese women who are interested in social issues and global issues.
E: Now why would you think that would be worth doing?
Emily: Well for me... I'm just interested in things like that.
E: Umm hmm. But why specifically with a group of other women who are Chinese Canadian like you?
Emily: I just feel like we have different issues than other ... women... other groups. Like the [ABC] women's group. [It's] is a very diverse group as well but I think that just our [Chinese Canadian women's] perspective might be different or the way we communicate might be different. So it might be better to be [in a group] with people of my own ethnic background that would understand that so it just seems important for me to kind of have solidarity. (chuckle)
E: So how do you mean ... that ... "Chinese Canadian women," or that [the way] "we communicate as being different?"
Emily: Well maybe it has more to do with our experience [being] different. Our experience as different [from] "white" Canadians or Black Canadians or whatever. So maybe it has more to do with our experience. It's good to have people who are interested in the same thing and have similar experiences so you can share and support each other. So I think that's what I'm interested in [doing].
E: Now what kind of experiences are these?
Emily: Things... issues that we're concerned about like what's it's like to be struggling students, visible minorities, Chinese minority, racism... Different things like that. Values ... Things like that. There are very very few [Chinese Canadians]. I've been at [this university] on and off for five or six years and I think that I know two other people that (sic) are active [politically] and that's it. (chuckle) That's really it. It's kind of strange.

When I thought about the two conversations with Francesca and Emily about feeling as though they were different from other Asians and/or Chinese Canadian women, I thought about my place within this inquiry and my motives for conducting this research. I could have chosen to do an autobiographical narrative which meant I would draw strictly on my experiences and not conduct interviews. Over a year ago, one of my committee members had suggested I do research with, what he called, "an 'n' of one." Why had I decided to do otherwise? I wanted to have the hope of being able to see a part of myself in the women who I interviewed to reassure myself that my views, sensibilities, and interests were mirrored in some of the lives of other women. In short, I did not want to feel as though I was alone in "my experience" either as a woman or a Chinese Canadian. I realized this the day I noticed my language changing. Instead of writing, "I" in my research journal, I began to write "us" and "we" and I felt comforted by this subtle shift in language. Despite having had Asian female friends all my life, I never realized that I sought affirmation of my experiences within my academic life.

"How you can size people up"

With some of the participants, a key feature of perceiving themselves as being different from other Asian Canadians indicated a counter-distinction of themselves from the majority of recently arrived "newcomers" from Asian countries (e.g., Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China). As the flow of people, goods, and services continues to criss-cross the Asia Pacific, Kondo (1996) points out that in parts of North America, "[w]e are seeing, and will continue to see, the elision of Asian and Asian American" and "the confusion of Asian and Asian American" (p.99) by the dominant culture. The participants were sensitive and highly attuned to these distinctions.

Carrie and Francesca's narratives spoke to how they were conscious of this difference in deciding about matters of friendship. Carrie explained that, as a Canadian-born Chinese, it was "more natural" for her to have English-speaking friendships than friendships with foreign-born Chinese females who preferred to speak Chinese:

> C: Before when I was talking, I was thinking ["Chinese Canadian meant] someone who was born in Canada, but they are Chinese. Now, I'm thinking that there's also people who have immigrated to Canada, who, [are] from Hong Kong or China or whatever and they immigrated to Canada. Cause in my high school, there was that little clique of people

> who immigrated from Hong Kong, so I guess they'd be first generation. I don't know how that works but, they came with their families and were in my school. So they had that thing in common and they were always together and they became friends. But I wasn't a part of that even though I was Chinese. I was a more part of just ... with everyone who was born in Canada, I guess. And so when I ... came to school here, I guess it wasn't much of a difference because I was always just friends with people who were born in Canada. ... Cause the girls who ... immigrated here, they always spoke Chinese whenever they didn't have to speak English. And I couldn't speak that. [chuckle] I just didn't. It just wasn't natural for me to go to be friends with them. It's more natural for me to be with friends who spoke English more.

For Carrie, one's "natural" language of communication and whether or not someone "immigrated here" were two important markers as she began unravelling what "Chinese Canadian" meant to her.

Francesca maintained that it was more difficult for her to befriend Asian Canadians who were more recently arrived compared to Canadian-born Chinese. Her main criterion was a sensed difference in lifestyle. In Francesca's explanation, she distinguished between "Chinese Canadian" as individuals who "were born here" and "immigrants" as individuals who "live here, even for a number of years:"

> F: ... I don't have a problem with making friends or being comfortable with Chinese Canadian ... That means, that were born here. I do find that there is a definite difference between immigrants who come here and live here even for a number of years. For some reason, there is that difference, especially if they're coming from Hong Kong or you know, Taiwan. People with ... [who] grew up with a different lifestyle.
> E: What's the ... And so these ones ... those people ... are ones that are harder for you to make friends with? The ones who are more recent?
> F: Yes. I mean, I've met them in different social gatherings and I already knew more or less. You know how you can size people up. [chuckle]
> E: Well, how did you know they were [recently arrived]?
> F: Just how they talked and what they talked about.
> E: Can you give me some examples?
> F: ... I didn't hear too much about social activities. "Oh, do you want to go hiking or ... do you want to go for a paddle, do you want to go for a run or for a cycle?" "Let's go shopping [chuckle]." It was just the topics of a conversation that basically guide my own decision on ... whose company I would best enjoy.
> E: Hmm.

Being sensitive to the fine distinctions among members of one's own "group" or as Francesca called, having the ability to "size people up" to know if they were born here or not, was one way that both Carrie and Francesca had learned to move across the borders of being a foreign-born Chinese and Canadian-born Chinese.

For Carrie and Francesca who were both born in Canada, the complex status of naturalized and Canadian-born citizenship carried meaning for them. In a conversation with Emily, she had entered into the little-discussed issue of citizenship when considering whether or not someone was Canadian-born or born outside of Canada. In telling me how she responded to questions about where she was from when working with international students, Emily made the curious distinction between herself as someone who was "born in Canada" and her parents whom she referred to as "immigrants" and not "Canadian" even though they had lived "here for thirty years:"

> Emily: ... They thought, "Oh, where did you come from? Which country are you from?" [I said] "Oh, I was born here in [this city]. I have a Canadian education and I grew up here." He goes, "Are your parents Canadian?" I go, "No. They're immigrants. They immigrated here thirty years ago."

When does a person cease being an "immigrant" and "become Canadian"? In my work with a large multicultural social services agency, I often wondered how the identities of our clients were inscribed under the label "immigrant" even though some had been here for a decade or more. Does this transition from an identity as an immigrant to that of a "Canadian" have to do with how "assimilated" one feels, generational status, duration in Canada, how others perceive that person's history, or one's "papers"?

The significance of whether or not one is Canadian-born or foreign-born became startling clear to me when I attended the "Where is Home" Conference. Over lunch one day, I shared a table with a Chinese American woman in her twenties. Both she and I had been born in Asia and had come to North America during infancy. I told her how only recently, I had noticed that whenever anybody had asked me where I was born, my standard reply had always been, "I was born in Hong Kong, BUT my family moved here when ..." The word "but" stuck out and I wondered why I even used it instead of another word such as "and." It sometimes seemed as though I could not *feel* "authentically Chinese Canadian" in Canada or "Canadian" oversees if I could not claim Canada as my birthplace. When I shared this story with my lunch companion, I was surprised when she conveyed to me that she also felt this way when she told people that she was not born "here" but "over there." This semantic distinction had been a powerful marker in my life without my knowing it.

In our interview, Suzette explained that she considered both of us as a "minority" among the Chinese women she knew. She saw us as being not only less "soft spoken" than most women, but also, that in comparison to Asian women raised here, we both had an interest in talking about the "culture" we lived. For Suzette, there were finer distinctions among Asian and Chinese women as a group:

> S: ... I guess the model for most Chinese women is a lot of times more soft-spoken.
> E: So that's Chinese women who immigrate here or who are brought up here or who are raised here, like say, you and I would be?
> S: I would say a majority. I think you and I and a few other women I know are a minority.
> E: How do you mean by "minority?"
> S: In being open-minded in our achievements and the things we want to achieve and our interest in our Chinese culture. Probably the people you interviewed are unique in that they're interested. They want to talk about our Chinese culture and find it fascinating. Whereas say, if you just phoned a cousin and say, "I want to do this paper, can you help me?" They'd say, "Oh why do you want to talk about that for?" They live the experience so they don't really care to think about it. It's just like this conference [you're going to.] You knew I'd be interested in hearing about it because it's something that's already my interest. Or the movie [you were going to see.] Whereas I would probably not phone many of my

> female cousins and say, "... Have you seen "Raise the Red Lantern?" And they go, "What?" They're not interested.

"Breaking Glass"

In response to my asking her "about a really powerful learning experience" Marie recounted an incident that had happened with an Asian Canadian female teacher that had happened when Marie was a high school student. The teacher's assumptions of what being Chinese meant became hurtful when Marie saw herself not living up to that image. She felt as though she had let her parents down for not being studious and "compliant" as a family friends' Chinese children were. The learning experience had taught her about being reverse stereotyped:

> M: [This] ... experience had a lot of anger and shame and upset associated with it cause it was in high school. And a grade ten teacher who scared me to tears. I mean I would go into class and I couldn't think. I don't know how I got through her math class. And her name was Mrs. (Grief) I think she was Asian. I didn't know what kind of Asian. She was kind of asexual but she wore a skirt. [laugh] She was a horrible woman. [laugh]
> E: You noticed a lot didn't you? [laugh]
> M: ... I remember I was not doing as well in her class. My priority was not really with school. In fact, I think in grade ten I started to skip classes because I could and I could get away with it. I wasn't doing as well in her class and she found me. She saw me in the hallway once and she cornered me. She was like, you know ... And the way she spoke... My recollection of it was like, "ugh!" Like this is how she talked. [mimicking stiltedness of voice] You know, "ugh!" She'd grunt. [laugh] Like sort of in understanding you go "ugh!' [laugh] Very you know, kind of ... If her fist didn't put you against the wall that sound did. [laugh together]
> E: I wish I could transcribe that sound. [laugh]
> M: And I remember she caught me. She said basically... She said, "Marie, you're Chinese, aren't you?' And I said, "Yeah." She goes, "Why aren't you good in math?" And I couldn't answer her because my eyes started to tear up and I felt so humiliated for my parents. And I started ... Basically I went away and started crying. And then it took me a couple of days before I was really angry at her. And I just couldn't ... I never resolved that with her. If I was [still] living in [that city] maybe I would hold her accountable for that now. [laugh] A lot of angry moments. [laugh] But just to say, "That was not okay for you to say that to me." ... She was reverse stereotyping me. She was saying that I was Chinese so I had to be good at this and I just felt so bad because this is what my dad was saying when he went to that [Chinese] person's house and their two kids were so, you know, straight and compliant.

That the Asian teacher expected another Asian to be "good at math" constructed Marie's stereotypical identity that Chinese ought to be good at math. Also, by skipping out of math class, Marie had challenged the image of herself as "straight and compliant" which she related back to subtle forms of family expectations.

The careful detail with which Marie told her story was a result of her having assessed and made new meaning of it years later as an adult. Nonetheless, there was still emotion attached to her memory of it. Marie's poignant use of the metaphor "breaking glass" suggested that while she did had started to cast off the stereotype of herself as a student who should be "good in math" the Asian teacher measured Marie according to it, and thereby, reinscribed her in that identity:

> E: ... How would you describe the ... [experience] if you were to give some adjectives to [it]?
> M: Oh terrible. I mean, it's kind of like glass shattering right in front of your head. That's how I felt. I felt like my blood just turning cold. I just felt horrified. I don't know ... what is the worst experience you could have. The kind of shame. Like if I was pregnant and went home, like that kind of shame. I guess that's pretty terrible, but that's how I felt. I didn't tell anybody [about] that. I didn't tell my mom. I just felt so terrible. So just ... I think the shame.
> E: And maybe just that .. your teacher expected you to be good [at math] for no other reason than ....
> M: Because I was Chinese. Yeah. ... I guess when I say, "broken glass in front of you" it's like you're just seeing through things and it doesn't look like anything's wrong. You can see everything and everything's fine and all of a sudden, you realize that this is how somebody perceived you. "Breaking glass" was like I was just coming out of it, but at the same time, it was putting me back into it.

Many of the women were attuned to differences between themselves and other Chinese and Asian women. Marie was aware of being seen by males in the less than appealing stereotype of "the Oriental" woman as an "ideal." The image of "a geisha" (loosely translated from Japanese as "person of artistry") acknowledged how many Asian women are positioned into an identity as those whose role it is to please others, especially males. Marie noticed that it did not matter what Asian ethnic group a woman belonged to as this stereotype was applied regardless. This exchange shows how she considered both "Asianness" and "femaleness" intertwined, as evidenced by an assessment of having close friendships with other Asian Canadian women:

> M: ... And we'll talk about certain things about being women, but because we're both Asian women ... there's a little bit more of a connection and a little bit more of a "aha." I know *exactly* what you mean. ... It's just like there's a feeling there. And I don't know what kind of an example I can give you. Maybe how you're perceived by men. ... That's not quite the right example.
> E: You're talking in a sense, about gender roles ...?
> M: Yeah, because there's like the whole overlay, right? Like of ... being a woman ... I was saying before. Asian woman. It doesn't matter what Asian you are. It's like with a geisha woman. That's ... the ideal. [laugh] That's the stereotype, right? How do you get around that?
> E: Have you experienced that? I would call it being stereotyped.
> M: You're right.
> E: Have you experienced that? If I said being a woman in Canada. Being a woman of Chinese descent in Canada?
> M: I think ... not. I can't really think of an example short of ... the novelty factor of me in university because I was one of the different flavours, okay. And I don't think that's a big deal. LIke that's stereotype, but also in a certain environment. But I have not encountered that. No.

In her awareness of gender and racial stereotyping Marie had developed strategies or subtle ways to counteract them. Marie explained that she would deliberately try to look different from other Asian women through comportment and dress to resist people's possible preconceived ideas about her based on her ethnicity and gender:

> E: How do you deal with people having certain preconceptions about you because of what you look like ethnically, racially?
> M: Yeah. One way I cope is in terms of my fashion maybe. I don't think I'm very risque ... But at the same time, I like to think of myself as a little more eclectic. I think I carry myself quite confidently. I think I have enough of an id [laugh] to not really be like a coward. I think there's a lot to be said in how you carry yourself. ... You know how sometimes you're in Chinatown and you see people walking ... You know partly by their dress and by their demeanor. My demeanor is certainly not like that.
> E: What were you saying? Partly by their demeanor you what ... what?

> M: Maybe their walk. They don't take up as much space. Their shoulders are maybe not as square. The pace is not as long, not as jaunty maybe. There's a bit of that.
> E: So this is comparing yourself to other Chinese?
> M: Like we're talking about first generation. Yeah, another Chinese woman who maybe is ... Okay, let's compare myself to ... somebody who comes to Canada just to study in university and go away. Although now, there's a new generation of students that is also very much changing.
> E: Yeah.
> M: There's that whole cultural thing.
> ....
> M: And I'm vain enough that I have a fashion sense, right, that wants me to be different.

By the detail with which she spoke, I could see that Marie made distinctions between herself and other, mainly first-generation Chinese females. She was both attuned and attentive to difference especially via body language and comportment.

In listening to Marie's experience of having a "fashion sense," I recalled vividly how, as an undergraduate at a university with a large Asian Canadian student body, I would purposely "dress down" because I did not want people to think that I was a "foreign" student or a (wealthy) recent immigrant from Hong Kong. These two identities were, in my mind, not appealing and ones I wanted to avoid. It was not until recently, after talking with one of my committee members about these reflections and confessions of being embarrassed by "rich-looking" Chinese that I realized the effort I went through to avoid a mistaken identity. Moreover, I felt ashamed admitting this both to myself and the committee member.

Marie extended her assessment of being different from other Asian Canadians into her choice of where she felt "comfortable" socializing. She pointed out that these were places where she could go where she would not likely expect to see other Chinese women. What is striking in Marie's account is her high degree of awareness about her and I being seen together as "two

Chinese women" in a place where she would not ordinarily see two Chinese women together. Her perceptive comment made me laugh what Kondo (1996) aptly calls "the laughter of re-cognition" (p.103):

> M: .... But I think a lot of it too, is ... [pause]. If you go to the [Western] Pub ... or like you know, some place [like that], you're not going to see a lot of traditional people with those kinds of values.
> E: Is it where you hang out?
> M: It's also where you hang out. I mean, it's where you're comfortable. Actually, and I didn't think of myself as very sheltered, but I guess when I left high school to go to university or away from home, I remember the first time I went into the pub and it's like I was very conscious of ... Like after the first couple of years, I didn't think of it anymore, but I was conscious of being the only Chinese female there.
> ....
> E: ... [W]hen you're with people in a group and there are any other Chinese Canadian women there, do you notice them?
> M: Oh, totally. Yeah. Well, if I'm going to a pub .... When I left a message for [my partner] that we were going to be at the pub, I caught myself as I was doing it. "Ask for two Chinese women" because you're not going to see two Chinese women at a pub, generally. Or you might, but probably not. [laugh together]

"Now, I don't let things go"

A major theme that emerged across all the conversations with the participants had to do with speaking, being heard, and voicing one's opinion as women in various contexts. Participants discussed these aspects of themselves as university students, daughters, in community work, and as minority women in this society.

In describing how they had changed in the last several years, several of the women described a major source of personal growth as "stick[ing] up for" their beliefs and less of an inclination to "let [something] go" when they knew something was offensive. Carrie, who had attended an all-girl's high school, was particularly attuned to gender dynamics in the classroom when she entered a co-educational university. Looking back on her university experiences and how she had changed since high school, she perceived herself as being "stronger." While she was more comfortable now in starting to voice her opinions, she was also not sure how much this had changed or stayed the same:

> C: I think that if you ... look at me when I first came out of high school, I was very worried about being in classes with guys. [It's] things like that, that I'm stronger about ... now. That I will argue sometimes with a guy if ... about something ... I think is important. Whereas maybe in first year [university,] I might not have. So in a way, I've become a bit stronger, but in a way, it hasn't changed too, too much.
> E: So when you mean by "arguing"...
> C: ... I'm always arguing with people who say that [my field of study] is ... . That it's always so easy to get through ... So I'll argue with them that it isn't that easy. That it's pretty hard to [work with] kids and get them interested. I think that before, if someone had said that .... I might have said, "Well, whatever." But now, I'd be more likely to ... stick up for it. To say ... Just to say something.

When Emily described the noticeable changes in herself since becoming involved in her social justice work outside of formal education, she too, articulated a feeling of greater confidence in articulating her views to others:

> Emily: ... Maybe a few years ago if somebody had said something to me that I thought was offensive, I'd let it go. Now I don't let things go. I sort of you know... I try to defend myself more if something comes up. So I think that's happening. So I think that my personality's getting more sort of stronger, more independent and more confident, I guess. And I think that a lot of that is ... I don't know if I would have learned as much of that if all I did was went to university and just got a degree. I don't know if I would have been ... because I think the work outside I do, outside my formal education has affected a lot of who I am and how I speak to people and how I think and feel about world issues and things like that.

I thought it was striking that in the above exchanges, both Carrie and Emily had described expressing their opinions with the words "argue" and "defend myself." I wondered if it was because when women, especially young women, decide to speak about something about which they are passionate, and which might contradict someone else's perspective, there is a perceived element of risk and discomfort involved. Carrie and Emily's selection of words seemed to suggest this tension and the realization that voicing a different opinion was becoming easier. In describing herself, Francesca had remarked that she too, had become more confident in verbalizing what she felt and thought. "Then I felt that I could say what I felt like saying and not feel bad about it or feel that someone's going to shout down at me or you know, do something horrible to me so I wouldn't be heard."

Francesca talked about her upbringing in a family where she did not perceive herself as having a "voice." As a female in her family of mainly sisters, she had learned that she was not expected to have an opinion. Looking back on this experience, speaking out had been tantamount to asserting her needs to her parents and developing a sense of her own agency. "Being ... vocal" had become part of Francesca's vehicle for rebelling:

> F: ... I learned a lot of things on my own and I've survived ... thank goodness. But I also think that my parents did not believe, nor could believe, or were surprised that I am so much an individual in that I have a voice. I express what I feel because they certainly did not really promote that, let's say. They didn't encourage us to say what our opinion was or how we felt when we were growing up in their home.
> E: Why didn't they ...
> F: ... do that?
> E: ... What would that have meant for your parents had they encouraged that?
> F: I'm not really sure. They maybe thought that we would be rather defiant, rebellious children if we questioned their every decision. And I think they did this because that's how they grew up. ... It's a traditional way of living that you obey because your parents are doing the best they can for you and you need to believe that and you don't have an opinion. You shouldn't ... have to ... voice your opinion if you had one. They didn't expect us to have an opinion. So even to actually voice an opinion was rather startling. And you certainly don't do that. You just don't.
> E: ... Do you remember a time when you tried to voice your opinion and what happened?
> F: I don't exactly remember what the reason was or why I was voicing my opinion. But I was certainly screaming at the top of my lungs [chuckle] and just yelling and yelling and yelling until I was tired. [laugh] I just remember saying a lot of "but." "But you didn't hear me" or "I've got something important to say." And I guess my parents ... don't understand that children, even though they're ... young people, they have feelings and that they should be heard. They just felt that ... our basic needs are covered. We're going to school. We're learning what we need to function in this society. That's good enough. ... You keep your opinions to yourself. You're not asked for your opinion. So be quiet. [That] is what I remember in those early years.

> ....
>
> F: ... I can't really pinpoint why I became rather vocal or I rebelled. I learned somewhere along the line in my education that, whether it was through peers or just in an English class I had, but I *knew* that if you have something important to say, if something means anything to you, you need to communicate that. Whether that's orally or on paper or somewhere it needs to be communicated and I guess that was sort of one of my guiding beliefs. That's how I have evolved.

"Seen and (not) heard"

"I did not speak, and felt bad each time I did not speak. ... The other Chinese girls did not talk either, so I knew the silence had to do with being a Chinese girl." (Hong Kingston, 1997, p.150)

The theme of speaking and speaking out as women is layered by additional images of Asian women who are, more often than not, depicted as demure, quiet, and agreeable (Espiritu, 1997; Yamada, 1983). The underlying discourse of Orientalism associated with "being seen and not heard" is the idea of Chinese and Asian women in general being perceived and hence, generally *expected* to be "submissive, subservient, ready-to-please, [and] easy-to-get-along-with" (Yamada, 1983, p.37). As an "innocuous" stereotype with socially desirable characteristics, it becomes a personal hurdle in order to be taken seriously by others. For example, in many of the narratives, several of the women made direct reference to "being seen and not heard." They did not want to be perceived this way; however, they also sometimes measured themselves against this deeply embedded stereotype. There were variations in the aims and meanings that were asserted in the women's perceptions of themselves and other Chinese and Asian Canadian women.

For example, when I asked Marie what it meant to be a good student and good daughter, she responded with "Well, basically to be seen and not heard, okay, which is not a smart thing for me." What this meant was, "You don't have to tell everybody what you did and how well you did it and to try to accept praise all the time."

Emily referred to her "outspokeness" in terms of resisting gender and cultural stereotyping. When I asked Emily about growing up in Canada, she indicated that the most difficult things were representation in the teaching profession and people stereotyping her. She noticed that people appeared surprised by her being "outspoken:"

> Emily: I think people still stereotype me when they first meet you or things like that.
> E: What kind of stereotype?
> Emily: Like people that think, "Oh, are you at teacher?" They're kind of surprised. They don't really see Chinese Canadian [as] teachers. Or they think well, "You must be good at math or something." [laugh] I'm horrible at math. [laugh] You know ... or people being surprised at how outspoken I am.
> E: Hmm.
> Emily: Like that I can talk seriously about issues and think seriously about issues. Things like that. I think some people are sort of surprised. And it could be their own experience. They're limited by their own experience, you know. They haven't met someone like me before. It all depends on who I'm dealing with.

I later asked Emily to explain why she thought people reacted with surprise to her being "outspoken." Her response focused on a combination of gender and ethnic stereotyping and how Chinese Canadians were perceived:

> E: Why would they be surprised by the fact that you would be an outspoken sort of person and that you could talk seriously - and I guess by seriously, you mean intelligently - about issues?
> Emily: Maybe because that [the people] I'm talking to aren't very educated themselves. [laugh together] Like I spend a lot of energy sometimes just educating or re-educating somebody else about what racism is.
> E: Are you suggesting that they're surprised because of your race or ... gender ...?
> Emily: My colour.
> E: ... your race or ...
> Emily: Combination. I think they're surprised because ... I'm thinking about a specific group of people... listeners who haven't had very much experience with Chinese Canadians or other visible minorities. They're always like "Wow. I didn't know you knew that. I didn't know you had an opinion on that. Or I didn't know you had that experience or something." So I'm thinking of a specific group of listeners.

Emily explained that she attempted to resist and dispel the image of Chinese women as "quiet," and "not having an opinion." Emily linked her analysis to people's perceptions of Asian Canadian women and men being uninterested in political issues. As a female who was interested in political issues, she was aware of how she and other Chinese Canadians were perceived:

> Emily: People who don't have experience with Chinese women stereotype us as quiet, submissive, stoic ... like we don't have a sense of humour. [chuckle]
> E: Are these [stereotypes] that would apply mainly to women or men?
> Emily: Both. I can only tell [by] what my experiences are. So my experiences are when I make a political comment or something, they're surprised that I'm even aware. They think we don't care or we don't think about political issues or something. .... That people tend to think that Asian people are not politically active or don't care about political issues. And therefore, don't have an opinion about it cause we don't speak out about it very much which doesn't mean we don't have an opinion about it.

Listening to Emily brought back thoughts that I still wrestle with when I ponder what it means for me to be a learner and woman who has spent time and energy commited to the learning lives of both others and self. For as long as I can remember, I have admired women who, to borrow the words of Virginia Woolf, have "a room of one's own" (1929, p.6) to nurture a mind and voice of one's own. The "room" to which I am referring is not composed of four walls or even a physical space, but room within oneself to deepen, stretch, and expand cognitively, emotionally, and as a member of society. How is this room further challenged and even endangered by internalized stereotypes of Chinese Canadian women and Asian women being "seen and not heard"? Belenky et al. (1986) contend that in a male dominated society, being seen and not heard are qualities which are ascribed primarily to both women and children. Orientalism adds yet another layer of representational constraint that potentially stifles this room.

I was once told by a "white" male friend that he and I differed because, as he surmised, I had not been raised in a family where I was taught to question authority and look at the world critically. In other words, I had not been trained by my parents to have an opinion and "rock the boat." This statement cut right to my achilles heel. In that moment, I was both inscribed and revealed as the "nice," can-only-learn-by-rote, has-no-opinion-of-her-own Chinese woman whose image I loathed and yet, often fearfully perceived myself to be. Looking back on that comment, I now see the irony. My friend had been telling me that I was a "received knower" (Belenky et al., 1986, p.35) and I did not realize I was until I (without question) accepted *his* knowledge claim and allowed myself to be framed by it. I knew I had to be more than this stereotype, but *was* I more than a telling stereotype when I could only feel the tightness and weight of the frame and not name it so as to cast it off?

In reference to her community work, Suzette expressed that her "main challenge" as a Chinese Canadian woman was in "being seen and not heard." These were factors that she saw as being related both to her gender and age. She was conscious of being, what she called, "a thorn" in the side of older Chinese males who she had to deal with in one community group. In describing her work with the influential people in the Chinese community who were predominately male and about twenty years older than she, Suzette surmised that they preferred to work with women who did not challenge their views and essentially "kept quiet:"

> E: I was interested in finding out what some of the challenges are [for you] about being a Chinese Canadian woman and being engaged in learning that might be particular to that experience.
> S: I think the main challenge is that Chinese women should be seen and not heard.

She described one female colleague of hers who was well-respected by the (male members of the) community because of her work in banking and her ability not to be controversial when the situation warranted it. Suzette saw herself as being different from this female colleague:

> S: In the women's group, she'll stand up for the things she believes in but whenever she's with the whole Chinese community, especially [the association] she will stay quiet and so she is very well respected. Whereas I have trouble staying quiet. [chuckle] So that's what they'd [the men] prefer. That Chinese women are seen and not heard.

To further her interests and lessen the possibility of being "ostracized" by the older Chinese males who held power in many community organizations, Suzette learned that she could be tactical about being seen and not heard. Being tactical may have helped her remain involved in her work despite constantly running up against the structures of sexism. In her case, they were invisibly linked to age and her public identity earlier described as "so-and-so's daughter:"

> E: What makes you think that you are considered a trouble-maker?
> S: Because my way of thinking is very different from the way .... older Chinese men think. I constantly have to bite my tongue and to show respect for them because I realize that that is the path that I need to take to get somewhere.
>
> ....
>
> S: ... [Sometimes] I [like] to protest or I'd like to take [an issue] to a higher body but to rebel and to be that outspoken would just make me ostracized by the Chinese community. So it's best to play by their rules. My feeling is that you play by their rules until you have enough power that you can change the rules. And I can do more changing inside the community .... inside the organization than from the outside. So although there are times when I wanted to walk out and say, "This is stupid. I disagree," I stayed there mainly because I could do more than .... if they asked me to leave.

This first section of the analysis illustrated how identities are complex and articulated within discourses of gender, race, and culture in our society. These women live within and across different borders in their everyday lives and their voices reveal the shifting meanings attributed to different identities. This is an adaptive feature of a "hyphenated" identity that needs to be stressed in terms of multidimensionality (Fischer, 1986; Kondo, 1990) and the shifting of meanings.

Stories of Be-longing

> "Don't you ever wonder where you came from, who your ... people were?"
> "I know who my people are. My mother and father, Eden, you, my friend Mercy, I suppose, even if she drives me crazy sometimes."
> "I mean the people who know your history. The people who will care about you even if they don't know you."
> (Lai, 1995, pp. 96-97)

> Chinese-Americans, when you try to understand what things in you are Chinese, how do you separate what is peculiar to childhood, to poverty, insanities, one family, your mother who marked your growing-up with stories, from what is Chinese? What is Chinese tradition and what is the movies?
> (Hong Kingston, 1977, p.13)

Stories of be-longing describe an array of activities and resources that provided the women with opportunities to enhance an awareness of Chinese Canadian female identity and identity issues. I selected the word "be-longing" to illustrate the layers of a sensed- affiliation and orientation toward a real or imagined Asian or Chinese Canadian "community" of women and men both "out there" and within familial relations. When a person is raised and socialized in a society where she is both a female and a racial minority, where does she establish those "mirrors" that inform her about the possibilities of self? While listening to the women's voices and their impressions of themselves and the world around them, they located some of the places in their lives where learning mirrors were constructed.

"A typical Chinese woman"

Speaking about themselves as women of Chinese descent meant that the participants regularly retraced a cognitive path between themselves and their families. As Marie had clearly stated, "You asked me about my place as a Chinese Canadian woman. I *can't* answer that without giving you a definition of my family because that's my place as a Chinese Canadian woman."

Many of the "warm up" questions I posed began by asking how the participants' families came to settle in Canada and subsequent impressions of parents and family life. The women's descriptions usually included the perceptions of herself within her family juxtaposed against perceptions of her parents and family within Canadian society. Szapocznick and Kurtines (1993) maintain that it is important to situate the minority individual within the contexts of her family, and in turn, to situate the family within a pluralistic society.

The majority of the women were well-versed about the histories of their immediate family, how they came to be in Canada, and some of the hardships and sacrifices their parents endured or still endure. For many of the women, the knowledge of where they stood in the story of their family was often a reminder to themselves that they had a role in establishing familial roots in this country.

While the topic of family is vast and can easily constitute an entire thesis on its own, I limit my analysis of familial mirrors to the gender dynamics within family that stood out in the interviews. Familial mirrors constitute an important site from which to understand how the participants made sense of growing up as females in Asian families embedded in the dominant Euro-Canadian context.

The majority of participants were the first generation of women in their families to be born or raised, and socialized outside of Asia or predominately Asian settings. As such, many of them had well-developed views of what being a female meant for themselves especially when they observed their mothers who had been raised in another time and place. Unlike the participants, most of their mothers had limited formal education and only Carrie's mother had completed high school. The mothers worked or had worked out of the house while raising their families in mainly service sector jobs. Francesca recalled how her mother had used herself as an example of the kind of work her daughter should transcend in order to be "successful" in this country:

> F: ... I knew ... because as I got older and I was in high school ... that my parents were limited. Their earning capacity was limited in the kind of work that they did. And I knew that I would *never* do the kind of work that they did. Actually, my mother said, "Francesca, this is what is going to happen to you if you don't get an education. You want to be a waitress all your life? [laugh] Do you want to be a cook like your dad all your life? No, you don't. It's hard physically - physically hard work."

Some of the participants offered descriptions of their mothers that show how they viewed Chinese women and women's roles in their families. Their observations were largely based on generational differences and cultural locations between themselves and their mothers. Almquist (1995) contends that for minority women the "speed of social change ... guarantees that contemporary women will inhabit a world that is different from that of their mothers. And mothers and daughters can inhabit different worlds at the same time within this country" (p.596). This was the case for some of the women when they looked at their mothers.

The most common area that the participants commented on about their mothers had to do with voicing opinions and being an independent thinker either within their marriages or in their daily lives. Francesca recalled that while growing up, her mother rarely contradicted Francesca's father. While she attributed her mother's initial deferential stance to a Chinese upbringing, Francesca also felt that her mother should voice her feelings and thoughts more readily now that she was in "the western world." Francesca empathized with her mother's situation; yet acknowledged that her mother did not have a "strong enough character" to always "stand up" for what she believed in when it came to marriage and family life:

> F: ... I don't think she totally believes everything my father believes in. ... I would say that my mother doesn't have a really strong character. She doesn't speak out as much as I think she should in the western world. She, I guess [has] been brought up in a certain way - in the old Chinese, and this is communist China Chinese ways. And she just feels, well, my

> husband knows best even though, I think now that they're older ... I think now that she does feel that she can voice what she feels, thinks and she's willing to take whatever comes ... I remember in the past, whenever she did try to say what she felt ... she wasn't heard.
> E: Could you give me an example of something you remember?
> F: I can't say that I remember a specific example. [pause] But I know it still stands out strongly in my mind that my father ruled the roost and my mother would just go along with him. And maybe [she'd] say to us and try to console us... I think she disagreed with him, but she didn't have the strong enough character or backbone to stand up and say, "Well listen, you know, maybe the girls know better because they are living in this society. They're growing up. They're learning the system. Maybe they *do* know better and you don't."

In relating her observations of a conversation with her mother about abortion Suzette remarked how she had been "surprised" by her Canadian-born mother's view point and "moderness" because she viewed her mother as a "typical Chinese woman." The fact that her mother was "her own thinker" and a woman who did not always adhere to what Suzette's father believed, impressed Suzette:

> S: ... For how I think she is a ... typical Chinese woman, there have been times when she has stunned me by her moderness. For example, one time we were talking about abortion and she said, "Well you know, that's terrible. Women should have their own choice." I'd never talked about abortion to my mother so ... I was very pleased to know that she ... believed that. I never talked about that with her because I never wanted to get into anything controversial with her cause I thought she'd be very much against ... women having a choice. Her views on capital punishment ... When we've discussed it she's been very good at articulating her belief that if someone's done something that's so terrible, that we *should* have capital punishment. And I really respect the fact that she does have an opinion on that. Whereas with things that have to do with politics, she just goes [with] whatever my father says. ... In some areas she's very much a follower and she does what she's told. ... But in some ... [other areas] she's definitely her own thinker. And I think that's great.

When I ask what she meant by being "stunned" at her mother's remark, Suzette described in more detail how she saw her mother within "the Chinese world" and what she thought that world necessarily expected from women in their role as daughters. Although her mother had been born and raised here, Suzette still viewed her in a context that was different from hers:

> S: Although she was born here, her mother was very old fashioned and very superstitious. And she quotes her mother a lot. ... In many ways, [my mother] comes off as [being] very traditional like in her beliefs and ... Chinese. I guess both ways. So in some ways, she's always ... seems to like the typical Chinese girl or what she feels she would like her daughters to be in the Chinese world - more quiet, more "see mun", you know, more dainty, marry Chinese husbands. In some ways she's been very traditional. But on the flip side, her western ways sees that, hey, we didn't marry Chinese but our husbands, our spouses are good to us. ... Our family is very sociable and she has always noticed that ... people always praise her because her children are able to go to cocktail parties and know how to speak, you know.

In the above exerpts, I noticed how Francesca and Suzette's descriptions of their mothers and Chinese females in general, were marked by a strong "traditional"-"modern" dichotomy when it came to the topic of women "speaking up" and voicing an opinion. On the one hand, being "traditional" was attributed to a Chinese upbringing, and Chineseness, and meant that a woman would either withold her opinion or not be too controversial in the expressing of that opinion. On the other hand, being "modern" seemed to be equated with being "western," and non-traditional, such that a woman could voice her opinion readily if she chose to do so. I perceived there to be two distinct sliding layers of gender and ethnic representations around women voicing their opinions. The participants had been sensitive to one or both in how they described and made sense of their mothers as Chinese women living in Canadian society.

Sometimes, the participants saw their mothers in a very different and surprising light that disrupted the binary of traditional-modern. They had much to teach their Canadian-raised daughters about being independent thinkers. While relating a second story about a "powerful learning experience," Marie described her reaction to a conversation she had had with her mother about abortion. Marie had attended a Catholic high school which was among those who took turns picketing an abortion clinic. "I went and signed my name. I don't know why I mentioned it but I told my parents." The conversation describes how Marie's mother had illustrated to her a valuable lesson about perspective taking and "contradiction":

> M: ... [M]y mom [and I] were in front of the TV and my mom said to me, ... "Don't you think these women have a right to safe ... procedures?" - essentially. And I never really thought about it like that. And also she was the one who was church-going more so in the family. And we would accompany *her* to go to church. And for her to say that ... It occurred to me that, "Whoa." I just assumed that [abortion] was wrong. I never really thought twice about why it was wrong. I just accepted what ... the church said. Here was my mom who was a church-goer. I guess that is when it occurred to me the contradiction. When people talk about things or a certain point of view and I also have a strong point of view, but if there's one predominant kind of perspective, I always play the devil's advocate because I don't think after that time, I'd actually ever taken one side without ... looking at the other.

Emily also described her mother as an "independent thinker." It was her mother who, in addition to waiting tables, managed a building that the family owned. In listening to Emily describe her mother, I sensed that Emily was proud of the ways in which she was an independent woman:

> Emily: ... I think my mother is an extremely independent thinker. My parents ... own a ... building. And my father doesn't know anything that happens that goes on there. My mother's the one that does all the paper work.
> E: Okay.
> Emily: She's the one that talks to the tenants. If somebody phones about the apartment, she's the one that deals with it. ... Like if there's a confrontation with any of the tenants, she's the one that deals with them. ... She knows who's going in, who's going out, what they all do. She's the one that deals with all the paperwork. ...
> .....
> E: So this is on top of her other daytime job?
> Emily: Yeah. Your regular six days a week job waiting on tables. Yeah.
> ....
> Emily: ... So she's the one that I think is a very fast learner. ... And she's very logical and practical minded.

The participants were sensitive to how their mothers' lives were conducted within the family and in Canadian society as women who had immigrated here or had been raised in a different era. Although some of their mothers differed according to the ways that they perceived women's roles in Canadian society, their mothers were mirrors for their own lives as women.

"We have an affinity"

Close friendships with other Asian Canadian women helped to validate and affirm those experiences and insights that the women might not readily articulate or be inclined to share among non-Asian friends. When Francesca described situations in which there were other Chinese Canadians, she mentioned that she would always notice them. She also noticed that when she was in a group of people with one or more Chinese Canadians in addition to herself, she described feeling a sense of affiliation even if she had never met the person before:

> F: I think we have an affiniity. I seem to make friends. I can make friends easily with them if I want to. If I think, "Oh, I think I want to be friends with this person," there's already a base or commonality. It's because we're Asian. We are Chinese. There are certain Chinese ways and mannerisms or behaviours that we ... or I think, we are aware of.

The sense of affiliation to which Francesca referred was also described by Marie when describing this connection with close Asian Canadian female friends:

> M: ... I had a Korean girlfriend in high school. ... And I've got one other Chinese Canadian girlfriend and now... And we'll maybe talk about certain things about being women but because we're both Asian women ... there's a little bit more of a connection and a bit more of an "aha" [that says] "I know *exactly* what you mean." ... I don't have good examples of this. It's just like there's a feeling there.

Carrie identified an affinity between Chinese Canadian women when we discussed the topic of Chinese Canadian women being role models for younger Chinese Canadian women. At first, Carrie considered ethnicity and culture as unimportant to her choice of a role model. Later, she shifted her position when she acknowledged that others might benefit from having a role model if they could learn by comparing their family experiences to each others'. Comparison was seen as being beneficial when it validated experiences and could reassure somebody that her experiences were both "normal" and that she was "not the only one out there." The similarity that Carrie referred to was anchored in familial experiences, especially interactions with one's parents:

> E: What would [Chinese Canadian women as role models] be beneficial though, for this group of young women?
> C: I guess that they would have the same experiences. You know, ... if I was a role model for someone, then maybe they could see how I related to my parents and they could see that they are relating to their parents in the same way and know that that's normal. And know that it's just not *their* parents or they're not the only one out there. Cause they ... we have the same ... We might have the same kind of problems that we're going through or things with our parents that we both have to deal with because we're Chinese Canadian.

Carrie, Francesca, and Marie each also raised similar observations about friendships with Asian and Chinese Canadian females. They pointed out either that they had no close friendships with women like themselves or that these friendships were a very recent and relatively rare phenomenon. For Carrie, not knowing many Chinese Canadians in her own peer group appeared to be indicative of perceiving herself as being outside even an imagined group of Chinese Canadians:

> C: I don't know if I'd say that I belong to a group of Chinese Canadians cause I don't really know if I know a lot of people that I associate with that are my friends. I don't really know too much about what it is like for other Chinese Canadians that are my age or my group.

Later in the interview, when Carrie described how she saw herself in relation to other Chinese peers who were not Canadian-born as herself, but had attended the same high school, she referred back to the marker of same-ethnic friendships and participating in activities with other Chinese Canadians. For her, these friendships were meaningful regarding whether or not someone would "relate with being Chinese:"

> C: ... I don't relate too much with being Chinese. ... That's not going to help much on your tape. [chuckle] But being Chinese Canadian in terms

> of [how I see] being Chinese Canadian ... I don't relate much with being Chinese. Whereas people in my high school, they did have other friends who were Chinese outside of school who went to the ... Chinese Ball [in town] and things [like that]. They did activities with other Chinese people and I think that in that way, they did tend to relate with being Chinese more [than I.]

Marie discussed her perceptions about being the only Chinese or Asian Canadian in her group of friends. She noted that the group was very diverse in its ethnic and socioeconomic composition. Marie stressed that "being almost" the only "non-white" person in the group had absolutely no bearing on her comfort or her ability to have diverse close friendships. Secure in this position, she used the word, "disenfranchised" to describe the experience of looking from the outside into her group of friends. Marie's use of this word reinforced her recognition that she was aware of the ways she "fit in" and felt with groups of people:

> M: My circle of friends ... does not have another Chinese person in it. Pretty well everybody in my subgroup's "white". Okay. And I think my group's kind of diverse because there's different cultures. Like my partner's German and I've got a couple girlfriends. One is from Quebec. And they're from different socioeconomic backgrounds too. So there's a diversity in background there that we can relate to on different levels.
> E: Yeah.
> M: But in terms of culture, it's not there. In terms of language, it's not there. In a way I almost feel like ... partially part of my sub-grouping is ...[I] feel a bit disenfranchised to some extent.
> E: Hmm.
> M: Not in a powerlessness way but ... I think that if I was in a group of people I could make myself fit in or feel ... or look like I feel very comfortable or maybe even feel comfortable.

Both Francesca and Marie spoke most strongly about the central role of personal friendships with Chinese Canadian women friends as a source of self-knowing and validation. Compared to several years ago, at the time of our interview they had more Asian Canadian women friends. Close friendships provided these two women with a forum in which their "insider's" perpsectives might not only be voiced, but also be heard empathetically by women who they viewed as being similar to them. Both Francesca and Marie perceived this as a positive influence; yet, the validation and opportunities for learning about their identities as women of Asian descent had slightly different functions for each of them.

It was not until several years ago, when Francesca joined an all women's sports team comprised of mainly first and second generation Chinese Canadians, that she developed close ties with other Chinese Canadians of any kind other than her siblings. Significant in this example was that this team was well-known in town on the basis of it's all-female, all-Chinese members when it was involved in recreational events and competitions. Some of these events were high profile even though the members were non-professional atheletes. Therefore, the team had a public identity as an all "Chinese Canadian women's team." This feature was important in re-contextualizing Francesca's prior understanding of herself and her "Chineseness" from the context of her family to a broader context of other minority women who shared with her their stories of growing up as a Chinese daughter.

Through the sharing of stories with her team-mates, Francesca gained considerable reassurance that the difficulties and pains of her experiences as an "immigrant's child" were not unusual compared to the family lives of many of her team-mates. In fact, earlier in our interview, her comments to me suggested the degree to which she had always perceived her family life and upbringing as something she rarely discussed with others. While telling me about her family, Francesca pointed out that a younger brother, who is the only son in the family among several daughters, is physically-challenged. In the telling of her story within that of her family's, Francesca's understanding of self was clearly multidimensional as it was based on gender as a status position and how her parents understood her position relative to her brother's. As a "daughter" and "girl" with a "second-class status" she was "out to prove them wrong":

> F: ... I don't tell many people my early beginnings cause I think it kind of floors them sometimes. I don't know very many people that have come from the kind of family I have come from. Not only being an immigrant, but also having the ... added situation of having a ... handicapped person, let's say, and having to deal with that growing up with the kind of Chinese values that my parents had, you know. It's important to have a son and daughters are second-class citizens. ... I don't feel they really treated us as ... human beings [chuckle] or equal, equal status. "You're only girls." Or "What can we expect of the girls?" You know, they used to talk ... like that as adults - [my] mom and dad and my grandmother. Well, I was out to prove them wrong, of course. I guess that's why I am the way I am.... All those things contributed to ... the person I became.

In the beginning of Francesca's talk about her relationship with her team-mates, her main emphasis was initially an affirmation about her family life. The friendships were based on sharing stories about up-bringing and familial ties as evidenced by the topics that fueled the conversations among her team-mates. As a result of these conversations, her team-mates had been mirrors for her because they enabled her to see that she was not "any different" from them. Francesca could discern how they "were treated" in their families and how she was treated in her's:

> F: Actually [my team-mates] are second generation whose moms and dads were born here. And I thought, "Wow, this is fascinating."
> E: What was fascinating about it?
> F: I just thought I got to share stories. "What was it like growing up in your family?" "Was it very hard and strict?" "Oh... my mother let me do whatever I want." [laugh] ... I was motivated to find out what their childhood and upbringing was like compared to my own. And was it because there was a difference in that generation?
> E: What motivated you? What made you want to ask them?
> F: I just wanted to know if I was any different from them. ... I just wanted to know what kind of relationship they had with their families. That was important to me cause ... I would like to have a harmonious relationship with my mom and dad, but I don't think that will ever happen because of this generation thing, being an immigrant. I've not experienced the immigrant thing. I don't know what they've really sacrificed for us although I hear about it [chuckle] ... occasionally. And I just thought I wanted to swap stories to see if ... they were treated differently as kids and if they had any of these pressures. ... What are

> their values in life compared to mine? You know, those kind of general life things that people might want to talk about. ... And I was quite reassured [laugh] which is good.

When I asked Francecsca (in a follow-up interview) why she joined the team and what she learned about herself through meeting the women, she explained that it gave her insights about "the Chinese culture" from a completely different vantage point outside the context of her family. Compared to her responses in the first interview, her understanding of this experience had shifted from learning about "the immigrant thing" to making sense about being Chinese and how part of her rebellion against her parents was also a rebellion against the Asian and Chinese aspects of her life. Her identity position had therefore, shifted from knowing herself solely as "an immigrant's child" and "the immigrant thing" against which she rebelled, to an understanding that rebellion had simultaneously been waged against her own Asianess and Chineseness which she could now accept.

The friendships and commaraderie with her team-mates brought her to a place of comfort and reassurance with others who not only listened but also understood her as a similar insider. Francesca no longer felt, in her words, that she was "abnormal" and alone in her experience:

> F: I think I felt very comfortable with them. It didn't take very long to have things to talk about and share childhood experiences or even the problems that come up between children and Asian parents. I felt reassured that some of the problems that I thought our family was experiencing throughout my lifetime living at home, they were kind of common to other people's lives. (chuckle) Or other Asian families so I wasn't - as what I would think - abnormal. (chuckle) I feel I want to use that word as I thought I *was.* It was good for me [to make these friends]. I really felt comforted. I enjoyed their company. I just think, okay yeah, at one point in my life I rebelled against the Asian culture, being Chinese and I just sort of really focused on making friends in the Caucasian world and I sort of left that [Asian part] behind. Then as I guess I got older and I found that you know, I still felt there were some unanswered problems and questions dating from my childhood and I felt that I needed to try to find some answers and I thought one way was to find some Asian friends. Yeah. So that's why I did it.

> E: Would you say it was a sort of conscious decision?
> F: Yeah. Yeah. It was one of my aims to try and just bring closure to some of those problems and I think one of those ways that I thought I could do that was to seek some friendships with people that hopefully shared a similar background and could understand the culture from which I came.
>
> ....
>
> E: What would you say you learned about yourself from meeting those other [women]?
> F: I think that I learned that I'm not ashamed or I'm not making ... Let me back track a bit. Having met these women, I found that it's okay to be Chinese. You don't have to go out of your way (chuckle) to rebel against anything that is Asian or Chinese, in my case. They're people just like anybody else. People who have needs and concerns and ups and downs in life. It was a good thing. I just felt that it just rounded out my life. Yeah. Cause I also think that I missed being with my older sister who was a big part of my life. ... I wanted to see if I could find someone who would offer similar, I guess comforts, that my older sister does and did. But what did I find out about myself? That I no longer needed to rebel, basically in that I accept who I am, my background, my roots, and my ancestry. And it's fine. You know who you are, and a little bit of where you came from and then you just go on with life. That everybody has needs and some of them are similar. Yeah.

Marie talked about friendships with Asian Canadian female friends in different terms. Her friendship with one particular close friend called Tania, whom she mentioned several times in the interview (and recommended as a possible participant in this inquiry), was integral in raising her own consciousness and insights about the lived realities of gender and race differences. It was also important in how she learned to see herself as an Asian female from the perspective of being "noticed" by other people.

Marie explained that her friendship with Tania offered the opportunity to discuss her perceptions about "internalized racism" in her family in such a way that Tania, a fifth generation Chinese Canadian, could also understand:

> M: Internalized. Internalized racism. That's it. Yeah. So that was kind of an interesting question for me. That's some of the things that I'm kind of looking at. And that's the thing ...[as] I was saying about other Chinese women like with Tania. I was talking to her about that. I was saying [to her], "Yeah I was just thinking about this." I was explaining this to her. And she was like, "Yeah, it's true." She could relate on me. We were

> talking about ... our experiences that way in terms of who we were looking to date with.
> E: Yeah.
> M: I mean her family's been in Canada for six and five generations. She's one of four siblings and they *all* have non-Chinese partners. All of them.

In another narrative which involved Marie and her close friend, Tania, Marie was attuned to her Chineseness when she was in public with another Asian woman because of their physical resemblances. When considering the few Chinese female friends she had, Marie's construction of her own Chinese female identity was forged in a recognition that this identity had a public or representational component:

> M: ... When I have a good friend that's Chinese ... I don't know ... It's weird. I can hang out with my friend Tania. When I go out in public with her, I *feel* more noticeable with her. Whereas if I was out with a girlfriend I have, who is very vivacious and has a kind of spring about her, together we draw attention too, but I don't feel as conspicuous with her cause I know she's drawing a lot of the attention compared to me. I think she'd be attracting more attention than me. But if I'm with a girlfriend who looks like me or we both have this dark hair and other features in common, but she's got a different fashion sense than I do, I really feel that people will notice us equally. This makes me a little more conscious because people are noticing ... me. But all of a sudden, there's this real comfort in being out in public with somebody who's similar to me.

Although Marie did not specify if she was attracting male or female attention, she was nontheless cognizant that the perception she held of herself would change depending on the race and appearance of the person who she was with. Her use of the words, "being noticed", "drawing a lot of attention", being "conspicuous" and to be noticed "equally" demonstrated that Marie was attuned to the ways in which females are viewed on the basis of their appearance and that race is heavily factored into that appearance. In a society where female standards of beauty are narrow and generally consist of being "white", blonde-haired, tall, and blue-eyed, Asian females are unable to aspire to or challenge such one-sided images of femaleness (Kim, 1981). Marie's comments about being noticed suggested to me that she had developed an understanding of the intertwinings of race and gender and of how racial differences influenced feelings of being seen in a company of other females.

Francesca's and Marie's friendships may have enabled them to both share stories with other Chinese Canadian women and have those insights and perspectives mirrored back to them. Heilbrun (1988) points out the importance of women sharing their stories with others through conversation. "Women must turn to each other for stories; they must share the story of their lives and their hopes and their unacceptable fantasies" (p.44).

I maintain that the sharing of personal stories from one's intersected position as a woman and an ethnic minority is critical as exemplified with Francesca who moved through the story of her life for years without knowing that others also lived a similar version. That the friendship with Tania enabled Marie to further engage in discussions about "internalized racism" indicated "border talk." This is the type of conversation from the margins that questions a previous, deeply-held view of the world. It acknowledges the workings of power that structure how certain tacit views come to be held as normative. Furthermore, Marie's awareness of how she felt when she was in public with another Asian Canadian female (who had similar features as herself), highlights how learning about identity included being sensitive to the link between female appearance and race. These diverse experiences and moments of re-cognition and confirmation about their Chineseness was evidence of how close female friendships enabled these two women to learn about identity.

"No. Chinese is good."

It was striking that when the women talked about close friendships with Chinese Canadians, very few of them mentioned friendships or close associations with Chinese or Asian males. Chinese males who were non-family members were either largely absent from or remained on the periphery of our conversations even though there were degrees of variation across the interviews. Only Suzette had discussed associating with Chinese males through community work. This general absence, however, suggested that most of the participants' understandings of themselves in terms of Chinese and Asian Canadian friendships were largely gender-specific and limited to other females. The few instances in which males were alluded to in the conversations usually had to do with dating and marital partnerships.

Both Francesca and Suzette brought up the topic of Chinese males when they described them as preferred marital partners by their parents. Suzette noted, "I think my parents always wanted one of us [kids] to have married Chinese. Well, they did like *all* of us to have married Chinese mainly because that is the Chinese way of thought."

Even when Francesca's sister married a non-Chinese male, she knew that her parents had always preferred her and her sisters to marry a Chinese male rather than "outside the race." Francesca described how another neighbourhood Chinese family with three daughters had all "basically obeyed their parents" by marrying men whom their parents introduced. In contrast, she chose not to follow her parents' wishes and expressed this by thwarting her mother's match making attempts:

> F: ... I would openly oppose her and I would make sure I was not at home. And actually, when I was home one day, I was really a mean person [laugh] and quite to her embarrassment. Cause of course, she'd choose people that I was not totally ... interested in. ... Well, basically, her type of son-in-law, somebody who she would want to be in the family, and of course I'd say, "Forget it!" [laugh]. ... [My parents are] not very liberal-minded sometimes and that bothers me. Yeah.
> E: So being "liberal-minded" would be what?
> F: More accepting of outsiders. ... You know, they're not ...I think they're a bit ... racial [chuckle]
> E: Raci ... Racist?
> F: Racist. ... Yeah. Racist. They did not ... at the beginning, anyway ... I don't think that it's such a major problem now because one of my sisters [chuckle] already made that commitment, sinned [laugh] and ended up ...

> In other words, she married outside the race and after they went and met [my] parents, I guess, they're, "Oh, I guess he's alright." [laugh] So it's not so much a big deal anymore, but it certainly was ... something that was hammered into us. "No, Chinese is good." [chuckle] "The others, we don't know about so leave them alone and don't look that way" kind of thing. And of course, going back to the match-making thing. I totally embarrassed [my mother] And even though she kept trying, I wouldn't go, comply and she was always mad at me about that and that's what she brings up time and time again.

Suzette described how her family, including her parents, were intially perceived in an unfavourable light by other Chinese in their community because her parents' "westernization" had enabled her and her siblings to marry caucasians. In fact, her parents suffered "embarrassment" because of this. As a result, the family also developed a "reputation" that had taken time to wear off:

> S: [My parents] started off very traditional because of their parents. But then, as they have grown up [here] they have gotten more westernized as well. So they started to accept the westernization in themselves. We're all very non-Chinese. And there was a time when they were embarrassed to walk down Chinatown because our reputation of all marrying non-Chinese.
> E: Okay...
> S: We all married non-Chinese and there was a time when they were embarrassed by that. And one day, my mom said to me you know, some person in the community who always commented that we all married non-Chinese commented that half of the families in Chinatown that had married Chinese ... A lot of them have split-up. That is amazing how all our marriages have lasted all these years and yet, they used to always tease us or put us down because of that.

Suzette also pointed out that she had not dated very many Chinese males mainly because there were not very many opportunities to do so in the town where she grew up. As the conversation evolved, it became less a matter of ethnicity per se that was important, but that Chinese males who were seen as being "modern" like their "non-Chinese" counterparts were more compatible:.

> S: .... Unfortunately, being brought up in [my town] your options for dating were very slim because there weren't very many available Chinese men when I was growing up and half of them were my relatives anyways. So it wasn't that I didn't go out with Chinese. There just weren't... For every hundred non-Chinese men I met there'd be about one Chinese guy around and so there wasn't that option. And the ones I

> did meet, I found that a lot of the Chinese men that I've dated weren't as... modern as probably a lot of the non-Chinese men. So that's probably why I ended up with a non-Chinese husband.

In the above excerpts, Chinese males were usually only talked about in juxtaposition to their "non-Chinese" or Euro-Canadian counterparts. Through this counterdistinction, association and lack of association with Chinese males illustrated several features about how the participants viewed themselves. First, males were related to the degree to which the women perceived themselves as either "obeying" or opposing familial and community expectations as a "good daughter." In Francesca's case, rebuking her mother's attempts at introducing her to perspective Chinese partners identified her as being "non-compliant" compared to the three Chinese women next door who all married the men their parents had selected for them. In Suzette's situation, having a "non-Chinese" spouse had, in the beginning, directly been connected to her parents' experiences of "embarrassment" among other families. That preferred males also meant Chinese males, was clearly noticed by the women, their parents, and the people with whom they interacted. As Francesca noted, "Chinese is good." The *absence* of Chinese males in both these women's lives influenced how Francesca and Suzette saw themselves in both their roles as daughters and Chinese females.

Second, in both Francesca's and Suzette's narratives, parental acceptance of "non-Chinese" males marked how they perceived parental changes in attitudes regarding racial tolerance and the adoption of "liberal-minded", "western" views. Francesca described her parents as becoming more "liberal-minded" and less "racist" when her sister married "outside the race." Similarly, Suzette equated her parents' recognition of "non-Chinese" males as a process of "accepting the westernization in themselves." It was also striking how Suzette constructed Chinese males' identities as partners in terms of being or not being "modern" when compared to their "non-Chinese" counterparts.

In exploring the different ways in which the participants both perceived their male counter-parts as perspective partners and the familial meanings associated with them, "Chinese males" marked the degree to which the women constructed themselves to be either "good" or "non-compliant." Moreover, the examples of crossing racial and cultural borders through marriage and/or partnerships with "non-Chinese males" were conceived as "temperature readings" of how parents had made "progress" in relaxing "Chinese-only" boundaries.

"I lived it, but I didn't notice it."

A third area that offered opportunties for many of the women to discuss and reflect on facets of identity and self was in formal education. Again, there was variability among the women. For Carrie, Suzette, and Emily, especially, formal education offered academic opportunities for these pursuits.

Carrie described an anthropology course that she had taken the previous year, in which she was able to begin to be aware that she was Chinese. This appeared to be the first class she had ever taken where her "minority" experiences were discussed. It brought learning to a different level, in that her Chinese experiences became the site for both personal and intellectual development. In this description, Carrie's previous criterion for "being Chinese" had shifted from friendships and activities to values:

> C: ... [T]aking that cultural anthropology class made me realize that some of my values were because I was Chinese. ... I've ... learned that now. ... I really didn't think about it before.
> E: Umm hmm. So it kind of started you becoming a little bit more ...
> C: Aware of being Chinese. Yeah, of being Chinese and what it means to be Chinese and that's only because of this class. This class was always talking about this. Like about minorities and what it's like to be a minority ...
> C: How was that class?
> E: It was very interesting. Yeah. We had to write these journals after every class. It really made me think. I had a hard time writing them cause it was so hard to, first of all, [write] definitions of things. Coming

> up with *my* definition of "Chinese Canadian" ... [and] my definition for "minority." And then to verbalize what I mean[t] to say. And then to also think about what I think because I never really thought about it before.

By enrolling in one Chinese history course, Suzette made a decision to change her major from English and psychology to Asian studies. Through subsequent courses, Suzette discovered topics and fields of study which were compelling to her and with which she "could identify." Subject and object began to inform each other. This was a significant part of her university experience because she said that she could "stand back and look at it all and see the big picture." "The big picture" to which Suzette refers, was, I believe, the story of herself connected both to her family and to her "Chinese roots:"

> S: ... As soon as I took [the Chinese history course], it was like right on. ... I felt it was something I needed in my life. Maybe a connection with my Chinese roots. Maybe it was time to find out more about my background. So that was the start of it. I looked into what they were offering like Chinese language, history of China. Then there were other parts like Japan, Southeast Asia. It just interested me so I started to change over.
> E: What was it about this course?
> S: Something that I could identify with. I don't even remember what the course was but I just remember feeling like this is something that, one, I could identify [with], something that I wanted to learn. Maybe in English lit and psychology, I stopped getting the stuff I wanted to learn - [it] no longer became interesting. It became more work and with the Chinese history at the time, it just seemed like, "Wow. This is great." And I was eager to learn this stuff. And it wasn't all Chinese history. I found Japanese history just as interesting. ... A lot of my interest when we were studying Malaysia was the Chinese population in Malaysia. ... It seemed to always come back a little more to my Chinese roots.
> E: How did learning those historical things and starting in that Asian studies route ... how did that connect to your life? You talked about identification. At that time, were you doing other things, community work?
> S: No. None at all. I think it was a start to acknowledging my culture. It was the start of appreciating my culture. Before then, I lived it but I didn't notice it. It was just day to day. All of a sudden it was like looking outside and looking at the things that my family does, the cultural [things], my grandmother. I began to stand back and look at it all and see the big picture whereas before, [I] was basically living it and not appreciating it. That's the major thing that the education started to do.

Another aspect of Suzette's education was that it enabled her to see how women from "different cutures" lived. Although she still found that courses about "the Chinese Canadian experience" and "Chinese women's" experiences were lacking, she began to develop what she called, "feminist perspectives" that grew from studying about the lives and historic conditions of women from different ethnic and racial groups both in Canada and around the world. In relating the courses she took and the topics of papers she wrote about women's lives and forms of oppression, I was impressed by Suzette's recollection of her learning experiences for studying the lives of other women and knowing about their struggles appeared to have left a deep impression on her:

> S: Like as I said, I got my degree but I would love to see more courses that are to do with the Chinese experience, the Chinese Canadian experience, Chinese women's experience. I took a lot of women's studies courses and anthropology ... and most of the work I did in those areas had to do with women in those cultures. That was because I couldn't really get that in Asian studies. ... It was more historically-based than sociologically-based.
> E: What courses did you take in women's studies and anthropology that gave you that outlet or way to study?
> S: I took anthropology cause I wanted to take cultural anthropology. ... That was when I did my paper on female circumcision. ... When I was in ... Asian studies my paper was on foot-binding. Just looking at the fact that there's different forms of femal mutilation in many cultures. ... It was interesting to look at women in different cultures. ... I think that started a lot of my feminist perspectives. Sociology, I looked at women in the workforce, especially First Nations women. ... I'm more into people. Anything that is a course on people and their lives, that's what's interests me.

Emily and I talked extensively about her burgeoning interest to include and "speak out" about diversity issues and eurocentrism in the teaching of history. When she was completing her first undergraduate degree in Canadian history, she had never thought about proposing to professors the idea of reseach from a non-Euro-Canadian perspective because neither the history program nor her professors engaged her in this process. Later, when a critical perspective was encouraged and built into the the teacher-training program by its view to help students become "critical thinkers," Emily also began to emerge as a critical thinker. Compelling is Emily's choice of the word "confrontation" to describe how she would have perceived her actions of proposing to do research that did not "conform" to the topics and perceived interests of her classmates and professors. Her selection of "confrontation" is understandable, given her self-described status as "the only Chinese person in any history class that I ever took:"

> Emily: ... And when we were talking about Canadian history very rarely [did] we ever talk about Chinese Canadian history.
> ....
> Emily: ... It's only in the last five or six years that I've realized how few Chinese Canadians there are [at my university] (laugh) and even fewer in the history department. ... At the time when I was doing history, it was sort of in the back of my mind like there's not very many visible minorities doing history, doing Canadian history.
> E: And when you were taking this degree did you ... in writing essays, doing research, [given] your particular interest, were you able to pursue that interest? Say looking at Chinese Canadians?
> Emily: No actually I didn't. I just sort of conformed like anybody else. Just went along with what the professor wanted us to do. So I never really sort of addressed ... I never really tried to get into any kind of ... confrontation. Like ask them, "Why aren't we talking about Chinese Canadians." "Why aren't we talking about this or ... you know... who are the people who wrote this history book?" It's all from a Euro-centric point of view,... those kinds of things. Later on when I got into (the education program) I started to speak out more about that. ... [T]hey wanted us to realize ... who ... the people [are] writing the history books. That they don't represent everybody's point of view and they want us to ... encourage students to be critical thinkers and think about those kinds of things.

When I asked Emily if she had ever thought that she might write a paper from a non-eurocentric point of view, her response was that, at the time of her history degree, she had not perceived herself as having "a right to say something." This changed after she became involved in "social justice" volunteer work. Emily attributed this shift to her volunteer work. I attribute this difference also to the teacher-training program's either "sanctioning" or encouraging diverse perspectives. As such, learning what she wanted to learn no longer became an issue of "confrontation" but having "a right to say something." Emily had also developed into a different kind of learner by the time she was studying to be a teacher. While pursuing this second program of study, she was no longer there "just to get an education;" she was concerned with how that learning was going to be meaningful to future students as well as herself:

> E: ... But did it ever occur to you, "Oh, gee I *could* write a paper on [a non-eurocentric perspective]"...
> Emily: I don't think at that point I was ready yet. I hadn't done that much with outside of just being a student. I wasn't involved in my volunteer work yet. ... At that point it hadn't really occurred to me that yeah, I could do something you know. It wasn't until afterwards when I started to get really involved I realized that oh, I do have a right to say something. That I could have done something you know. At that point I was just there to just get an education. To learn what I [could].
> E: ... Now correct me if I'm wrong cause I don't want to put words into your mouth... Are you saying that that education was maybe removed from your own experiences of being ... Chinese?
> Emily: Yeah. I think so in a way. Yeah. I think so in a way.
> E: You didn't see yourself in that content?
> Emily: I was sort of detached from it for a long time. I think it wasn't until I got really involved in minority issues and racism and women's issues that I started to really think, well what did I really learn all this time I've been in university? Did I learn anything about myself? And what did I learn about the establishment and what ... you have to be? What westerners, western people or North Americans perceive as a successful person? What's their criteria of someone who's successful? Someone who has a good job and is educated? And what do we mean by being educated? Do we mean someone who's just gone to university and conformed to everything? Or do we mean somebody that's an independent thinker, that's a critical thinker? And I don't think that's valued enough in our society.

In summary, when the women saw their experiences mirrored in the courses and programs and were encouraged to pursue these interests, formal education contributed to self-awareness about their Chinese roots and background. Learning was no longer "detached" from the learner. For some of the women, such as Suzette and Emily, education began to take on a different meaning when they perceived some of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds being recognized in courses and programs.

"Reading their stories"

A fourth and final feature to the theme of be-longing consists of two areas:

1) how Asian North American literature impacted on how the women see themselves within a community of other Asians;

2) what these experiences offered toward understanding themselves as minority women.

Mair (as cited in Howard, 1991) asserts the importance of seeing oneself in the stories of similar-others:

> Stories are habitations. We live in and through stories. ... Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are *lived* by the stories of our race and place. It is this enveloping and constituting function of stories that is especially important to sense more fully. We are, each of us, locations where the stories of our place and time become partially tellable. (p.192)

Asian North American literature is not a new genre. Over the last decade, its growing popularity, particularly in the "mainstream" cultural landscape, has been recognized (Daniels, 1988; Espiritu, 1997; Marchetti, 1991). Liu (as cited in Haysom, 1997) describes the current wave of popular Asian North American fiction in liberatory terms as a casting off of psychological oppressions. This assessment of Asian North American writers purging "a sense of apology for who and what you were" (Lui as cited in Hayson, 1997, p.D1) through literature speaks squarely to the women's self-reported feelings of validation and self-acknowledgment they gained by reading books by and about other Asian North Americans. Although the topic of popular fiction and movies was not a part of my interview schedule, many of the women initiated this discussion in the course of our conversations. They were both nostalgic and critical about various books, indicating that stories were necessary mirrors to re-assess, acknowledge, and hold up for questioning selfhood and the representational aspects of an Asian North American identity.

Suzette took an historical perspective when she spoke about the stories she had read throughout her life that depicted the lives of the Chinese in China and Chinese North Americans. Stories made significant impressions on how she saw herself from the time she was in elementary school until the present. Suzette's favourite book in elementary school was the now controversial The Seven Chinese Brothers[11]; a colourfully illustrated children's tale set in China. Suzette noted that, as a young child, the book was the only one of its kind where she ever saw any Chinese people like herself. This was despite the facts that both all the characters were male and that the story was set in an ambiguous, crystallized period in history where the people lived "simply" and dressed in "traditional" attire.

Seeing the pictures was significant for her because, as Suzette had mentioned earlier in the interview, she had experiences of being taunted, "beaten up" and getting "into fights" while attending an elementary school where she was one of three Chinese children:

> E: What things did they call you? What were they focusing on when they called you names? Was it physical things ...?
> S: One term that to this day cannot come out of my mouth. ... Well, I can say it, but I have trouble saying the word "chink," to the point when people talk about the crack in the wall or ... the chink in the armor ...
> E: Oh yeah. That little piece.
> S: Yeah. Every hair in my body stands on end when I hear that word to this day.

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[11] Mahy, M., Illustrations by Tseng, J., & M. Tseng, (1990) The Seven Chinese Brothers. New York: Scholatic. This publication was not the same one which was available in the 1960s or 1970s to which Suzette and I were referring. The one that we were discussing had illustrations of Chinese people depicted as stereotypical "Orientals." The seven brothers all have exaggerated "Oriental" facial features, wear their hair in queues, and dress in brocade-like robes such that they are indistinguishable from one another. As one problematic saying often directed at Asians (both in Asia and North America) expounds, "They all look the same."

For Suzette, her physical features alone seemed to magnify all the cultural and racial differences between herself and her peers. The result was feelings of exclusion and that being different had stigmatizing effects. So when Suzette saw Chinese people in a storybook who bore a similar (yet stereotypical) physical resemblence to herself, the visual experience gave her a tremendous sense of reassurance as a child:

> S: ... And I was made to feel different and that I was a "bad" different. ... Those memories stay in your mind. There were a lot of kids that were fine and welcomed [you], their families welcomed you but I remember in general on the school ground, I was different. I was different because I was Chinese and I looked different. To them, everything, my home life, was different, so I wasn't really accepted. I had trouble with that. I remember [at] the library ... there were no books that had to do with Chinese culture. ... The only one was The Seven Chinese Brothers.
> E: Oh yeah. I remember that one.
> S: I took out that book so often and about five years ago, my husband bought it for our [home] library just because I remember that was the only book that had Chinese people in it.
> E: I remember that book was almost banned or there was a lot of controversy around that book. ... Perhaps it was in [another district] that it was [purported to be] presenting ...
> S: Chinese as stereotypes.
> E: Or something around that. I just can't remember what happened to it.
> S: The thing is that if I looked at it now, yeah, I would probably say that it probably has a lot of stereotypes. But back then, to me, it was just identification that we were ... that [there were] Chinese people that looked like me in a book.

Suzette also spoke fondly about Pearl Buck's story, The Good Earth, as part of a conversation we had about role models. She credits the book and author, Pearl Buck, with encouraging her to begin a journey of "acknowledging [her] roots:"

> S: When I was going to school in junior high, the show, The Good Earth came up and I watched it with my family. Then I went and got the book by Pearl S. Buck and read it. She is a role model in that she brought the Chinese perspective into my life that I [had] rebelled against.
> E: You mean Pearl S. Buck or the book?
> S: Yeah. Well, The Good Earth was the visual part and to see the lives of the people in China because it was so distant ... I was Chinese but I never had any idea what life in China was like. I'd never seen many Chinese people on TV unless they were fu-man-chu's or something like that. So

> The Good Earth brought the Chinese experience home to me. That's when I started to acknowledge my roots. ... The last trip to China I was able to arrange ... a side trip to ... visit the home of Pearl S. Buck because I wanted to thank her in *my* way for something in her writing ... [that] triggered something that opened my heart, my mind to my roots.

Francesca's relationship with Asian North American stories began when she enrolled in a children's multicultural literature course. The course was a required part of the teacher-training program, and until then, she had absolutely no interest in reading anything about either Asia or Asian North Americans. Francesca discovered that the stories offered her new openings and ways to understand the values of her parents and their understanding of the Chinese culture:

> F: ... I took a multicultural children's lit course two years ago and that exposed me to Denise Chong's and Amy Tan's books. And the Korean writers... Paul Yee and Lawrence Yep and all those authors. So I enjoyed reading their stories and I began to understand my parents better. I began to understand just what the Chinese culture is all about and why they believe these things or why they did these things, superstitions included. It was based on these beliefs whether I believed in them or not. Yeah. So I [also] read The Wild Swans. I mean, I was *fascinated* by these books.
> E: Yeah.
> F: Just truly. I read them one Christmas and I thought, "Wow." And before that, not... none at all. "Don't care." "Why would I want to read that?"

In the follow-up interview, I asked Francesca both why she had admitted to being "fascinated" by these stories and, moreover, what she learned about herself through reading them. Central to her explanation was the sense of personal and social validation gleaned from the experiences of the female characters and authors. That these women told their stories and those of other women in their family was regarded by Francesca as both a violation of "personal confidence" in the family and an act of courage. As a result, Francesca could make new meaning of her family life when she saw her story mirrored in those of other Chinese Canadian women:

> F: ... The reason I was fascinated [with the books] was because I didn't realize that other people sort of were feeling the same way I felt and that they actually had the courage to write it all down and share it with the world. ... I was, I guess, surprised. Being Chinese and being brought up the way I was - I was taught not to share personal confidences, or personal, ... real feelings with a lot of people. ... I didn't think that people would dare to publish for the world to read and hear such stories of their hardships or their sufferings, or their good times, bad times, whatever. I was just astonished to find that on the book shelf and I was grateful ... I took the course, that I was able to really understand the lives of other Asian women. ... [I] was fascinated to find out how things evolved [for them.] ... And just the unhappiness was overwhelming in some cases, and just the support in others.
> E: Do you remember anything in particular or any books in particular where you saw that?
> F: I quite enjoyed Denise Chong's The Concubine's Children. ... I just never thought that such stories would ever be revealed outside the family, the immediate family. .... I guess it's because I was always taught this is not for anyone else to know or hear. And they, [the writers] violated that! ... My god!
> E: She crossed the line. (chuckle)
> F: That's right. I thought, "Wow, she must have been really strong and felt the need to do that. It was important to [Chong] to share what was happening in her own family, not only in her generation, but her mum's and grandmum's generations. ... [I]t revealed a lot to me. I could just see the parallels, [the] similar stories happening in her family as well as mine. Yeah.

For both Suzette and Francesca, reading Asian North American stories was self-affirming. In Francesca's case, this was further facilitated when the writers and characters of the stories were also female and Asian. Marie also expressed an interest in reading this literature even though she soundly acknowledged the diasporic distinction of her family:

> M: Everyone's telling their story of how they came to be here. It's not close to my story because my family didn't come from China. ... It speaks to me. I'm glad they're writing about it.
>
> ......
>
> M: I read [Amy Tan's] The Kitchen God's Wife. That that was kind of interesting because what [Tan] does is she really demystifies these Chinese women. You see them from the outside and they seem cute. And then she elaborates these wonderful stories for them.. And you just think, here's an old Chinese woman and yet, she's lived ... this is her life. These are her experiences.

Marie used some of the stories as critical tools against which her identity perceptions and analyses could be held up for inspection. For example, Marie talked about The Jade Peony, (Choy, 1995) as a basis with which she compared her understandings of being a Chinese Canadian female:

> M: ... Basically, the point of view from the girl [character] was really hard to get through because I didn't relate to it at all. Like it left me cold. ... It seemed like he was trying to talk from the point of view of a Chinese Canadian girl. [laugh] And you know, [Choy's] a Chinese guy, so he's trying to talk from a perspective he hasn't ... He doesn't do very well. ... He hasn't lived it, which isn't fair to say because I'm sure he might be able to get away with it. Some writers can, but he didn't.
> E: You didn't think there was authenticity about it or realness?
> M: No. There was realness in *what* he was trying to communicate. ... In the fact that he tried to use her voice didn't work. .... I don't know if authenticity is the right word. There was no empathy there. I guess if there's a voice, maybe you must have some kind of connection, but there was no connection there.
> E: Hmm.
> M: Like twice-removed.

Later, when recounting the screening of Tan's (1989) book-turned-movie, The Joy Luck Club, Marie spoke about her observations of the characters. The mixed-raced relationships of many of the characters heightened her awareness to some of the complexities of identity and "Chineseness" in her extended family. By thinking about the representational messages of the movie, Marie identified some of the deeply-felt assumptions of what was considered "Chinese," "attractive," and normative in her family with roots in both China and East Asia:

> M: ... I think I just liked how the story just got into the characters. ... There were a couple of non-Chinese husbands or boyfriends and that was interesting to me because I started thinking about ... not with a lot of depth, but I was trying to put my finger on it and figure out what it was about for me, because with ... [being] Chinese [and] coming from [East Asia], as in our family.... There's this one particular aunt in our family. She's quite a mean woman... in a negative sort of way. ... She's got four kids and she used to really harp on what being Chinese is all about. "Being Chinese." "You're not being Chinese." "Your not being Chinese enough." You know, she can cook Chinese. She can talk Chinese. Her kids are *Chinese.* And yet, all her kids married non-Chinese people. So what is that? And I think you can't help who you end up loving sometimes. And certainly, I'm in that situation, but when I started

> looking at it, I realized, well, what is it? If part of it had to do with being part of the dominant culture? What's western is what's attractive. You find that attractive. It never occurred to me that Chinese men could be attractive. ... It just didn't occur to me until I got involved with the relationship that I'm involved in.

Marie's excerpt shows how an essentialized and "pure" form of Chineseness seemed to be preferred and imagined by her aunt even though the family members had themselves were not from China but East Asia. Marie questioned the logic of this assumption in terms of marital partnerships. Moreover, the exchange also highlights how racialized identities are also connected to gender.

Asian North American stories gave several of the women new ways to re-vision identity and perceive themselves within the spheres of their own lives, their families and the Asian North America landscape of home. In particular, the stories and characters provided comfort when the lived-realities of difference and being different could be mirrored back to them and connect them with others whose stories were, until then, unimagined and separate from their own.

Talking-Story:
Moving Hermeneutically in the Inquiry Process

> "Chinese characters are developments of early pictograms, and the interplay between image and text is one of the original features of the *I Ching*."[9]
> (McCarver, 1996, p.6)

fuku *zatsu* 複雑	"complexity; intricacy"[10] "complication; maze; labyrinth" *struggle is part of making sense, analysis, interpretation, and learning; following the twists and turns; complications as unavoidable*
複	"double; compound; composite; multiple" *multiple re-finement of both the text and inquiry; returning again and again; re-working, re-living, many meanings*
雑	"miscellany" "that which is rough, course" *raw data; what's of interest; paying attention, being mindful of rough places and loose ends; that which requires refinement and rethinking; emergent forms and impressions*

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[9] The *I Ching*, or "Book of Changes" developed from Taoist and Confucianist philosophy. Used as a text to deepen an understanding of ourselves in everyday life, the *I Ching* is a compilation of learnings. It is based on the continual movement between the primal life forces of yin (feminine, receptive, quiet) and yang (masculine, creative, strength) in nature, including the phenomena of human nature (McCarver, 1996).

[10] The English translations in quotation marks are from Nelson, A. N. (1974). The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary (Second revised edition) (pp. 809, 810, 938). Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle. Written Chinese and Japanese share similar characters or ideographs, although pronounciation differs. The pronounciation provided are Japanese, expressing another dimension of myself which has been meaningful in this inquiry. The italicized writings are my hermeneutical interpretations.

Holding Our Mirrors and Viewing Each Other: Contextualizing the Inter-View and Research Project as Sites of Identity Negotiation and Learning

> You and I are close, we intertwine; you may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what I am not.
> (Trinh, as cited in Bannerji, 1993, p.101)

> I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for paradoxes. (Hong Kingston, 1997, p.34)

In this section, I examine some of the identity processes that transpired between myself and the participants by analyzing the interview encounter and research con-texts as sites of identity negotiation and learning about oneself. I consider how the link between power differences and the construction of identities in the research relationship were enacted by both the women and myself at various points in the inter-view. While at times subtle and fine-grained, these negotiations permit an analysis of identity at a micropolitical level. This last section of the analysis therefore, explores the following two related areas:

1) identity dynamics in the interviews; and
2) learning opportunities in the interview context.

Women Interviewing Women

The literature on women interviewing women proposes that feminist researchers can seek to establish non-hierarchical relationships with female participants through actions and approaches which appeal to a shared affinity as women in a gender-biased society (see for example, Cotterill, 1992; Oakley, 1981). Other scholars suggest that researchers should also be attuned to when and how interview situations are impacted by differences between researcher-researched in terms of race, class, age, educational level and so forth (Bhavnani, 1993; Edwards, 1990; Fine, 1994; Dyck, Lynam, & Anderson, 1995). Their argument is that social demarcators introduce both visible and invisible power differentials into the inter-view site which can influence the conditions of the researcher-researched relationship (Bhavnani, 1993; Edwards, 1990).

The majority of interview studies I surveyed considered power negotiations as examples of "cross-cultural" and cross-racial encounters[12]. This literature did not extend into an examination of how racialized minority women raised in North America from the "same" ethnic group, also negotiate power and identity dynamics with *each other* when they occupy positions as researcher and participant. Part of the reason may have its roots in the dual assumptions that minority women from one ethnic group possess more similarities than differences (Almquist, 1995) and further, that as "double minorities" (Kim, 1981, p.42) they experience the "double whammy" (Kim, 1981, p.16) of societal subordination of gender and race in ways that are seen to be even in magnitude and quality.

Blanket representational notions of "shared" experiences and "cultural affinity" (Edwards, 1990, p.480) conferred by gender and ethnicity do not transfer readily to inter-view contexts because they potentially limit the ways in which power differences between researcher-researcher might be analyzed. Further, similarity and affinity suggest an absence of power differences which I find problematic when I consider myself as a researcher within this inquiry.

My context as a university-educated woman of Chinese descent interviewing other university-educated women of Chinese descent, who like myself, had been born or raised and educated in Canada, could be assumed to be non-hierachical and therefore, devoid of power differences. In this research, power and difference did not become less of an issue or a non-issue altogether, but required the use of a telephoto lens for analysis. I agree with Lincoln and Denzin (1994) that "actual differences of power, knowledge, and structural mobility still exist in the researcher-researched relationship" (p.577) beneath the gloss of "shared" gender and race. Pivotal moments in the conversations showed me that the participants and I were endeavouring to make sense of the relationship we had with each other. These moments arose from the condition with which the umbrella label "Chinese Canadian women" both conferred and assumed hidden points of distinction and similarity.

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[12] One exception is an ethnographic study by Ong (1995) on diasporic Chinese women from Mainland China living in the United States which features both the researcher and researched as, according to Ong, "overseas" Chinese women rather than "Chinese-American" women.

Our "shared" status as "Chinese Canadian women" was a false status in so far as it did not diffuse power inbalances between researcher-researched but instead, created what Bhavnani (1993) calls, "unexpected opening[s]" (p.100) with which to understand identity politics within the project. The power relations were premised on how the participants and I came to *be* Chinese women for each other in the research context. From this context, the participants sought to make meaningful identity distinctions for themselves by imploding this homogenous and at times, constraining identity that defined both them and myself. I report on the following two forms of identity negotiations to make complex the ideas of power difference and shared affinity in interview encounters between women:

- contesting the limits and assumptions of a "Chinese Canadian" identity as women; and
- constructing the researcher's identity.

Contesting the Limits and Assumptions of "Chinese Canadian Women"

The inter-views constituted a "view between" each of the participants and myself. Marie first drew my attention to this when she considered the inter-view as an exercise in self-presentation stemming from the formalization of the research relationship:

> "I'm a bit on public display for you and you for me too because I don't know you very well [and] cause we're still on formal terms."

Why had I assumed at first, that observations between researcher-researched had been chiefly unidirectional, that is, from my perspective only? In our face-to-face inter-view the women and I had observed each other, and our verbal exchanges could not but be influenced by mutual observations.

Marie's asute perception of researcher-researched being "on public display" for each other provided an opportunity to view the interview site as a micropolitical arena in which the participants identities were being both constructed and contested within the parameters of the research project.

The Semantic Limits and Implications of "Chinese Canadian"

The most striking example of a mircropolitics of identity was when Francesca, Carrie, Marie, and Suzette each pointed out to me that she rarely thought of *herself as* "Chinese Canadian", "Chinese", or a "Chinese Canadian woman."

When Francesca read over the letter of informed consent (before the tape recorder was turned on), she noticed the words "how you think and experience learning as a woman of Chinese Canadian descent" in the description and told me that she did not see herself as a "Chinese Canadian woman." Later, having spoken to me at length about her family, I asked Francesca about her comment about the consent form and her response had not changed:

> E: ... [I]t was interesting [how] when you read my consent form, you made a remark about um... something that was written on there.
> F: That's right.
> E: Yeah. Cause I had entitled this ... Now, what part of this did you ... were you saying ...?
> F: "How you think and experience learning as a woman of Chinese Canadian descent."
> E: And it was interesting that you commented that you didn't think of yourself in those terms.

F: No. Not often.

A similar situation occurred with Carrie. We had been discussing friendships and how Carrie defined the term "Chinese Canadian" in light of language distinctions she saw between individuals who were Canadian-born and born outside of the country:

> C: I don't think you *can* tell by looking at them. I don't think there's much of a difference if you just look at a person. I think that if... when you start talking to a person and if they ... [pause] I don't know because I don't relate too much with being Chinese. And so I think that, in that way, you can tell I'm more with this ... That's not going to help you much on your tape. [chuckle] but ... being Chinese Canadian in *my* terms of being Chinese Canadian. I don't relate much with being Chinese.

On the topic of developing one's mind as a woman, Suzette discussed how for her, it meant "be[ing] more intellectual" such as having the ability to see or "go beyond stereotypes" such as those often levelled at Chinese and First Nations people. When I proceeded to ask her whether there was anything to developing her mind "within the particular experience of Chinese Canadian women" she responded with the following:

> S: ...[W]hen you mention "Chinese Canadian women"... I very rarely think of myself as Chinese unless it's brought to my attention. ... I don't try to act like a Chinese Canadian. ... That's just me. What I am is what I am. ... Like this is not something you think about. And it comes up more often maybe because of the people I deal with and it's something that's brought to my attention which is always weird to me because I ... As I said [before] I don't lead my day to day life thinking about the fact that I'm Chinese.

When asking Marie how her identity as a woman had changed in the last several years, I followed her response by asking if she would answer the question differently if I had posed the question with the words "Chinese Canadian woman" in it.:

> M: Yeah. That would have been a different answer.
> E: ... How would you answer that question if I had posed it with "Chinese Canadian woman" in it?
> M: That's interesting ... I've gotten a lot less conscious of my "Chinese Canadian womaness," you know. I'm just a woman and not worrying

> about being [a] Chinese Canadian woman. There's something, something more independent about becoming Marie, the less I worry about being a Chinese woman [laugh] who's Canadian.

In the above examples, participant self-recognition and my identification or representation of the participants' appeared to have reached an impasse. The exchanges with Francesca, Carrie, Suzette, and Marie were triggered by similar instances in which I incorporated, rather than ommitted labels such as, "Chinese Canadian" and "Chinese Canadian women" in the posing of questions and in the writing of the consent form. As the participants had known before meeting with me that I was interested in the lives of women of Chinese descent, I wondered what these moments of rupture indicated in terms of identity negotiations in both the inter-view encounter itself and the over-all research context.

In the months I had spent in an interpretive inquiry course exploring the research topic, and later, as I prepared my application to the research ethics committee, I had begun to think about the implications of using the labels "Chinese woman" and "women of Chinese descent" to frame a project about learning as evident in the following journal entry:

> I am beginning to get a bit wary of the labels I myself am afixing to my research interest when I write things such as "Chinese-Canadian women" and "ethnic minority women." These are indeed my labels that I use for framing my research and I wonder in doing so, whether or not some kind of power balance has already been violated even before the actual research has even begun. (November 4, 1996)

Who were the women I was seeking to interview and how could I resolve numerous implications that I had begun to see within this dubious category? Could these labels have served *my* purposes as a researcher instead of the interests of the participants during the interviews? For not only did the use of labels fulfill the formal (modernist) research requirements of "defining the population," they *had defined* the population by scripting the participants' identities but not without leaving questions of representation open for contestation and discussion.

The overt use of the categories "Chinese Canadian" and "Chinese Canadian woman" served different purposes before and during the interviews. Prior to the interview, they enabled me to frame the project by inviting prospective participants to respond to my request for an interview. Without having to explain in depth the aims of the research, the labels indicated that I was interested only in women who were ethnically Chinese and their experiences around learning. On the other hand, I wanted to focus on women who were not recent immigrants nor foreign students to this country, but had been born or raised, educated, and socialized here. The "line" was difficult to draw and unclearly marked.

Later in the interviews, the function of the labels "Chinese," "Chinese Canadian," and "Chinese Canadian women" had changed and the participants alerted me to this shift. When I used the labels in the interview, the participants could choose to accept, question or ignore them. In terms of a discursive framework, my insertion of the labels in parts of the conversation constrained the ways in which the participants could choose to see themselves and speak for themselves. Hence, I understand the participants' previous reactions not as refusals of Chineseness nor gender, but as refusals against being identified solely on these two bases in particular moments of the inter-view. For instance, Marie challenged, not only the limitations of labels, but also the use of labels as a way to define who she was. She wanted to have the choice to define herself:

> M: ... So the fact as a Chinese Canadian woman making a place for myself in my career, making a place for myself socially, I don't have any labels to apply to it. I don't have any strengths. I put whatever labels I want on me. You asked me to define myself. I gave you descriptions of who I think I am.

The semantic limits of the term "Chinese Canadian women" indicated to me that the use of social categories as an identity marker was potentially contentious and problematic in the research context. Not only does it take for granted the heterogeneity of a group of people, but it also positions them into a subjectivity that they do not necessarily choose for themselves at that moment.

While ethnic self-recognition and representation appear to be interconnected, they were not equivalent nor interchangeable in my relationships with participants, and as such, opened onto identity politics. For example, Carrie wondered how I might have *already* defined "Chinese Canadian" in the project:

> C: ... In high school, there was always the Chinese Canadian students... Well, I guess they were ... See, how are you defining "Chinese Canadians?" Someone who was born in Canada and their family [is] Chinese?
> E: I'm not defining it in any particular way here, but how would you?
> C: Before when I was talking, I was thinking [that it was] someone who was born in Canada, but they are Chinese. Now I'm thinking that there's also people who have immigrated to Canada ... from Hong Kong or China or whatever and they immigrated to Canada.

Francesca also wrestled with the categories "Chinese Canadian" and "Canadian Chinese" to find where she fit or did not fit into them. In the process, she peeled away multiple meanings of identity. Francesca's exerpt pushes up against and challenges the limits of a fixed, "natural," and otherwise, single "Chinese Canadian" identity:

> E: ... So when you hear the words, "Chinese Canadian" what do you think? ... How do you feel? What's your reaction?
> F: I used to think, "Chinese Canadian, wow." What does it actually mean? ... People would ask me, like my white friends. ... "What does that mean, Francesca?" "Well, hell if I know." [laugh] I guess that must mean you're born Chinese ... no .... You're Canadian but you ... come from Chinese immigrant parents. That's what Chinese Canadian must mean. And then I thought, "But what's the difference between 'Chinese Canadian' and 'Canadian Chinese?'" Then I thought maybe Canadian Chinese was a person who was Chinese and truly Chinese versus me, having I believe, my culture is western. I have western ways of thought. I act like a western person. Well, I thought maybe it's Canadian because they're

> naturalized. They got the immigration status and then they became a Canadian citizen but they're really Chinese and they're not going to change [chuckle] very much like my parents! [laugh]

The Limits of Cultural Affinity

Another more subtle form of identity negotiation had to do with ascertaining the limits of similarity and difference between researcher-researched as "Chinese Canadian women." Edwards (1990) refers to this as "cultural affinity" (p.480). Although the participants and I were university-educated, minority women from the "same" ethnic group there were less visible forms of distinction between us which began to surface. Just as many of the women had distinguished themselves from more recently arrived people of Chinese descent, some of them also made distinctions between myself and them. These differences were confounded by our research relationship.

When Marie talked about how she and a close Asian Canadian female friend often shared a sense of immediate connection or "aha" because they were both open to the same kind of ethnic and gender stereotyping, I asked if she had ever been stereotyped that way. Although as Asian women, she and I could both be open to similar kinds of stereotyping, Marie's response suggested that my "values and morals," rather than my simply being a woman and a Chinese woman would have had more bearing on whether or not she would have felt she had "a connection" to me:

> M: ... "It's doesn't matter what Asian you are. It's like with a geisha woman. That's the ideal" [laugh] That's the Asian stereotype, right? How do you get around that?
> E: Have you experienced that? I would call that being stereotyped.
> M: You're right.
> E: Have you experienced that? .... [B]eing a woman in Canada. Being a woman of Chinese .... descent in Canada?
> M: ... I can't really think of an example short of .... the novelty factor of me in university because I was one of the different flavours, okay. And I don't think that's a big deal. Like that's stereotype, but also in a certain environment. But I have not encountered that. No. That's really hard for me to explain. If I had met you on the street, I'd think you're a nice

> person, but if I don't .... If we didn't have the opportunity to talk about something at a deeper level ... I don't know that I'd automatically feel a connection to you cause your values and morals might be very different from mine.
> E: Umm hmm.
> M: And maybe you don't feel like sharing with me. [chuckle] But if I felt comfortable enough with you that might be something that would come up. Yeah.

Marie's comments made me wonder whether or not my position both as a researcher and someone who she did not know very well could over-ride the fact that we were both Asian women. The above exchange highlighted for me how in assuming a "shared identity" as women and as "Chinese Canadian women" I could easily neglect to detect other subtle differences within that shared identity designation. One such area had to do with ideological (and epistemological) frameworks of understanding oneself and place in the world.

An area which I did not account for prior to the interviews was the possibility that any of the participants might express ideological outlooks which at the time, might have differed considerably from my own. I noticed during the interview, how both Marie and Emily tried to create a space in which to engage me in conversation about their experiences from a critical perspective. Prior to and even during the interview encounter, I had not identified this as a potential area to which the participants might have wanted to speak. I had minimal knowledge and expertise in understanding identity issues from a social theory orientation. As such, I did not readily frame questions with this perspective in mind nor did I make accessible this discourse until Marie and Emily tried to enter into it themselves.

At the end of our session I asked Marie her impressions of the interview. She pointed out that my "point of view" as a researcher had been quite different from hers as a participant. What struck me about Marie's comments was that the perceived differences in perspective could be expressed as power differentials structuring our relationship. Her words alerted me to the delicate relationship between researcher-researched, which in this case was assigned by both my status as a researcher in addition to *my* framework(s) with which I could choose to understand *her* experiences:

> M: ... Because some of your questions were very open-ended [and] it was like hearing myself have a point of view [which] almost made me feel kind of ... dogmatic a certain way ...
> E: Okay. Cause you're almost stepping outside yourself to see yourself?
> M: Yeah. I *don't* know you very well so it's very easy for me to imagine what kinds of opinions you might form although I don't think you'll do that. But you probably have insight into the kind of person I am and the way I think about things, right? So just because of the kinds of answers I've given you and obviously my answers are from a different point of view. And I mean certainly, the way *I've* been thinking about this actually at the very end, like in terms of internalized racism. That's cause I'm kind of ... It's not the *wrong* way but certainly the way I've approached thing's. It's kind of like, "Well why?" I kind of look at things from a conflict. ... This isn't ideal so what is that? There's something missing here or there's something lacking here. Or there's a conflict here. And *that's* where I approach my looking from as opposed to there's a space here ...

Emily's approach in opening up a critical discourse about Chinese Canadians evolved differently from Marie's mainly because I had sought Emily's participation by contacting a campus organization which I knew had political leanings. I created opportunities in the interview in which she expressed her ideological preferences as these discussions had grown directly out of talking about how her social justice work had impacted on her as a learner and teacher. In the following exchange, I had asked Emily to clarify some statements she had made in the first interview about being a role model for other Chinese Canadians. The conversation shifted quickly to a discussion about the relationship between representation and power:

> E: You said [being a role model] "for Chinese Canadian students" [was [important for you.]
> Emily: Yeah. And that's being a teacher and showing [students] ... There's not that many Chinese people in teaching, I think. There's more and more, but I just think cause teaching is a very public image job -

> you're sort of out there and you're in front of the classroom and people know who you are ... There's not enough representation ... of Chinese people in authority positions or power positions.
> E: Within teaching?
> Emily: Within teaching and within a lot of other professions too.

I understood Marie and Emily's actions as agentic practices in the interview situation especially since I had not directly posed to either of them questions which directly addessed issues of power and social representation in our discussions. Marie in particular, expressed her understanding of the world relative to mine when she did not perceive that I, as a researcher, held a similar view.

In the above exchanges in which the limits and assumptions of a "Chinese Canadian identity" were tested and questioned, the exchanges I had with the participants challenged the conventional ways in which power differences are seen to exert themselves in researcher-researched relationships between women in interview encounters. Our dual and "shared" status as women and minority women was more a provisional status within the inter-view than a guarantee that we would have similar views, experiences, and insights that the participants warranted sharing. Moreover, this status did not always provide a sufficient common ground from which power differentials in the interview could be diffused. Despite having entered the inter-views with a vague expectation that being women and Chinese Canadian women might encourage rapport between myself and each participant, I discovered that my position as a researcher confounded and could, without my awareness, over-ride my other subject positions as a woman and Chinese Canadian woman. By questioning both the limits and assumptions behind our "shared" identity as well as the nature of our relationship as Chinese women, I understood the participants actions as necessary ways in which they sought to re-balance the inherent power inequities between researcher-researched within the parameters of the project. Making sense of this experience also made visible the heterogeneity among us.

Constructing the Researcher's Identity

The other cluster of identity processes which transpired in the interviews between myself and the participants made reference to my Chineseness. Some of their comments suggested to me that just as the research context had constructed identities for them, the participants had been "constructing" my identity as a "Chinese Canadian" female in relation to how they saw themselves in the interview context.

The most salient indicator was exemplified by the participants' casual use of Chinese[13] with me even though I had only briefly asked them about speaking the language with their families. I made little reference to my relationship with Chinese language and dialects. Marie had earlier commented that by looking and being Chinese there was an expectation that a person could also speak Chinese:

> M: ... You look at me and ... You're Chinese. Did people assume you could speak Chinese?
> E: Yeah.
> M: Because you're Chinese. It's like that. And it's like no matter what, you loook Chinese, right?

Later, I noticed how Marie inserted Chinese words into the interview situation when she described familial relationships to me. Right after using Chinese words, she provided a quick translation:

> M: ... And we still call each other "jai jai", "goh goh" like that. Big brother and sister so ...

Similarly, Suzette used Chinese to highlight a teaching she had learned from her parents. She followed by asking whether or not I understood the word. This situation transpired with Suzette when she discussed what it meant to respect one's parents and about conducting oneself in the "Chinese community:"

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[13] I use the term "Chinese" in reference to language to denote various dialects of the spoken language.

> E: You said that part of [respect] meant tone of voice and not talking back.
> S: Not ever talking back.
> E: Is "talking back" kind of like sassing [kind of] talking back?
> S: Yes. "Sa chan." Do you know any Cantonese?
> E: What's that [word]?
> S: You know any Cantonese?
> E: No not that.
> S: Toisan [dialect]. Probably my Cantonese is better then ... They used to say, "Gum sa chan". That would be "sarcastic."
> E: Oh. I didn't know that.
> S: ... So to learn to not be sarcastic. Respect. ... Acknowledging people. We were always taught when we walk into a place we always say, "Hello, 'mo-mo'. Hello, 'bak-bak'" You know, greeting anybody we call uncle or like our friends of the family ... that my parents say, "Oh, say 'hi' to uncle so-and-so." And then they would say, "Gwei nuei. Gwei nuei.'" Like "good girl.' Good girl.

Although I had never initiated the use of Chinese with any of the participants, I found it striking and yet, comforting that they had spoken snippets of words and phrases with me. In my conversation with Carrie, she had discussed mixing English and Cantonese in her interactions with family. Mixing language in the interview gave me the opportunity to return to a part of my self that I had associated primarily with my family, extended family and my parents' Chinese friends, but had not incorporated into my academic life. As such, my spoken Cantonese is what I refer to as being fossilized language, the level barely having progressed beyond childhood[14]. The intermingling of Chinese and English with Marie and Suzette created what like a linguistic familiarity that was culturally local and specific to me. Kondo (1996) describes how the idiosyncratic use of language, especially among American-born Asians, can be seen as a form of social practice that helps to re-articulate and create a sense of be-longing and "community":

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[14] My mother illustrates her perception of my articulations with the onomatopoeia of a stuck wheel going "luck-kuck."

> Small epiphanies and moments of recognition like these demonstrate how linguistic practices can define a community. These languages ... enable the creation of a[n] ... identity transcending a particular family's idiosyncracies. As an Asian American, often one does not know what is peculiar to one's family and what is common to a larger community. Or, if you believe that you are engaging in practices that are "typical" of your ethnic group, you may still not be sure "what is Chinese tradition and what is the movies" (Hong Kingston, 1997:6). What these linguistic practices accomplish is to create the sense of recognition and the "authenticity," asserting and affirming one's belonging to a family and to a "culture." (p.105)

Another example of how my identity was constructed against the participants' was though dialogue that sought to compare their social reality with mine. Marie had been discussing the extent to which she noticed "two Chinese people together" in public and saw how I appeared to be surprised by her comment:

> M: ... Maybe now there are a lot of mixed couples around. So I notice like a Chinese guy with a white girl like that. I'll notice that. But very seldom will you see two Chinese people together because they want to be together. It's like they're associated with a group of people of a different culture usually.
> E: Hmm. This is [here]?
> M: This is [here]. I have not - and this is in the last three years - I have not noticed a lot [of this]. A lot less [here] than in say, Toronto. Yeah. It's kind of not a good thing to admit. Maybe it's where I've been hanging around too which is probably downtown and [another trendy area].
> E: Yeah ...
> M: I guess that's not your reality, eh? Cause you seemed surprised by that.
> E: No. Not that I mean ... I can't say that right now [where I live] I have [a group of] Chinese women friends who I hang out with. ... I'm just thinking. Okay, I eat at this restaurant ... So I'm thinking about what I've seen as opposed to who I've been with.
> M: And you wouldn't notice that. Would you notice that if there were two Chinese women together?
> E: I would notice if I somehow think,"Are these people sisters? Or are they mother and daughter? Or are they two friends?"
> M: Oh, okay.
> E: But actually, I noticed that at UVic the other week cause there's this coffee shop there.

> M: Yeah.
> E: And it sounds like you notice too, in terms of composition of groups of people. And how they're fitting in and not fitting in with each other.
> M: Definitely ... I just wasn't sure if what I was saying was way out there cause no, it's not something I've noticed [here] as much.

The above examples highlighted that in the inter-view encounter, my gender and ethnicity were dynamic parts of the context and impacted the exchanges that I had with the participants. The participants' constructions of my identity relative to theirs revealed that the researcher-researched relationship was influenced by who I became for the participants.

My interview encounters showed some of the complexities with which power differences operate when researcher-researched are both university-educated women and minority women. The resulting identity negotiations between researcher-researched revealed the range of identity politics at work at the interview site, many of which were structured by the particulars of the study itself and the unique dimensions that constructed who the researcher-researched were for each other.

Inter-View as an Opportunity for Learning About Self

The final section of the inter-view analysis considers the inter-view site as a place in which the participants could learn about themselves through exchanges with the researcher. Kvale (1996) and Oakley (1981) point out that in qualitative research interviews, researcher and participants actively construct knowledge about the topic through active dialogue and conversation.

At the end of the inter-view sessions, and later, when I sent each participant a copy of her transcription to edit, I invited their impressions about the session. When I asked the women whether or not they had opportunities to talk about their experiences and insights about being women and women of Asian descent, the majority of them said that engaging in discussions about these aspects of their lives was rare. Although the women did vary in the degree to which they had thought about questions around ethnicity, culture and living in this country, these thoughts were sometimes unarticulated. I understood this to mean that more often than not, they engaged in learning about themselves on their own as opposed to part of a group of other women. Their responses and reactions showed how the inter-view and research context had provided a temporary space in which to look at themselves and consider questions about their own lives.

In the middle of the interview, Marie pointed out that aside from speaking about being born in East Asia and aspects of her professional life, she did not talk about her experiences of being a Chinese woman:

> M: I've probably talked more about my Indian birth place than I did about being Chinese and yet ... being born in [East Asia] is very incidental, you know. And the fact that I was born there ... People say, "Where were you born?" "[East Asia]." "Oh, really. Tell me about it." I get to talk about that but I don't really get to talk about being Chinese because being Chinese in [East Asia's] so different, right?
> E: Yeah. Do you get to talk about being Chinese at all? Other than what we're doing today?
> M: Short of. We had accreditation at our high school and it was like, "Do you find as a woman, as a minority who's young, teaching *that* ....." You know, the issues of this and this in this school. Like how does that fit in? Short of that, no.

At the end of the interview, Marie also mentioned that although she had thought about many of the questions I had posed to her, she had yet to articulate different experiences about learning about herself:

> E: ... [A]re some of the questions I asked you things that you've started thinking about or that you've thought about yourself?
> M: ... I would say that some of the questions like being a Chinese Canadian woman and that kind of stuff I've given thought to for sure. But some of the things about the *Chineseness* I haven't done much fine tuning [or] thinking about. So that was kind of tricky.
> E: ... Also about your learning life. Yourself as a student... as a teacher... someone who's developing her mind.
> M: Yeah. I don't think that I've sat down and looked at it from that point of view though. So I think I did think about some of those things but I didn't really put, give a voice to a lot of it.

When I asked Emily if learning about herself as an Asian woman was something she wanted to keep pursuing, she was encouraged that this kind of research was being conducted:

> E: Are these things that you would like to pursue more as far as thinking or talking about them, studying or reading yourself?
> Emily: Yeah. I guess so. It's good to see someone who's doing research into Chinese Canadian women. There's not much I don't think. I don't think there's much out there. It's very limited.

When I pressed Francesca and Carrie about why they had agreed to participate right after they expressed that they did not see themselves as a "Chinese Canadian woman," they anticipated that they could learn something about themselves. Both of the women, especially Carrie, did not readily give the experience of sharing, talking, or the content any name.

Carrie drew parallels between her participation in the inter-view and a project in which she had interviewed her father about his life and how he had eventually come to Canada:

> C: ... I don't really know too much about what it is like for other Chinese Canadians that are my age group or anything like that.
> E: Is that something you've been curious about?
> C: I've never really thought about it, I don't think.
> E: How about just coming to this interview today? And you know, your interest in doing it and talking to me about your experiences?
> C: I just think that when people talk about experiences that they'll learn something and I never had anything specific in mind that I wanted to learn or that I was expecting or anything like that. I just thought it would be interesting to kind of talk about it and I know that just talking to my dad about his [experiences], I learned stuff so I thought that if I talked about myself that I might learn [something] too. So that was why I came to this.

Francesca described that she had accepted my request for an interview because she saw it as "a new area" of education, and as a way to "think about who I really am:"

> E: So when I phoned you up and asked you to ... if you'd be interested in just talking about your experiences, how was that [for you]?
> F: Ooh.

> E: When I said, "I'm interested in talking to Chinese Canadian women."
> F: Umm hmm. I thought it was kind of fascinating. Oh, somebody wants to talk to me? [laugh] And I just thought, "Wow, if I can help somebody, I will because I'm always interested in promoting education and you're a ... student and I thought this is great. This is a new area. I thought it might make me think about who I really am. Or... one aspect of who I am. And I thought this is quite intriguing. That's basically why I accepted and I thought, "Well, I could learn many things from this." [laugh] Why not?

Several months after the initial interview, I was still in contact with Francesca and Carrie. Francesca sent me a note and I met Carrie for a follow-up inter-view. What I noticed about their reflections of participating in the research was that knowing that other women "share a similar story" fueled their curiosity about other women like themselves. Compared to their previous responses, they saw the research inter-view as a site of sharing and discovering with other women who they had not met, but somehow, knew were out there. Francesca included the following in a note when she returned her edited transcript:

> I welcomed and continue to welcome the opportunity to discuss this experience with others who also share a similar story. I am curious to know how other women have fared and evolved. I will admit this topic doesn't always cross my mind - actually rarely. I guess my energies and concerns deal with the day-to-day problems I need to solve. It's very refreshing to spend some time to ponder [these] questions which tend to be on a different level than the daily thoughts related to surviving. (July 11, 1997)

The fact that I had only interviewed other women of Chinese descent triggered a response of curiosity about how these women's lives had been like compared to their own. When I asked Carrie about her interest in reading this research, her main motivation was to be able to see her experiences set against and within a group of people who she saw had similarities and differences to her:

> E: How do you think about reading about the other four people I'm interviewing, about their reactions or things that they thought about, their experiences... Do you think that would be enriching for you?
> C: Yeah. Some sort of comparison. I couldn't help but compare my answers to their answers almost.

> E: Why do you think that would be interesting? What would that give you?
> C: Again, just to see similarities and differences. ....
> E: Would the fact that the whole group of people I've been talking to, also come from a Chinese background, would that have a certain different affect?
> C: I think it would make it more interesting that we're all Chinese because I know that the way my parents raised me is probably different from my friend's parents - the friend I was telling you about. ... It would be interesting to see what their thinking was and how their parents raised them and seeing how it can be done and the results of it.
> E: Other than through friends [and family, as you said before], where do those opportunities about learning about ourselves, in terms of ... our background come?
> C: I don't think there really is too much opportunity to unless ... Maybe cause I didn't ever really think about going and learning about how I got to be where I am.

Learning about the lives of other women gave Emily the opportunity to compare her experiences:

> Emily: ... I'm always trying to be a critical thinker. Things like that I've thought about. What has been *my* experience compared to *other people's* experiences as Chinese Canadians, right?
> E: Do you have the opportunity to find out about these things at all?
> Emily: Just [through] friends and colleagues I've talked to.
> E: And what does that give you when you have that opportunity?
> Emily: Well, I think I've had ... If I was just to compare evaluatively, I've had pretty positive experiences compared to most people. So I think I'm lucky in that way.

Emily's statement that being able "to compare evaluatively" her experiences to those of other Chinese Canadians made me think that there were and still are others, who, for various reasons, could not claim to have "positive" experiences and feel as though they were as "lucky" as she. I recalled having heard some of these voices that expressed pain and confusion in different parts of the interviews; yet sometimes these emotions had led to different processes of re-thinking and rearticulating questions of identity.

What did "luck" have to do with being born and raised in Chinese families, and socialized in this society such that our lives could *be seen* as being less dependent on chance and probability and more on agency and selfdetermination? I recall how Carrie also perceived herself as having "been very lucky" when she talked about her upbringing compared to other Asians she knew, and "get[ting] a fair chance" in reference to why her parents had sent her to an all-girl's school. Sandwiched in between these two statements was an oppositional construction that cast race and ethnicity in deterministic terms and gender as something which, through education, women could necessarily "correct" and alter. Where did racial minority women factor into this construction?

When Suzette and I ended our first inter-view, I asked her what she hoped to accomplish in her life. Her response captured some of those elements of learning and agency that I would envision for all Asian and Chinese Canadian women. It takes into consideration how both gender and race need to be acknowledged within one life:

> S: That's my dream to write about things to do with Chinese culture and just ... women, Chinese culture. I'd like to write books that have to do with that. ... And hopefully, I'll be one of the first five women presidents of the [Chinese community organization I'm in.]
> E: Have they ever had a woman president?
> S: I think there's one other woman in the community who'll beat me cause she can speak Chinese. And now that we sort of started to allow women of power in[to] the [organization] she's doing very well. So I'm hoping that the next, maybe two elections from now, we'll have our first woman president. So hopefully, I would like to become one.

Chapter Six
Summary of Re-search: Looking Back and Ahead

> Nobody sees a flower, really - it is so small -
> we haven't time, and to see takes time.
> (Georgia O'Keefe)

> As more of us ... from the borderlands go "home" to study "our communities," we will probably be seeing increasing elisions of boundaries between [research] and "minority discourse," in which writing [research] becomes another way of writing our own identities and communties. And writing that identity in the context of writing one's scholarly work creates a narrative space in the dominant discourse, a space that could refigure the disciplines as "home" for us. (Kondo, 1996, p.114)

This inquiry explored how five women of Chinese descent learn about and negotiate matters of identity and representation as "Chinese Canadian" females born or raised and educated in a eurocentric society. The overall purpose of the inquiry was first, to counter Asian North American women's invisibility and constrained portrayal in research contexts. Second, the inquiry explored how identity extends to the realm of representation and is based not only on how the women saw themselves, but how they are seen by others. Identities are neither given nor discovered, but rather, are re-arrived at by the interplay between psychological processes, social forces, and discourses that continually shape experiences between self and other. Third, the research identified sources with which the women construct learning mirrors for themselves when those mirrors offered by the dominant culture render one invisible and compromises gender and race at the expense of each other. Last, the inquiry process raised micropolitical issues regarding how a minority woman goes about studying the lives of other minority women. Central to this process was the concern of representation in research and re-writing Asian North American identity so it does not reproduce marginalization, homogenization, nor the suppression of "difference." Two questions framed the research:

1) What kinds of negotiations and identity processes characterize women's ways of learning to live between different configurations of cultural "borders" and contexts?

2) How do Chinese Canadian women educated in Canada construct mirrors of learning in order to learn about "themselves" in a predominately euro-centric society?

For the five women in this research, the project of living an identity and learning about themselves as racialized minority women is evolving, shifting, and complex. This project involved discursive movements within the telling of their stories as well as the interview encounter. These movements were fine negotiations between self-recognition and representation. In trying to describe these identity processes, I am cognizant of the constraints of language in activating a thorough description of some of their subtleties. For me, Trinh's (1991) description of "having to live a difference that has no name and too many already" (p.14) captures the essence of a hyphenated identity. When and how do "we" sense "we" belong?" When do we sense that we belong in an unnamed place until we have touched that place for ourselves? That place is a curious mixture of corporeality, attunement, and the politics of voice.

Discursive and cultural psychological frameworks helped me to reveal how identity spans both the psychological and the social by the meaning-making systems that individuals and society reproduce and engage in. Kondo (1990) maintains that "identity is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and open-ended power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations" (p.24). I saw how the processes of identity involved discursive shifts based on meanings assigned to difference and sameness in relation to the dominant culture, other Chinese Canadians, and Chinese Canadian women. "Chinese Canadian" identities were constituted in how the women spoke about themselves in relation to different discourses and the meanings and investments associated with those discourses.

Borders and Agency

In some feminist literature, gender, race, and class differences are discursively constructed as "barriers" (Almquist, 1995, p.573) that minority women face because of their social positioning. While societal barriers such as sexual and race discrimination do operate, the idea of "barriers" suggests that women lack agency with which to resist or refigure their specific conditions within these structures. On the other hand, the idea of "borders" emphasizes the agency of women in general, and minority women in particular, in negotiating within and against systems that perpetuate different privileges and power asymmetries.

Many of the women had developed strategies of moving across borders as ways of understanding their worlds (Anzaldua, 1987; Hurtado, 1996). In the beginning of the analysis, I found it difficult to identify these subtle forms of learning until I became attuned to context and reflected on some of my own past and current experiences. Some of the faculties included:

- Seeing sameness and decontextualizing of self to be impartial to gender and race
- Reading a situation and knowing when to engage in a certain type of discourse and when to remain silent;
- Reading a situation and knowing when you have been positioned as Other
- Being attuned to subtle differences within one's "group" and sensing when one is the only minority person/woman in a group;
- Resisting stereotypes in speech;
- Intentionally learning ways to fit into and be in different contexts; and
- Constructing split worlds and dichotomous identities to hold contradictions.

Discourse as Context

Situating my conversations with participants into a mapping of discourses revealed the contexts in which the women speak about themselves. Identity is embedded within various discourses that influence how minority women are invisible and visible, as well as what ways they are visible through the telling of "safe" and "unsafe stories."

Hoskins (1997) maintains that in order to study any phenomenon from a discursive perspective, one necessarily attends to the ruptures and discontinuities surrounding the topic from all who have a stake or vested interest in it:

> [I]n order to study discourse [one needs] to be able to see contradictions and ambiguities that [are] often concealed by mixed metaphors, competing interests, and conflicted desires and ideals. Discourse itself is not a tangible objective body of knowledge available for scrutiny, but is a complicated tapestry of similarities and differences. Although there are commonalities and shared symbols within discourses, there are also disruptions, inconsistencies, and internal incongruence. (p.234)

Twice near the end of our meeting, Marie had expressed what she had described as "contradictions" in the conversation. "I discovered paradoxes talking to you ... but ... like tensions." I noticed that in my conversation with Marie, she had begun to touch some of the depths around identity and representation, and I could see her grappling with them:

> M: These are really hard questions. I know I'm kind of circling around some of them and I'm kind of not quite getting at some of the things but ...
> E: Well, that's okay. I've made them open-ended because I certainly don't have definitive answers about them and it's really just to see how you think about them, too.
> M: A lot of contradictions, though.

The contradictions and layers of identity for minority women allow us to be open to different possibilities about ourselves (Fischer, 1986). This is signficant in that one can defy and "transcend" some identities while simultaneously dwelling within them and others to re-articulate the folds in terms of the psychological, political, and personal.

The second section of the analysis was descriptive in that it located some of the key resources from which the participants had engaged to think about themselves within a "community" of Chinese or Asian women and men. It touched the spheres of family life, professional and educational experiences, as well as friendships and social life. These resources and sites offered different lenses to reflect on self in terms of gender, race, and "culture."

In analyzing this section it occurred to me that the function of mirrors is to scrutinize and compare self to "similar" others as a vehicle for learning. As ethnic and racial minority women, I wonder how often "we" have the opportunity to compare "our" experiences and view of the world with "like" others unless we have already decided, at some level, that we are curious about how others' stories can contribute to our own and why. Mirrors, however, only seem to become important with the shocking epiphany that one is oppressively invisible or encumbered by having to define oneself in terms of one or more "oppositional identit[ies] (defining the self as what one is not)" (Goldberger, 1996, p.338).

The inquiry process revealed additional issues about the micropolitics of representation between researcher-researched when both occupy the "same" gender and racial locations in an inter-view context. The account of identity negotiations by participants in the inter-view highlighted for me, how racial and ethnic identity in particular, are not "essential" nor established through statistics, but are constituted within social relations. That is, that identity is grounded in the dual processes of how one sees herself and how one is seen by others, and this is itself political. The latter pushes the theorizing of identity into the realm of power relations that occur between women interviewing women from the "same" ethnic group in an eurocentric context.

The guiding methodological features of this project were consistent with the topic in its concern in addressing how differences are conceptualized in traditional psychological research in ways which do not reinscribe marginalization, cultural exoticism, nor the erasure of "difference" based on race, ethnicity, and gender. In fact, locating and articulating these potential hazards was helpful in understanding why this topic was so complex and difficult for me as a female minority researcher. (I explain some of these challenges in the Epilogue.)

In order to carry out this inquiry and live the questions to their fullest, my subject positioning as an ethnic minority female was incorporated as an interpretive tool to compliment and make explicit the theoretical orientations I selected. This position enabled me to find footing in which to move within the borders between myself and the participants, the participants and the dominant culture in which we live, and some of the discourses associated with Chinese Canadian women.

Heterogeneity of Experience

A key focus of this research was not only to challenge the notion of Asian North American female invisibility, but to also disrupt the study and representation of "Chinese Canadian" women as an homogeneous group with the same characteristics and traits (Almquist, 1995; Chow, 1996). As I have sought to emphasize throughout this work in both the biographical sketches and in the inclusion of participants' voices in the text, Carrie, Francesca, Marie, Emily and Suzette came to this project with unique backgrounds and experiences. They differed on demographic descriptors such as age, profession, educational backgrounds, personal histories, and the socioeconomic backgrounds of the families in which they were raised. In addition to these indicators, however, three qualitative distinctions emerged when I situate them in a context as learners. These dimensions are inter-related and are summarized as followings:

- 1) framework(s) for knowing and meaning-making;
- 2) gender and race consciousness; and
- 3) an historical consciousness of place.

Framework(s) for Knowing and Meaning-Making

There was variability in the frameworks and resources the women drew upon to make sense of their experiences. Some of these frameworks were epistemological in nature, ranging from critical reflexivity (Mezirow, 1981) to the engagement in meaning-making strategies about the sources and nature of knowledge claims (see for example, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986). More often than not, the women employed multiple ways of knowing in how they thought about themselves both as women and ethnic minority women.

Responses from the closing questions of the interviews also showed that there were differences in how much the participants had previously thought about "ethnocultural" experiences or imagined what it was like for other women like themselves. Closely paralleling this was variability in the chief sources or societal mirrors that they selected for thinking about who they were and how they saw themselves. These ranged from their family, peer group, academic and professional background, popular literature and culture, and community experiences. Clearly, the participants moved through very diverse worlds and their sense-making could not be but reflections of those worlds.

Gender and Race Consciousness

A second dimension of variation among the participants that surfaced centered on the degree of consciousness about gender and race differences. This ranged from a general awareness of difference to the recognition of societal structures and practices that grant differential privileges based on gender and skin-colour. The notion of "difference" itself carried various meanings for each participant. As a result, I began to see how "embedded"some of these markers of identity were among different participants as well as myself.

An Historical Consciousness of Place

Last, I want to draw attention to an historical consciousness of place that I would define as an elliptical awareness of one's own story woven between the story of one's family and a collective "memory" and vision of other Chinese and Asian Canadians. Of the three areas of variation among the participants, this was the most sublime, expressed through a tone of voice, use of language, and a look in the eyes. I would describe this awareness as a sensibility and caring for where they had "come from" and could still be-come.

While some of the points of difference were noticeable at the interview sites, others filtered through my observations when I had the opportunity to stand back and recall impressions that were not captured by distinct words as much as my felt relationships with each of the women.

The point of illustrating these three dimensions is to reinforce the position that there was considerable variation among this group of women that could not be easily be collapsed together under a homogenizing identity label.

While I noticed these emergent dimensions among the participants, having meaningful interaction with each of them placed me in the position of a learner as I tried to understand their ideas and views of the world. In making these observations, a challenge that I faced as a researcher was in touching the limits of my own understanding of identity and representation. Hence, when I speak about the participants in a context as learners above, I am also necessarily speaking about myself (Denzin, 1994; Hoskins, 1997).

Risking Essentialism To Construct a Minority Discourse

Upon meeting each of the women in the interviews and later, as the work unfolded, the differences among them continued to take on a kaleidoscope of shapes and forms. As a result, this inquiry often felt as though it was unraveling from the inside out as I became cognizant of the difficulties and diverse meanings surrounding the "Chinese Canadian woman" label that I had selected to hold the work together.

The "common" identity or subject position which the participants occupied was based on those that I had constructed for and positioned them into based primarily on the markers of gender and race. These positions were in movement and resisted both homogenization and imposition as illustrated in my discussion of identity politics in the project. Hence, the more I learned about the connections and ruptures between identity and representation moving through this research, the less I felt I could and should "contain" the participants and their stories together in a cohesive text. Striving for a multivoiced text to highlight the specificity of experience became increasingly challenging as a result. Was I reinscribing the participants to an essential identity or was I revealing the boundaries and discursive structures which constituted their subjectivities within both the parameters of this document and society?

The inquiry was paradoxically established upon, what Brah (1992) calls a "risk[ing] of essentialism" (p.144). For in order to conduct research that was expressly *by and about* "Chinese Canadian women", I had necessarily assumed a provisional essentialist stance for the purposes of countering invisibility and stereotype. In embarking with what can be argued as an essentialist position in how I saw myself and the women, this position evolved into the recognition that without a "constructed" community, there would be no place from which we could speak to "our experiences" collectively, and affirm that speaking. While it is problematic and difficult to deploy a "minority discourse" (Kondo, 1996, p.114) without a reinscription of essentialism, it was necessary to recognize and "appeal to [our] bonds of common cultural experience (Brah, 1992, p.144) to make ourselves visible not only to others, but most of all, to "ourselves."

Finding Each Other as a Way to See Our-selves

The concerns regarding visible omissions and stereotype are significant if women of Chinese descent are going to make a place in which to engage in the process of hearing our own voices together while also speaking to the diversity of experience. In listening to the women talk about themselves and their impressions of participating in this project, many wanted to know what it was like for other Chinese and Asian females of their peer group to be raised and educated in North America. This observation suggests that their knowledge of self had been peripheral. They wanted to have the "luxury" of comparison without having to work at sifting through what was "ethnically-specific" or only characteristic of their families, current way of life, and upbringing. In the telling of stories about themselves and thinking about how their lives connected to those, who as Francesca said, "share a similar story", these women were also undertaking a project of identity construction and reconstruction within the parameters of this project (Ebron & Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1995; Fischer, 1986; Howard, 1997). Kvale (1992) maintains that "the very act of telling a story ... position[s] the storyteller and the listener, and their place in the social order is constituted; the story creates and maintains social bonds. The narratives of a community contribute to uphold the values and social order of that community" (p.34). In "talking-story" (Hong Kingston, 1977, p.24) the women were re-constituting "our cultural" and historical identities.

Having insight into the scope of lived experience, while valuable and personally enriching is insufficient if we also lack our own sets of crafted mirrors with which to affirm and legitimize the personal in the social world. Whose scripts are we then relegated to and how can we feel entitled to say the "unsafe" or the unsayable about ourselves? Finding each other as a way to see "ourselves," empowers when it exposes the omissions and tangential fissures between self-recognition and representation in the dominant culture.

Toward the Revisioning of Border Identities as Affirmation

What strikes me as imminently necessary are ways in which we might re-vision what it means to be both "Chinese Canadian" and Asian Canadian females to create innovative spaces to express the fullness of those experiences that defy the binary logic of "western or 'white' as local" and "Asian as foreign" (Kondo, 1996). Moreover, the personal and social costs of invisibility are high especially when compounded with current attitudes and racial tensions in Southwestern B.C. toward Asians and "Chinese immigrants." I and the women who I met through this research all have a stake in what that future will look like.

At a social gathering recently, I had a conversation with a female clinical psychologist about my inquiry. She proceeded to tell me about a past Chinese female adolescent client who did not want anything to do with her own Asianess. While she provided sketchy details about the young woman's life, the psychologist was baffled as to why the client was unable to see the beauty of that part of herself that she refused to see.

The story was poignant and it made me consider more questions based on this work. Given her invisibility in the dominant culture, I wondered how this young woman might ever begin to see herself and her story as part of, instead of apart from, the experiences of other ethnic and racial minority women. Our popular culture not only reinforces that void, but institutions and practices socialize us into thinking that if we live as "colourblind" individuals, and completely transcend difference, we will not have to deal with the problematics and prickly meanings that racial and gender differences carry in the social world. I worry about the costs of this brand of "universalism."

Moreover, the idea of "culture" and "tradition" as something to which many minority individuals are handed, and bound by, is both distressing and immediate. To that end, the visibility of women like Carrie, Francesca, Marie, Emily, and Suzette as role models, coupled with a consciousness of how that can impact on the worlds of their students and colleagues becomes a way to legitimize and affirm others' peripheral experiences.

I came away from my conversation with the psychologist with an unsettled feeling that bordered on helplessness. Would it only be a matter of time until the young woman "came to her senses?" How "typical" was she of others? And why did I feel as though I had a responsibility to produce research that was supposed to answer such hard questions?

As this inquiry draws to a close, I still worry whether or not the multiple folds of identity are seen as being non-issues or irrelevant for some or many Chinese Canadian women who are born or raised here. As many of us have found agentic ways in which to fit in so well, we might believe that it is unnecessary to have mirrors to re-vision the specificity of "our" experiences. When does invisibility mean comfort? When does it mean assimilation by others' rules? Like Mab the witch in the story of Merlin, could "we" too, eventually disappear if the ease of forgetting and invisibility slips silently into a discourse of racial and ethnic "acceptance" -- being the same "like everyone else"? Yet this research showed how different discourses of identity bring different subjectivities to the forefront for the women whom I interviewed. With those discourses, as a collection of mirrors one can *choose*, comes multiple and evolving ways to reconsider intersected meanings of race, ethnicity, gender, society and selves. Somewhere, invisiblity itself might be erased.

Breaking Ground, Breaking Out

New discourses about identity and representation in education and psychology, in particular, need to make room for the contradictions, cracks, and mixed messages that women with "hyphenated" identities must confront, examine, and negotiate between. Above all, they must legitimate and acknowledge the experiences of those in the borderlands. Kondo (1996) reiterates the perils of Asian American invisibility and stereotype as a critical matter of "cultural" survival:

> ... [A]s we get more and more ethnically and generationally specific, [we] are systematically erased from representation in the mainstream media. In very real ways, we do not exist. Either we are absent entirely or, what is often worse, when we are depicted, it is only in the most stereotypical way, thus subjecting us to psychological violence rather than offering affirmation or recognition. (Kondo, 1996, p.110)

As Bannerji (1993) alluded to in the epigraph that opened this inquiry, an absence or omission opens new spaces for research by and about Asian and Chinese Canadian women to re-script their own identities in the contexts and communities in which they live (Heilbrun, 1988; Kondo, 1996, Lavie & Swendenburg, 1996). While this inquiry was not limited to a specific sphere of social life such as learning institutions, the classroom, organizations, family dynamics, and so forth, future research has many areas in which to expand.

In terms of general topic areas and sites of future studies, more needs to be understood about the lives of Asian Canadian females in general and Chinese Canadian women in particular. Attention could be focused on inter-generational experiences and dynamics between mothers and daughters as well as family life. Moreover, the experiences of Asian North American women as educators, activists, and counsellors, as well as those involved in multicultural community and other grass-roots organizations and events warrant exploration. The perspectives of writers and artists engaged in the process re-visioning "community" would also provide a space with which to examine directly, the connection between representation and "cultural" identity. Innovative studies which explore how minority participants interpret different works of autobiographical fiction by and about "their communities" can also provide further insight into the expression of "border" identities.

In all the above, I would endorse the inventive use of focus groups, research collectives, and collaborative endeavours so that women have the opportunity to find and engage creatively and critically with one another (see for example, Chambers, 1998). In addition, inquiries involving women from various minority "groups" could open up fruitful dialogues between those who occupy different positions in "the margins" (Ebron & Lowenhaupt Tsing, 1995). Finally, research should be sensitive not only to the heterogeneity of experiences, but the changing demographics of a given population in this country. This includes factoring in the dimensions of gender, generational distinctions, as well as class.

Theorizing of Differences and Research as Border Crossing

Equally, if not more important than the actual topics themselves, research involving minority women should reconsider the connection between the theorizing of "difference" and representational challenges. Brah (1992) points out that from a feminist perspective, the notion of difference is itself multiple and carries with it a variety of meanings depending on the discourse in which it is located. She identifies four discourses: 1) difference as women's experience; 2) difference as social relations which pays attention to practices which affirm versus those that exclude; 3) difference as subjectivity considers the process by which "subjects" or "other" are formed; 4) difference as identity and meanings.

Brah's (1992) understanding of difference reinforces for me the primacy of context with which both participants and researchers occupy in the undertaking of any study. As such, the voices of women as both researchers and participants need to be heard together in ways that attend to power differences between them as well as the social locations in which research unfolds. Such approaches need to take into account not just content and background, but the imperatives of difference that link the act of research to its social implications. The message I draw from this is the proposition that human inquiry will increasingly be called upon to be accountable to a politics of inclusion, diversity, and human welfare:

> Liberation and feminist theologians are central to this new discourse. They ask hard questions, such as Where and What are the places of women, persons of colour, the poor, the homeless, and the hungry in the church, in science, in art, and in literature? (Lincoln & Denzin, p.580)

Given that there are lives that span the margins and centre, research itself should reflect the wholeness, instead of the fragmentedness of those lives and selves. Explorations into models of the self that examine selves in contexts and discourses need to be considered (Hoskins, 1997). Narrative, discourse, cultural, and poststructural orientations create the space for grasping selves as socially constituted, multiple subjectivities to which gender and race are central. New vistas for research include the examination of relationships between the psychological, social, and discursive in specific spheres of life experienced by minority women and men. Root (as cited in Goldberger, 1996) calls for nothing less than psychological praxis that "resolv[es] other status" (p.341) by taking into account the intermingling of the political, sociocultural, and familial influences when making sense of identities.

To that end, interdisciplinary approaches that draw from multiple intellectual orientations and disciplines are both promising and necessary. The work of cultural and critical theorists in particular and others writing in the area of border pedagogy (Giroux, 1992) and diaspora (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996) offer a view of the world that, in my estimation, needs to be integrated into the research about minority women especially in disciplines where their/our voices are rarely heard.

This proposition suggests that minority researchers in general, and minority women researchers in particular, have a pivotal role in both opening up and breaking open "unauthorized discourse" as a methodological strategy against invisibility and the politics of representation. They will become "border crossers" by the approach they take and the understanding of their own lives within various social and cultural arrangements (Villenas, 1996). Giroux (1992) describes this as:

> [P]art of an attempt to further rupture a politics of historical silence and theoretical erasure that serves to repress and marginalize the voices of the Other. (p.125)

I look forward to what Denzin (1994) describes as "epistemologies of colour" (p.512) in the not-so-distant future in the realm of qualitative research:

> Epistemologies of colour will proliferate, building on Afrocentric ... Chicana, ... Native American ... Asian ... Third World ... and other minority group perspectives. More elaborated epistemologies of gender (and class) will appear, including "queer theory" ... and feminisms of colour. ...
>
> These race -, ethnicity -, and gender-specific interpretive communities will fashion interpretive criteria out of their own interactions with the postpositivist, constructivist, critical theory, and poststructural sensibilities. These criteria will be emic, existential, political, and emotional. (p.512)

In marshaling my vision for this research as I moved through it, I feel as though I have been gradually mapping movements toward an epistemology of colour as well as an epistemology of "home" in all its contradictory commitments, urgencies, sensibilities, and rewards.

Epilogue

Tracing the Hermeneutical Circle Back "Home": Reflections of a Chinese Canadian Female Re-searcher

We shall not cease from exploration
And in the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know that place for the first time.
(T. S. Elliot, "Little Gidding")

I felt as if I were assembling a jigsaw puzzle in which each piece had a specific place. Before I put the puzzle together, it all seemed incomprehensible to me, but I was sure if I ever managed to complete it, the separate parts would have meaning and the whole would be harmonious. Each piece has a reason for being the way it is.
(Isabel Allende, 1982, House of the Spirits, p.432)

How does the life of an inquiry in-form the re-searcher such that it alters how she sees herself and the world? Hermeneutical re-search calls upon the re-searcher to "engage with the perils of making sense of the meanings of others in order to do something more with the meanings one already holds" (Britzman, 1992, p.252). In both listening and seeking to understand the separate voices of the women in this inquiry, I was urged to live with-in the questions that I posed to them. Carried in the weights of their voices were moments of self-assuredness, irreverence, and steadfastness juxtaposed against slivers of doubt, vulnerability, and pain. Without my being made aware of it, the women had implicitly ex-posed to me some of the very same hard and uncomfortable questions I asked (of) them. As a result, my voice in this text multiplies the strengths and fragilities of theirs.

I wonder too, how my understanding of the participants' voices and stories had been continually blurred and sharpened by the different lenses offered by scholars and writers whose ideas I lived through and synthesized. Much like how a camera lens brings to focus a new corner or dimension of the same picture, refocusing and negotiation were necessary movements in describing my engagement in learning about identity and representation across disciplinary terrains and a tangle of competing discourses.

The project of living and researching "Chinese Canadian" female identity across disciplines and discourses was unmistakably parallel, if not deeply intertwined processes with something to teach me about the topic, re-searching and myself. It intensified my experiences of negotiating and blurring "borders" that often felt as though they were too divergent to synthesize with anything less than a belief in what needed to be told even as the proclivities behind that telling may not have been known to myself at the time. hooks (1990) speaks to this experience when she suggests that "[d]ifferent cultural locations evoke links, sensibilities and longings contained within diverse structures of representation and meanings" (p.51) Well into the inquiry, I began to take notice of these cultural locations when I observed how different kinds of writing and perspectives produced an array of visceral and emotional responses in me. I swirled back and forth from moments of resistance, confusion, lucidity, anguish, and euphoria. This is captured in what Williams (as cited in Britzman, 1992) calls "structures of feelings" (p.252) which are unexpected places within consciousness where theory and practice are lived as inter-minglings and collisions. Structures of feelings are:

> the affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feelings against thought, but thought as felt and feelings as thought; *practical consciousness* of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity." (italics added, p.252)

Why did I feel a vague familiarity and ease when I was aware that an author was a woman making visible her life and the life of others like her? Why did I notice when use of language and voice had shifted from "them" to a collective "us" when I read works by and about Chinese and Asian North Americans? Why did it become progressively easier to read through politically charged writing and not cringe when "unsafe" words such as "sexism", "racism", "radical feminists of colour," "hegemony" and "co-optation" were used? Why did I feel the constant need to return to safe, "neutral" research that just looked at "us all" as human beings, plain and simple? Why did I see that theorizing about identities and research without also theorizing about representational implications was unduly problematic? Why did the lyrical voices of Alice Walker, Larissa Lai, Joy Kogawa and Maxine Hong Kingston speak to me when academic voices did not locate the places I wanted to enter? How did I come to notice what "voice" I was and was not writing in? Why did I seek out quiet spaces of revitalization near the end of the inquiry in the *I Ching* about being a human being struggling to remain engaged in a process of learning and unlearning? My answer to this constellation of questions is that I was living across multiple borders and in different cultural locations as I tried to keep my self intact. Dorinne Kondo (1990) writes about her sense of "self" fragmenting during field work in Japan. Negotiating disciplinary borders forced me to re-cursively examine my self in parts and whole as I became conscious of the borders both inside and outside of me.

In making sense of the literature and the voices of the women whom I interviewed, I crossed multiple borders and stood in different locations. Each place and position had something to offer to my understanding of myself and the research topic because I too, occupy multiple positions to live meaningfully in this complicated topography of "home." Thus, instead of erasing the tensions of those borders, I have elected to preserve them in the text for living and researching identity across different kinds of borders entail tension, contradiction, and negotiation. While I acknowledge that tension might be seen as weakening a document, I maintain that presenting a text that would have shown otherwise would fail to emphasize this pivotal point about the topic as I have come to know and experience for myself.

As the experiences and insights of minority women such as Carrie, Francesca, Marie, Emily, and Suzette have shown, they operate from multidimensional identity perspectives. Negotiation is itself a generative mode for living in this pluralistic society as "pluralism" does not necessarily invoke a condition of "equally different" locations across the rocky terrains of multiculture and gender (Lavie & Swedenburg, 1996). When ethnic, racial, and gender differences have socially inscribed, ideological meanings beyond the biological, nostalgic and "festive", those who have felt the exigencies of centre and margins know that we already operate in a modality of multidimensionality with which to know who we are and can still become. Britzman (1992) boldly crafts the central question that I have asked myself in this research but could only articulate on an affective level:

> "How can one acknowledge oppressive relationships without feeling a sense of responsibility and a sense of being implicated?" (p.257)

I leave this inquiry with a profoundly altered view of research than the one with which I entered. As a gendered and racialized novice researcher in a society that still holds to a notion of universalism as a means to an end in human affairs, dwelling in the tensions and "structures of feeling" (Williams, as cited in Britzman, 1992, p.252) of this inquiry alerted me to when the aims and claims of the "universal" as an organizing, unquestioned principle breaks down in its assertion of serving and speaking for "the universal." As articulated by many of the scholars and writers whose works have inspired my thinking, the discourse of universalism can erase and make invisible (Britzman, 1992; Ingelby, 1995, Harding, 1995, Ponce de Leon, 1992) the "particular" and the peripheral.

Britzman (1990) addresses this concern in slightly more provocative terms when she asks, "given that culture and history are produced by humans, when does the cultural and the historical denigrate humanity?" (p.79).

What then, is the responsibility of the researcher in giving form and voice to "the particular" in our lives, the researcher's life included? Given that educational and psychological research does not take place in a vacuum, how does (researcher) agency factor into societal structures that coalesce with knowledge production? One lesson about agency which I have learned in this inquiry is that I should not be afraid to acknowledge and begin to touch the invisible and contradictory workings of power - in my own terms. Heilbrun (1988) eloquently states how this is not usually a popular gesture for women to make, while my social reality as both a woman and Asian, reminds me why it sometimes feels like a risky topic to speak about:

> I have had students walk out of a class when I declared that power is a reasonable subject for discussion. But however unhappy the concept of power and control may make idealistic women, they delude themselves if they believe that the world and the condition of the oppressed can be changed without acknowledging it. (p.16)

Twelve months ago, I too, would have been among those "idealistic women" who walked out of Heilbrun's class. Maybe I would have run out. In her message (given that one stays long enough to hear it), Heilbrun (1988) offers a way out. It is a way out of her classroom, but certainly, not a way out of "the flux" (Caputo, 1987, p.269) which I now view as a responsibility to the self and others to hear what it is that unsettles and needs to be examined. Heilbrun (1988) urges that if we can begin to look at "ourselves" with the shaky eyes that accompany a new understanding of the world and one's historical place in it, we can become open to discovering unique ways to reconfigure and resist the dimensions of power, and in some cases, attempt to loosen its deleterious effects if need be. It is a simple message, but a tall order. For it entails paying careful attention to practices and conventions, as well as ways of being and knowing that always have the dual potential to con-strain and silence on the one hand, and open and make visible, on the other.

I concur with Kondo (1990) and Ong (1995) who understand power, not as a blanketing condition of determinism that extinguishes agency or desire but as "creative, coercive, and coextensive with meaning" (Kondo, 1990, p.307). Kondo (1990) further proposes that "in the process of searching out potential points of resistance," we might glimpse how "acts of caprice and exclusion both consolidate and undermine power" (p.307). I have found the practice and challenges of research to be one such act with many layers and sites which Kondo describes.

"Jie": 知 On Knowing

Michael Polanyi (as cited in Grudin, 1990) declares that "personal knowledge is an intellectual commitment, and as such, inherently hazardous" (p.97) In the silent darknesses of confronting what I was learning in this inquiry and did not necessarily want, or set out to learn, I observed myself continually locate and refuse my own social, historical, and political embeddedness as I proceeded in gaining critical glimpses of "self" and identities as oscillations between universal-particular and centre-periphery. In research, "[e]xploring the controversies of our time coincidentally means attending to the controversies and deep investments of the self" (Britzman, 1992, p.257). Indeed, I was surprised by my emerging convictions that research, politics, ethics, and Being were intertwined in places where I had never anticipated. On the topic of self-understanding and learning, Britzman (1989) offers an elaboration of Gramsci which I take as my crucible in the re-search process:

> Self-understanding ... requires an awareness of one's historical context and an acknowledgment of the power of sedimented meanings. That is, our development is both social and historical, concerning conscious and unconscious circumstances. Self-

> understanding also depends upon a persistent interrogation of one's own deep investments in, resistances to, and desires for challenging the status quo. (p.457)

My development in this inquiry (in painful and bright moments) was an interrogation of deeply held assumptions about identities, representation, difference, power, and knowing. I discovered that if I shielded myself from recognizing the conditions under which power and meaning operate as an inoculation against determinism and the extinction of self-agency that are inspired, then there would be in this formulation and others like it, scant opportunity to recognize multiple voices, creative agency, and Being in the lives of other women. In arguing against one "universal," I recover and admit to a "universal" of a different nature for which I have no name.

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Appendix A
Interview Questions

- Is there anything you'd like to tell me about yourself? What are you doing now? (your profession, background, education)

Section A: Family and Upbringing

Tell me about the neighbourhood or neighbourhoods where you grew up. Describe the houses, atmosphere as you remember them. Was it a diverse neighbourhood?

A1. Tell me about your family and how they came to Canada.
What words best describe your up-bringing?
    Describe your parents.
    What was your relationship with them like as you were growing up?
    How about your relationship with them now, as an adult?

A2. What do you remember most about your home life? What language or languages did you speak in your home to your parents, with siblings? What language did / do your parents speak mostly with you?

A3. Do you speak Chinese? (when, with whom?) Do you think in Chinese sometimes? When? What's this like for you?

A4. What slogans, sayings, teachings about learning, education, studying, do you remember your parents using or saying to you as you were growing up? Reactions toward these now.

A5. In what way did your parents or family define "being a good student" "being intelligent", "successful" How would you define each of these?

A6. What would you say was / is valued by your parents and Chinese-Canadian culture in how a woman is expected to carry herself in general?

A7. How would a Chinese Canadian woman be expected to behave or carry herself as a student or someone who is participating in learning of some kind?

A8. What do your parents tell you is important with regard to your education, your work?

Section B: Education (past and/or current)

The following questions in Sections B, C, and D were either directly from or based on questions from the Ways of Knowing Interview Schedule (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, pp. 231-236)

B1. What do you think will stay with you about your experiences here in this school, this program?
- good/bad teachers, academic/non-academic experiences, good/bad assignments, courses.

B2. Has being here, (in this program) changed the way you think about yourself and the world?

B3. In your learnings here, have you come across an idea that made you see things differently, or think about things differently?

B4. What has been most helpful to you about this place?

B5. Are there things this (school, program, environment) doesn't provide that are important to you? Are there things you would like to learn that you don't think you can learn here?

B6. What goals do you have for yourself while you're here at this school, in this job? What do you hope to come away with when you leave here?

B7. There are many different ways that we can describe someone's approach to learning, their style. What words would you describe yourself as a student / professional, your style of learning?

B8. Looking back since you started this program / career / job, how have you changed as a student/ learner ?

Section C: Learning in or out of the classroom and ethnocultural experiences

C1. Looking back over your whole life, can you tell me about a really powerful learning experience? (teacher, subject, environment).

C2. Can you tell me about a time (in or out of school) when you had a disempowering, difficult learning experience?

C3. What does the phrase "being a woman with a mind of her own" mean to you?

C4. Who would you consider a role model in your life? How about role models who are also Chinese Canadian women? Do you think they are necessary for Chinese Canadian girls and young women?

C5. When you are in a classroom, meeting or group situation, with other Chinese Canadian women, what do you often notice about them, how they carry themselves?

C.6. How has it been for you, as a Chinese Canadian female growing up here in Canada?
What's been the most difficult (situation) for you?

C7. How has your identity as a Chinese Canadian woman changed in the last several years? What led to these changes?

C8. Looking back what has been your most enriching experience about being a Chinese Canadian woman?

C9. What role does your ethnic heritage play in your life now? Is it different than in the past? How would you like for your ethnic heritage to come into play in your future?

C10. How has your experiences as a Chinese Canadian female entered into your work, your studies, your interests?

C11. What part of being Chinese Canadian do you want to hold onto the most? Why?

Section D: Conclusion

D1. What will you and your life be like 15 yrs. from now?

D2. Are some of the questions that I asked, experiences or issues that you have felt and thought about before?
What people, opportunities do you have to discuss, explore these areas with?

D3. Are there any other questions that I should have asked you, that would have thrown some light on the areas I am interested in, .. that is, Chinese Canadian women's lives and women's learnings/education?

Appendix B
Informed Consent Form for Participation in the Study Entitled,

"Thinking and Learning Through Culture: Experiences of Chinese Canadian Women"

Purpose and Scope of this Study

This research project explores what it is like to participate in and experience learning from an ethnocultural and women's perspective. Specifically, I am interested in examining Chinese Canadian women's development as they are engaged in learning endeavours (e.g. as students, professionals working in education-related fields, or in related community work). You will be asked questions about your formal and informal education and learning experiences, your family background and upbringing as it pertains to education, your perceptions about yourself as a woman engaged in learning, what you care about in terms of your learning life, experiences that have shaped your development at school, at work and other pertinent areas, and any insights about culture and learning that you would like to share.

The objective is to hear your story, and to understand how you think about and experience learning as a woman of Chinese Canadian descent as you engage in different areas of learning. Although a lot of psychology and education research has already looked at adult women's experiences and development in learning, very little research has specifically included an ethnocultural perspective. As such, your experiences will be of interest to me as a researcher.

Participation and Use of Data Collected

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time, without explanation. Whether or not you choose to participate will have no bearing on your grades or employment. You have the right to refuse to answer any interview questions you do not wish to answer. If you do withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point will be destroyed immediately.

Your interview will be audiotaped and the tape will be erased after 1) it has been transcribed by the researcher, and 2) after you have read the transcription and have made any revisions you deem necessary. In the event that the transcription will be used by the researcher in any further publication(s) (e.g. academic journal article) at (a) later date(s), additional permission will be sought from you only if you deem it necessary. (Please see below). As such, the researcher has the right to retain a copy of the interview transcription.

The audiotaped information collected in the study will remain confidential and only the researcher will have access to the actual taped interview. The transcription of the interview will be kept safely in a locked office. My thesis supervisor and members of the thesis committee will have access to these transcriptions should such a request arise at anytime prior to the final thesis defense. Be assured that your anonymity will be protected in that your name and any information that identifies you will be altered and will not be attached to any published results. This signed consent form, along with identifying information will be stored separately from the transcription of our session.

Thank you so much for your participation and interest. Should you have any questions about the purpose and scope of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Brian Harvey at the Dept. of Psychological Foundations in Education, University of Victoria. (Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are listed on the next page.)

I have read and understand the above terms and agree to participate in this study:

______________ ______________________
Participant's Name Participant's Signature

____
Date

Researcher: Eugenie Lam ______________________
Researcher's Signature

M.A. Candidate, Dept. of Psychological Foundations in Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Victoria
Ph: E-mail:

____
Date

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. C. Brian Harvey
Department of Psychological Foundations in Education,
Faculty of Education, University of Victoria
Ph.: E-mail:

If the transcriptions shall be used in a further publication (e.g. academic journal article) by the researcher, it is NOT necessary to obtain my written consent again.

______________________ ______________________
Participant's Signature Date

VITA

Surname:	Lam	Given Names:	Eugenie Yuen-Ching

Place of Birth: Hong Kong

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of British Columbia	1982 to 1988
University of Victoria	1995 to 1998

Degrees Awarded:

B. A.	University of British Columbia	1988

Honours and Awards:

Okamatsu Family Scholarship for Japanese Language	1988

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Title of Thesis:

Constructing Mirrors of Learning: The Negotiation of Identity and Representation in the Lives of Chinese Canadian Women

Author [redacted]

Eugenie Yuen-Ching Lam
June 12 1998