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The Lived Experience of Canadian Children of Colour

by

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ABSTRACT

What is the lived experience of Canadian children of colour? Through thematic analysis and interpretation, the tacit knowledge surrounding the living of this experience has been made explicit. Complex, thematic aspects integral to the life world of the participants unfold one by one. The significance of the physical presence is reiterated by those who struggle with definitions of attractiveness that exclude them, by those who are struck by the impact that corporeality has upon initial interactions with others, and by those who define otherness and belongingness through phenotypical criteria. The power of the ethnic slur to humiliate and degrade children of colour becomes understandable to us when we consider their precursory experiences of being named, collecting names and naming themselves — all instances of belonging, affirmation and identity. More generally, the formidable power of discriminatory actions and words or racist beliefs is apparent in their responses; while some are only mildly perturbed, there are those who are immobilized and still others who are vindictive. Equally powerful is the potential for friendship and the parent-child relationship to transform. The befriended are transformed by the lived understandings they gain from their friends of colour as they witness cultural ways of being and hear world views that are different from their own. Parents of colour influence their children by providing them with possibilities — a gift intended, but not necessarily received. And in the context of these relationships of caring, children of colour define themselves, holding close to those aspects of ethnic self which must remain in order to be authentically themselves. These understandings reinforce the importance of being pedagogically present for Canadian children of colour.

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To Jitsuya Oishi, Reiko Mori, Sandra Oishi, and Selwynne Hawkins, who like me, live the in-betweenness that is Canadians of Colour. And to Ian Hawkins who travels with me down this road that defies naming.

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I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience, and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.
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CHAPTER ONE

APPROACHING

Silver serving spoons lay idly on the rims of near-empty platters, their handles smudged with use. Linen napkins — once pristine and pressed — were strewn haphazardly across dinner plates by content diners lazy with food and drink. We were a circle of friends in repose: Linda to my left, Dianne to my right, Sharon, Sandy, Helen and Joy.

The candlelight captured

dancing eyes, expressive gestures.

Some of us with arms draped on backs of chairs,

Others leaning forward, chins propped on tripods of hands, forearms and elbows

Relaxed intimacy.

Conversations meandered from one topic to the next. Sometimes the exchange was rapid and boisterous. Other times, thoughtful silence punctuated serious discussion. At one point, someone asked Linda if the media's account of what had recently happened at a northeast LRT station was indeed accurate: Was the conflict an instance of ethnic warfare amongst Calgary's youth? She replied that the incident had not been as severe as reported on the news; the police dealt with specific individuals from several surrounding junior high schools but the media's insinuations of inter-ethnic animosity and police brutality directed towards ethnic youth were inaccurate, meant instead to sensationalise the sometimes rocky relationship between adolescents and adults in authority. Dianne sighed and sat back in her chair, "I'm sick of hearing the media

attribute youth violence and police confrontations to racism. They try to make it sound like the United States. I've spent time there and I know. It's nothing like the U.S.. There's no race problem in Canada."

My initial reaction to Dianne's comment was one of vague, wordless unease; I did not challenge her comment but I continued to replay it in my mind, just as one engages in the meditative ritual of turning a flat, smooth stone over and over in the palm of one's hand before skipping it across a sheet of water. Hours later, as I was driving home, still thinking back on that conversation, I was finally able to articulate for myself why I found Dianne's comment to be so disquieting. Here was an Anglo-Canadian assuming that race was not an issue for Canadians of colour because she had not heard otherwise. Indeed, as the only woman of colour at the table, I chose to say nothing, leaving her assertion unchallenged. It is this same silence that is interpreted by the other as assurance that visible difference is of no consequence to persons of colour. Yet my own experience countered this assumption and bolstered my belief that there are important personal truths to be told by Canadians of colour, so that others may come to understand that ethnicity and race influence our lived experiences. This dissertation explores the lived experience of Canadian children of colour. It is my hope that, like me, the reader will come away with a deeper understanding of how our particular day-to-day experiences remind and inform us about the human condition.

A Survey of the Existing Literature

For years now, I have had a keen personal interest in the experiences of Canadians

of colour. That interest led me to survey and collect literature on Canada's visible ethnic minorities. It seems that the existing literature can be categorized as follows: biographical, autobiographical, and fictional works — both poetic and narrative in form — focusing on the experiences of individuals of colour; anthropological, historical, or sociological studies which document and describe, statistically analyse, theorize or define; and pedagogical prescriptions for modifying the learning environment to better meet the needs of students of colour.

I have always been a collector of works by authors and illustrators of colour. On a personal level, they validate my own experiences as a Sansei (a third generation Japanese Canadian) and expand my understanding of other persons of colour. Novels like Badami's (1996) *Tamarind Mem* touch on themes of ambition, generational conflicts and coming to know one's self — all of which are familiar to me, while taking me away to different times and places that I will only know through the book. On a professional level, they allow me to enhance mandated curricula, giving voice to ethnic and racial minorities who are scantily, if ever, represented in the work that teachers must do with children. Lawson's (1993) novel, *White Jade Tiger*, and Yee's (1996) picture book, *Ghost Train*, recount the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad from the perspective of Chinese immigrant labourers, while the issues of cultural displacement are powerfully depicted in the work of Littlechild (1993) and Say (1993). I have also introduced individual students of colour to books that feature their people or that acknowledge their experiences. "Yes," Carol — a young immigrant from mainland China — solemnly attested, "that is what it is like to be an ESL student in a Canadian school," after hearing a chapter from Alma's (1993) *Skateway*

to Freedom. Yoshi, a reluctant reader, read *Naomi's Road* in one weekend. Upon completion of this simplified version of Kogawa's (1988) *Obasan*, Yoshi confided that he felt both "mad and proud" about the plight of Japanese Canadians during the second World War and their subsequent reactions — historical events of which he had no previous knowledge.

The field of anthropology has contributed greatly to my conceptual understanding of terms such as race (Goldberg, 1992; Lieberson, 1980; Rex, 1986), ethnicity (Rex, 1986; Roosens, 1989) and culture (Mahmood & Armstrong, 1992). While many of these works took me away from the specific Canadian context, they were invaluable sources of clarification and elucidation of terms I frequently encountered in my survey of the literature.

Much can be understood about the present world view of Canadians of colour by exploring historical accounts documenting the arrival and naturalization of specific ethnic groups in Canada. These historical case studies describe the existing immigration policies, the settlement patterns, the political climate of the community at large, and the subsequent reaction of the newly-arrived ethnocultural group. Some of the studies focus on the arrival and settlement of ethnic groups in the distant past (Adachi, 1976; Miki & Kobayashi, 1991; Ward, 1990), while others focus on groups that have emigrated more recently (Lakhani & Christensen, 1988).

Contemporary case studies leave the reader with a focused understanding of the cultural beliefs, institutions and customs unique to a specific group (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, & Weltman,

1992; Isreal, 1987; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Winland, 1993). In addition to case studies, sociologists have contributed significantly to theoretical and conceptual frameworks surrounding notions of ethnic self (Aboud, 1981; Hedley, 1994; Isajiw, 1980; Lambert, 1981; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990), stereotyping (Mackie, 1980; Taylor, 1981), prejudice (Cannon, 1995; Frideres, 1975; Kallen, 1989; McKague, 1991), and cultural pluralism (Hunt & Walker, 1980; Kallen, 1982; Williams, Himmel, Sjoberg, & Torrez, 1995). From within the discipline of sociology, yet a third form of literature emerges. The analysis of statistical data has led to a plethora of studies focusing on demographics (Chen, 1988; Halli, Trovato, & Driedger, 1990) and the socio-economic status of persons of colour (Darroch, 1980; Lautard & Loree, 1984; Li, 1988, 1992; Rajagopal, 1990).

The final body of work has significant pertinence for Canadian educators. These texts address the creation of classroom climates, curricula, programs and school policies which will foster cultural sensitivity and combat racism. Annotated bibliographies (Jobe, 1993) and teacher resources (Silvera, 1989; Spann, 1992; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1990) provide educators with numerous titles and activities that promote ethnocultural awareness, reinforce the value of an ethnic self and counteract disabling stereotypes or blatant forms of racism. In addition to curriculum resources, theoretical works examine the rationale behind the delivery of services meant to promote multiculturalism (Banks & Banks, 1989; Modgil, Verma, Mallic, & Modgil, 1986; Ramcharan, 1988; Sarup, 1986) or articulate the inequalities apparent in existing educational institutions (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1992; Mallea, 1987,1989; Witherspoon, 1987).

The existing body of knowledge in the areas of ethnicity, race relations and

multicultural education is indeed well developed, yet I was unable to find texts which pursued deep understandings of the lived experience of Canadian children of colour in ways that phenomenological exploration would allow. And so it was to that task that I turned my attention.

Formulating the Phenomenological Question

What is the lived experience of a Canadian child of colour? My research question, while simply stated, led me to discoveries and insights characterized by nuance and complexity. I believe this original question arose naturally from my orientation to the world. As a Sansei growing up in Canada, interactions with my family, my ethnocultural community, my friends, my classmates and my adversaries frequently led me to ask myself: When does physical difference matter? What aspects of my ethnicity do I value? Am I the same as others? Years later, it is now apparent to me that those seemingly disparate, particular, situation-driven questions were a part of the larger, existential questions: What is belongingness? What is difference? What is self? While I recognize that ethnicity and race are social constructs, I have experienced repeatedly how it is that universal conditions are framed in the life world of children of colour. And so my initial question encompasses the following questions: What is it about this form of life that makes our experience markedly different from the dominant other? What is it about our relationships with caregivers, each other and with the dominant other that shapes our experience as visible minorities in this country? And finally, how does otherness affect our burgeoning sense of self?

Beyond the personal significance of this inquiry, there was the lure of engaging in a research project of this magnitude. It is the challenge taken up by all who engage in research:

> We seek to understand something, which means that we seek to make its meaning clear to ourselves. After we understand something, we seek to communicate what we understand to others. This is the essence of science in its broadest sense. (Keen, 1975, p. 33)

Done well, this dissertation will complement an already extensive body of literature by contributing a rigorous, thoughtful analysis of the lived experience of Canadian children of colour — a task that has not been undertaken elsewhere, to my knowledge.

Finally, it is my belief that a professional obligation is met by searching for the deeper meaning to these phenomenological questions. As a caregiver of children, I make a personal commitment to be with students in a way that maintains their dignity, while together we engage in the business that is school. In a time when children of colour make up a portion of many Canadian classrooms, I will be better able to work with these particular charges if I can understand how it is that ethnicity and race shape their experiences at home, at school, in the company of friends and in the presence of foes. For, as van Manen (1990) says:

> I cannot just treat the topic of the child's experience . . . as solely an academic or research issue. I am not *just* a researcher who observes life, I am also a . . . teacher who stands pedagogically in life. (p. 90)

And so it is my need *and* my desire on a personal, academic, and professional level to

make sense of the lived experience of Canadian children of colour.

The Rationale for Selecting this Methodology

Of phenomenology as a research method, Silvers (1984) writes:

> My own relationship to phenomenology is not to a field as objectified *knowledge* but to the possibilities of phenomenological *knowing* made open to us through the reflective practices of our inquiry. (p. 18)

Simply stated, phenomenology is a descriptive human science wherein the researcher "begins in lived experience and eventually turns back to it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 35). It is a search to recover existential meanings, complex ambiguities and universal truths from the specific and particular, the result of which will be a rigorous, disciplined reflective analysis of some aspects of the lived experience of Canadian children of colour.

Early on in my exploration of phenomenology as a method of inquiry, I turned to existing phenomenological inquiries within the disciplines of sociology, psychology and education, since it was from these works that I was able to gain a sense of how to proceed with my own writing. I familiarized myself with the work of Schutz (1970) and then later, Schutz and Luckmann (1980), who cogently explore the nature of social relationships. I read the work of Giorgi (1967, 1975, 1985,1986, 1988, 1990), a psychologist of renown, who beyond analysing psychological phenomena also contributes greatly to the literature that addresses how to engage in phenomenological inquiry. Thirdly, I surveyed several phenomenological works focusing on pedagogy (Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, & Mulderij, 1983, 1984; Suransky, 1982; van Manen, 1979, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990). Like

Giorgi, van Manen is a prolific writer of both research and methodology; I have learned much by his showing and telling of phenomenology as a research method.

While all of the phenomenologists attend to the phenomenological reduction — seeing the phenomenon in its own right with its own meaning and structures — and the thorough articulation of meanings as they emerge from the phenomenon (Keen, 1975), researchers differ in the approach they take to present their thinking. The wide stylistic variance between inquiries reinforced for me the importance of establishing my own voice as a researcher — a substantial challenge that was only accomplished after much experimentation, substantial feedback and many drafts. I have settled upon a writing style and an organizational structure that I hope brandishes my personal signature while still upholding the methodology of this particular human science.

In addition to the pertinent sociological inquiries (Schutz, 1970; Schutz & Luckmann, 1980), I discovered other phenomenological explorations which related directly to the topic at hand. For instance, Laing (1984) uncovers the significant meanings of name and naming while Szekely (1987) explores the phenomenon of attractiveness. Phenomenological explorations of belongingness and alienation (Norris, 1990; Winning, 1991; Wu, 1991) also complement my work. My work is stronger for having found these related texts, since by engaging in dialogue with their texts, I was able to clarify my own thinking in light of what was written by another.

Gathering the Data

After establishing research questions and selecting a methodology, I began

gathering pre-theoretic data — the material on which to work. In retrospect, it is not surprising for me to have selected a methodology that relied heavily upon the description of lived experience. Quite naturally in the past, it seemed I had frequently relied on personal story to exemplify my beliefs and to determine the feasibility of theories presented by others. Lived experience was one of the sounding boards by which I determined whether research findings and theories meshed with what I considered to be lived truth.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I again turned inward to capture my own personal lived experience. The challenge was to make tacit that which is lived but not necessarily articulated. Not only did my descriptions of lived experience provide me with yet another source of the pre-theoretic, but the acts of recalling and recording my own stories helped me to hone reflective awareness — a sensitivity that enables a researcher to remain oriented to the phenomenological task at hand. Of this awareness, van Manen (1990) writes:

> It is to the extent that my experiences could be our experiences that the phenomenologist wants to be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings. To be aware of the structure of one's own experience of a phenomenon may provide the researcher with clues for orienting oneself to the phenomenon and thus to all the other stages of phenomenological research. (p. 57)

While I recorded a variety of personal experiential descriptions at intervals throughout the writing of this dissertation, my focus remained constant. In each instance, I worked diligently to record pertinent events in a protocol of direct description, while consciously

avoiding causal explanations or interpretive generalizations. This writing task involved visualizing episodes from my past — memories of childhood, adolescence and my professional life — trying as best I could to recreate the emotive and sensual aspects of doing, seeing and being with others. I found myself continually revisiting each protocol, replacing one word for another in an attempt to capture and then articulate the episode as remembered, always conscious of the gift and the curse of the English language. For in the magnitude of possibilities, subtle distinctions between one word and the next determined the precision of fit between the remembered and the understood. Or, as Goldberg (1986) aptly writes in her manual for beginning writers:

> Things, too, have names. It is much better to say "the geranium in the window" than "the flower in the window." "Geranium" — that one word gives us a much more specific picture. It penetrates more deeply into the beingness of that flower. It immediately gives us the scene by the window — red petals, green circular leaves, all straining toward sunlight. (p. 70)

For both reasons stated above, I attended seriously to the act of capturing memories and accurately transforming them into prose. My personal stories represent hours of scrupulous word-smithing, unlike the spontaneity that characterized the transcripts of participants. And so, in this dissertation, two types of voices are represented: the precise, polished voices of those who commit their stories to the written word and the spoken voices of the interviewed participants. In addition to my personal recollections, the former is characterized by the complex sentence structure and evocative vocabulary of the likes of Galeano (1995), Harris (1992) and Mura (1991, 1995), while the latter is immediately

identifiable as the spoken word; the cadence is captured in each participant's unique phrasing.

Once I had determined that this study would focus on children of colour rather than a specific ethnic group or generation of Canadian, I began the search for participants. In this study, the term child is generously used to encompass young children, pre-adolescents and youth. Some of my participants were former students, others were personal acquaintances, still others were referred to me by colleagues. Participants ranged in age from ten years old to young adults in their early twenties. For some, it was a matter of remembering the recent past — the day before in the cafeteria, or the previous weekend at the mall. For others, it was as it had been for me, the challenge of remembering back to the time of our childhoods or adolescences. Regardless of the difference in age between the participants, the experience of growing up and being schooled in Canada was the experience common to all. While some of the participants are perhaps featured in only a single anecdote, I drew primarily from the transcripts of seven participants, representative of a variety of ethnic groups. Through these discussions of what it is like to be a child of colour growing up in Canada, I came to appreciate the unique story that each had to tell. Here then, is a brief profile of these seven individuals. Given the participants' frank disclosures, the anonymity of each individual has been ensured. Therefore pseudonyms replace actual names. Firstly there was Jennifer, a second-generation Chinese Canadian who presented herself as a thoughtful, confident and precocious child. While Nina — a recent university graduate — shares Jennifer's heritage, her story of childhood and adolescence was one of uncertainty, caution and skepticism. Then there was Levi, a Grade

4 child with treaty status, who spent two years of his lifetime in Calgary while his mother attended the University of Calgary. Shortly after our interview, Levi returned with his mother and older brother to the Hobbema reserve outside of Wetaskiwin. Levi was quiet and unassuming, yet he spoke with warmth and affection about his extended family and his escapades on the reserve. Logan was a Vietnamese teen, who, like many immigrant youth, grew up balancing the culture of his homeland with the prevalent culture of his new home. Hasina was a teen of Caribbean ancestry. Her story was characterized by an ongoing struggle to define herself as Canadian. Like Hasina, Terrence — a young professional of Japanese heritage — spoke passionately about his evolving sense of self. He is best characterized as a young man with a strong drive to achieve and a fierce pride in his accomplishments. Finally, Muhammad was a South Asian teen who cherished his connection to a people while demonstrating repeatedly his ability to succeed in the Canadian milieu.

After making initial contact, explaining the nature of my research and obtaining written consent from prospective participants and, where necessary, their guardians, I recorded our conversations on audiotape. By remaining oriented to the original research questions, I was able to engage each participant in a conversational interview where the interviewee spoke of personal life stories associated with being a Canadian child of colour. During each interview, I encouraged participants to clarify vague or general statements with specific examples of lived stories and I asked for clarification when details were sparse or contradictory. After our initial meeting, I transcribed the tapes and then later contacted participants in instances where I needed further clarification or additional

details. The transcripts of these seven participants represent a substantial portion of my data.

During the data gathering phase, I also drew occasionally from recent conversations or observations. These isolated, unanticipated interactions took on pertinence because of their timeliness — instances of lived experience illustrated the very themes I was exploring. Up until the completion of this dissertation, I found myself continually filtering personal and professional encounters through the lens of a researcher. It seemed that I considered all that I heard or saw, wondering if that instant was potentially relevant to my research. While timely interactions were a fruitful source of additional pre-theoretic data, I understood the unease that Hansen (1976) experiences as she grapples with her seemingly disparate roles of researcher and friend or uninvested observer. Of this personal dilemma, Hansen writes:

> Later that day I would record this conversation, alone, without her knowledge, in my role as anthropologist. In my role as investigator the conversation became "data." Would she have spoken so frankly about this and other more intimate subjects had she understood that I listened in *both* roles, not only as a friend? (p. 129)

In these instances, where possible, I contacted those with whom I spoke or kept company to verify if they had remembered the incidents or conversations as I had. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) advise researchers who find themselves in a similar ethical predicament to honour the decision of the inadvertent participant to alter or exclude aspects of a protocol. In all instances, pseudonyms were employed to protect the identity of the individuals in

question.

Literary sources, including autobiographical works, poetry collections, plays, children's literature and fictional prose provided me with additional data. Despite the wide range of genres, all selected pieces are written by North Americans of colour. No one would dispute the use of autobiographical literature as a potential source of the pre-theoretic, since lived experience is the essence of this form of writing. However, it could be argued that fictional material by definition does not represent lived experience. I would counter that it is the spark of recognition I experienced as a reader that alerted me to kernels of lived experience embedded within fictional texts. Therefore, specific passages have been included as pre-theoretic data because the responses and reactions of certain fictitious characters seemed plausible and because cultural markers intertwined throughout some texts gave the impression of authenticity. While it is possible that such realism can be achieved by any talented writer, it is not coincidence, I believe, that the most convincing characters share the author's ethnocultural background. Indeed, Yep (1990) confides that it is the fictionalizing of self that allows him to write as well as he does:

> You should always write about what you know: the things you have seen and the things you have thought and, above all, the things you have felt . . . The heart is a difficult place to enter, let alone describe, unless one wears some sort of disguise. (p. 217)

It also became apparent to me as I culled through these sources that while some aspects of the lived experience of Canadian children of colour depend on age and time, there are other aspects of coloured otherness that traverse boundaries of age, historical

setting or national borders. For that reason, not all featured passages speak of childhood or adolescent experience. Instead, some of the protocols included throughout the dissertation address the lived experience of a *person* of colour — a broader categorization. However the inclusion of such data complements and strengthens, rather than weakens, this project, since the ensuing thematic analyses result in a deeper, richer exploration of the phenomenon.

Yet another source of data came from existing qualitative studies in the fields of sociology and education, particularly those research projects which focused on the experiences of Canadians of colour. While none of these studies required participants to speak of their lived experiences in the ways that phenomenologists would dictate, many of these studies featured excerpts suitable for phenomenological scrutiny. In such excerpts, the participants spoke candidly of their experiences, describing their emotive responses to significant events. In other words, the authentic voice of the participant was clearly apparent and the passages were sufficiently descriptive to be deemed suitable data for this project.

I returned again and again to the data to search for the deep meanings of lived experience, but that is not to suggest that there is no place for existing theoretical works or research findings in a phenomenological inquiry. Rather, lived experience acted as the filter through which I selected sociological and anthropological research findings and theoretical constructs, while consciously bypassing or challenging others. The inclusion of existing formulations and views that support that which is uncovered in this inquiry reinforces how it is that this phenomenological inquiry — while fundamentally different in

its methodology and intent — can be part of the existing body of knowledge that informs us about Canadian children of colour.

The Recursive Nature of Phenomenological Inquiry

The initial tasks of determining my research question, selecting a complementary methodology, and then collecting the pre-theoretic data unfolded systematically. During that period of time I purposely set about to survey a variety of qualitative research methods, to read widely, to collect passages which I sensed would be pertinent to my work, to interview participants and then to transcribe audiotapes. While it was rewarding to make efficient, visible progress, the most gratifying aspect of this project was also the most harrowing.

Sifting through protocols, trying to make sense of documented incidents and conversations, I identified specific passages as telling or meaningful.In some instances it was relatively simple to capture the essence of each meaning unit; in other instances, the units stubbornly defied words. Gradually, I had amassed many thematic phrases, each one alluding to one aspect of the experience of children of colour. Some of the phrases occurred several times — recurrence signalling the significance of a particular statement. Other times, an anomaly would appear, but rather than discount the isolated idea, I harkened to the advice of Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, and Mulderij (1983) when they caution, "It may be that the loose end holds the real clue to what has happened, to some new insight" (p. 135).

The tentative grouping of related statements resulted in loose thematic

formulations, whereby each grouping represented an aspect of the experience: our notions of attractiveness, our friendships, our relationships with elders, our sense of home and homeland, and so forth. Recognizing that thematic statements draw attention to significant aspects of the phenomenon but do not in themselves provide a deep, rich analysis, I began the process of writing phenomenological description around the established loose structures. After much thought and careful revision, thematic descriptions began to emerge in my writing. While some of the original thematic formulations have remained intact in the final outcome, other times, in the process of "going back again and again to the things themselves until that which is put to question begins to reveal something of its essential nature" (van Manen, 1990, p. 43), thematic phrases and formulations were cast aside or replaced and the reflective discourse changed dramatically in search of a better fit between tacit meaning and written interpretation.

For me, the writing of this dissertation has been a long, arduous task. In between spurts of invigorating inspiration and focused single-mindedness came extended bouts of nonproductivity. Repeatedly in the last five years, the writing ground to a halt and seemingly, the more anxious I became about ceasing to write, the more attractive the mundane became. Hours, days and weeks passed as I got caught up in the everydayness of my life, attending to closets I hadn't cleaned, files I hadn't sorted, books I hadn't read or acquaintanceships I hadn't maintained. However, in reflecting upon the process leading up to the completion of this dissertation, it is fitting that the act of creating was difficult, since I would venture that for most of us, dawning understandings stubbornly evade linguistic representation. Often times a satisfying thematic analysis finally emerged after considerable

and frequent attempts were made to reflect, blunder forth and then attune, time after time. Yet it was solely through this process that I gave body to thoughts. Interestingly, until many of these thoughts were constructed on paper, they went unconsidered by me. And so it is the mindfulness that accompanies writing which validates this project as re-search — probing again and again for what may be found buried in the seemingly ordinary, self-evident, generally unquestioned life world of the child of colour.

Organization of the Dissertation

Often, phenomenological research is guided by four life world existentials: spatiality, corporeality, temporality, relationality. Lived space or spatiality is reflected in the sections of this dissertation that refer to the landscapes of homeland, home and school. It is lived space that Terrence speaks of when he recollects the anxiety he felt looking out over a sea of black heads, while visiting an expansive park in Japan. And it is also within the context of home and homeland that young women of colour experience what it is like to be perceived as attractive.

Corporeality evolved into a major theme in this dissertation, garnering an entire chapter. This discussion focuses on the initial reactions to Canadians of colour, the predominant definition of beauty and handsomeness in a Canadian context, cosmetic changes that young women of colour undergo to achieve beauty, and classifications of Canadians of colour along racial lines. The myriad of topics related to corporeality reinforces the significance of body as lived in the life worlds of Canadian children of colour.

Time, in the empirical sense, is that which can be documented by watches, schedules and calendars. Time, as lived however, refers to the temporal landscapes of individuals of colour. The interconnectedness between past, present and future becomes apparent. The existential of lived time is apparent in how our people's pasts influence our present world views and how much of what our parents do for us in the present is driven by their orientation to the future.

The final existential, relationality, draws our attention to the interpersonal space between ourselves and others. Particularly, the notions of belongingness, otherness, domination and subordination are explored in the relationships between children of colour and their parents, friends and the dominant other.

Lived space, body, time and relation to the other are emphasized throughout the dissertation, but it is around five emergent themes that the body of the work is organized: beauty and corporeality, name, racism and discrimination, friendship, and ethnic self. Chapter Two focuses on beauty and corporeality. Specifically, the inquiry explores how it is that we define beauty and then respond to that definition. This chapter speaks to how Canadian children of colour experience physical difference in a predominantly Caucasian setting.

The thematic emphasis for Chapter Three is on the significance of the name. This chapter explores the way in which names are selected for children of colour and how it is that we collect names as we progress through life. Our responses to being given names are ambiguous, however, since some names are meant to bestow a feeling of belongingness, others are meant to describe, while others are meant to objectify, hurt or humiliate.

Chapter Four focuses on racism and discrimination. The impact of discriminatory words and actions are explored, as Canadians of colour articulate ways in which we cope with the otherness that is cast upon us in the form of stereotypes, exclusion and racism. Sometimes our responses are tempered with humour, generosity or caution. Other times, we respond with impatience or anger.

Chapter Five presents those thematic structures related to friendship. Firstly, acquaintanceship and friendship are differentiated and then the process of coming to know the other is explored. Intra- and inter-ethnic friendships are contrasted with the friendships we forge with the dominant other. Regardless of the configuration of the friendship, Canadian children of colour struggle to come to terms with the seemingly disparate forces that lead us to promote or discount aspects of our ethnic selves.

The final chapter, on ethnic self, delves further into the significance of sharing aspects of ourselves with others and of identifying for ourselves the impact ethnicity has had on our lives. It also focuses on the influence that our parents have on us as part of their wish to influence our futures. Additionally, the issues of retaining heritage languages and creating an evolving sense of ethnic self are explored.

As I had hoped, phenomenological inquiry has led me to deeper understandings of the life world of Canadian children of colour. It is also my hope that this interpretation will lead you beyond our narratives to the tacit knowledge of lived experience made explicit in this dissertation. For, as Kogawa (1988) says in her introduction to *Naomi's Road*:

If you walk with her a while,

You will find the name of a very important road. (p. ii)

CHAPTER TWO

BEAUTY AND CORPOREALITY

Lynn, a curriculum leader in a northeast junior high school, recollects an incident where she had to step in as an administrator to stop a fight between two Black girls. The Blacks in this school differentiate between themselves: the Jamaican Blacks and the African Blacks. While both ethnocommunities attend the same church, there is rivalry between the two groups of young women. The Jamaican Blacks view themeselves as more beautiful. Typically, according to Lynn, these girls are fairer in complexion, and have finer features. They also come from a higher socio-economic background than their rivals, with money to spend on clothes and hair extensions. With less expendable income, the girls of African descent are unable to acquire the beauty that money buys. And too, they struggle with their broader noses and their darker skin — features which are not acknowledged as beautiful in this subgroup or in the media's images influenced by the world view of the dominant other. But the girls of African descent have come to admire themselves for their moxie, verve and fast tongues. And so, the taunting of one group by the other has been a part of the reality of housing both ethnocultural communities in one school. The rivalry extends beyond the girls into their homes. Apparently, Sonia St. John's mother had words with Aretha Obremu's mother the week before, regarding the reputation of her daughter. The girls heard about the heated argument and brought their disregard for one another to school. When Lynn stepped in, the girls were close to exchanging blows. Lynn took Sonia into her office, where the young Black woman paced back and forth, spitting venom, "That bitch better not get in my beautiful face!"

The recency of Lynn's story reinforces for me the primacy of our corporeal selves in shaping what we come to believe about ourselves. Many of the participants in this study had telling insights into what it was like to be physically distinctive along phenotypical lines. This chapter focuses on the telling views from Canadians of colour in regards to beauty and body image in the company of our own people and in comparison to others.

Defining Beauty

Without the reassurance and nominations of others, we cannot claim that we are outwardly beautiful. Outward beauty is determined by the observing, judging other who evaluates the gestalt of our physical features and determines the degree of beauty we possess. While it can be said that a person has beautiful eyes or delicate lips, it is the presentation of the whole visage that sways the other's judgement, making us beautiful, handsome, plain or homely.

We do not stop to consider how outwardly beautiful we are until we are in the presence of those who value corporeal beauty. Beauty is a descriptor that is lavished upon us or others who are the objects of scrutiny and then favourable judgement. Ideals of beauty can be agreed upon by the collective other but also developed by the individual beholder. We can be deemed to be beautiful in one setting, but we may not be recognized as such in another. Each of us develops our own criteria, yet these criteria are not isolated or totally idiosyncratic; they are within a range of what we perceive is accepted as beautiful by the collective other. The range represents the multiplicity of views in the community: our family, our clan, our friends, our neighbourhood — locally, nationally,

internationally. While any one of us has an opinion on what constitutes beauty, Wolf (1991) contends that beauty is a socially constructed commodity heavily influenced by the archetype of the dominant other, meant to perpetuate the power enjoyed by males in Western societies.

> "Beauty" is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves. (p. 12)

Szekely (1987) suggests that women deemed beautiful by the male dominated other are advantaged in ways that unattractive or plain women are not:

> From a temporal perspective, women's pursuit of attractiveness is revealed as women's attempt to have a future. It is this chord — the anxiety about the future — that the call for beautification touches whether women are consciously aware of their attractiveness being a key to their future existence or not. Women's anxious pursuit of attractive appearance reveals their situations as tied centrally to their relationships with men; their future depends on men as husbands, lovers, employers, bosses, and even co-workers. (p. 109)

Pipher (1994) contends that while North American females feel intense pressure to look beautiful, the pressure is most intense for adolescents, especially given the social ecology of contemporary North America:

> The pressure to be beautiful is most intense in early adolescence. Girls worry about their clothes, makeup, skin and hair. . . . We have moved from communities of primary relationships in which people know each other to cities full of secondary relationships. In a community of primary relationships, appearance is only one of many dimensions that define people. Everyone knows everyone else in different ways over time. In a city of strangers, appearance is the only dimension available for the rapid assessment of others. Thus it becomes incredibly important in defining value. (p. 183)

Like Pipher, Locher, Unger, Sociedade, and Wahl (1993) conclude that "perception of differential attractiveness occurs effortlessly or automatically with the initial encoding of sensory data" and "that once information about physical appearance is provided people seem to rely heavily on it to make inferences about other aspects of the person" (p.741). Given the importance placed upon physical appearance and the rewards garnered by beauty, it is not surprising to discover that Canadian children and youth of colour voice ambivalence about our own phenotypical features and frequently yearn for the beauty ideal embraced by the dominant other even if we possess admirable features from the perspective of another, albeit subordinate, ethnoculture.

For Nina, a Chinese Canadian, the predominant world view of the dominant other is a powerfully persuasive one, overriding a loyalty to her own people. Because of its persuasive influence upon her personal ideals, Nina is unable to view the phenotypical features of her own people as desirable or attractive when contemplating what it is to be handsome.

> Usually a lot of Chinese guys are geeky and really thin and not athletic. I didn't want someone like that. I wanted someone who was tall, muscular. Someone who was sort of different from me. It's better they don't have flat nose[s], small eyes. They look better if they're tall. Clothes look better on them if they're tall.

Sadly, by rejecting the typical features of Chinese men in her definition of handsomeness, Nina — herself a person of colour — perpetuates a belief that is suspected by some Canadians of colour: that the criteria for handsomeness or beauty are narrowly defined to solely embrace Caucasian archetypes. For Nina, specific phenotypical features of Chinese males are perceived as the antithesis of what it is to be handsome in Canadian society.

Curiously, when asked about her own redeeming qualities, Nina bypasses her physical appearance to focus on her interests and other aspects of her personality.

> CHERYL: What did the boys see in you?
>
> NINA: I was smart. I wasn't really athletic. I was on the badminton team for a while, but that was about it. I was kind of giggly. I'd be talking back and forth in class with my friends and maybe they [the boys in her class] thought that was cute. Maybe it was because I was different.

Nina tentatively acknowledges that her phenotypical features were unique in this community, and therefore perhaps alluring, but she emphasizes other attributes as the primary source of attraction. Ironically, while she herself perceives that she is attractive to others, in part because of her phenotypical features, she is adamant about rejecting the visage of like-heritage males. Terrence, like other youth of colour, is suspicious that views of handsomeness are based on Caucasian archetypes:

> I think they [the girls in his high school] were probably looking for Mel Gibson. I think they were looking for handsome, but I also believe that personality plays a big role in a person's perception of attractive. A person's personality affects them in the way you perceive them in terms of physical attractiveness.

While crediting himself with desirable personality traits, Terrence discounts those physical features which are attributable to his ethnic background — slanted eyes, coarse black hair, compact build, short stature, flat nose — as not handsome. Given Terrence's outlook, different phenotypical features are neither a detriment nor an advantage, they are simply not acknowledged. He is not cynical or downtrodden about this perceived reality. Instead he pragmatically projects positive aspects of his personality, traits which he hopes makes him attractive to others.

Borrowed Beauty: One Reaction of Canadians of Colour

While established norms of beauty vary from people to people, the influence of the Caucasian norm that is embraced by the dominant other in Canada is also influential in many parts of the world, regardless of the nation's predominant race or ethnicity. In countries that are influenced by the dominant Caucasian world view, images of the White ideal predominate. Many Asian countries seek Caucasian women to epitomize beauty; these models are exotic in these communities but prized even more highly because of their rarity and because they represent the much admired "platonic ideal woman" (Wolf, 1991, p. 12). And, in blatant contests of physical beauty such as the Miss Universe pageant, contestants from around the world possess valued White features such as slender legs, taut

breasts and buttocks or aquiline noses, even if they represent a different race. To be ultimately victorious in this competition, contestants of colour exemplify the ideals of the dominant other; in some cases, they look phenotypically dissimilar to the people they represent.

While Canadians of colour are a visible component of Canada's demographic composite, they achieve limited exposure as archetypes of beauty. Of the paucity of South Asian women in Canadian media, Bannerji (1993) ascertains:

> We have to acknowledge that we do not suffer from the obsessive preoccupation the advertisement agencies or the sex industries show towards the bodies and faces of white middle-class women. South Asian women are not seen as aids to trade and, as such, are not used to sell a wide variety of objects — ranging from sexual fetishes or objectified sex to gadgets — which uphold the happy, white bourgeois home. That an Indian woman likes a certain kind of toothpaste is obviously no recommendation for the product, and certainly the sexual appeal of a garment is not enhanced by a Sri Lankan model. (p. 177)

For Canadian youth of colour, the multitude of world views with the overriding influence of the dominant other's criteria make it difficult for us to define ourselves as unconditionally beautiful. Do we, as Canadians of colour, embrace definitions of beauty which include our own physical features? Who and what influences what we come to know as beautiful? What are the effects of excluding or discounting our distinctive physical features by alternatively valuing the commonly-held criteria of the dominant other, a view that we sense does not embrace alternate notions of beauty?

In an attempt to take on what she perceived to be the ideal in eye shape, Sandra — a Canadian of Japanese descent — recalls how, as an adolescent absorbed with body image, she would look to cosmetics as a way to make her eyes look different, potentially beautiful or alluring:

> I'd flip to the make-over sections in all of those teen fashion magazines to see if they featured an Asian face. There was this suggestion about using black eyeliner to create the illusion of a crease for a double eyelid. I'd also read with interest in one of my grandpa's Japanese magazines that you could get cosmetic surgery done to achieve the look of double eyelids. Double eyelids were signs of beauty amongst Japanese girls. Not very many Japanese girls had double eyelids, and the ones that did had enviable Caucasian-like eyes.

By painting a thin black line along the contour of her eyelid, she hoped to downplay her Japaneseness with a White ideal, making herself more beautiful to her own people and to the naturally endowed other.

In yet another telling instance, Black women speak of straightening their hair with the intent to make themselves more attractive. The real nature of their hair is hidden from the other; many Black girls go to great effort to ensure that the natural tendencies of their hair are controlled. Carol Talbot and Makeda Silvera reminisce about their cautionary response to displaying the authentic nature of their Black hair:

> TALBOT: . . . When we got to be eleven or so then she [Talbot's mother] started to straighten our hair with the hot comb, eh? And that was not fun.
>
> SILVERA: Yeah, I know. I was there many times.

> TALBOT: You've been through that too, eh? (*laughter*) You know white people are really naive. They don't know that. I remember in Windsor all the high schools had swimming pools — you had to take swimming. Then you'd have to be in school all day with your hair in its natural state. I could have been a really good swimmer in high school, but I didn't want to get my hair wet. (*laughter)* It was like a demon that would ambush you.
>
> SILVERA:. . . I never learned to swim in high school because of hair! I didn't want to jump into that pool, you know, and come out looking like a totally different person, to be forced to explain the texture of my hair, the sudden change in length. (*laughter*) (Silvera, 1995, p. 166)

The cost of seemingly long, sleek, straight hair was hours of coiffing and careful, deliberate actions. Yet for many, the desire to have beautiful, Caucasian-like hair over-rides the natural tendency of their hair and the cost of upkeep. While both women now laugh at their adolescent desire to appear other than they were, it is a laugh of self-deprecating hindsight — an acknowledgement of how hard they tried to leave behind the phenotypical features of their people, a cosmetic change which they thought would make a significant difference to how they were viewed by the dominant other. For borrowed beauty is not a celebration of ourselves or our people, it is a conditional acceptance of our appearance based upon how closely we resemble the ideal other. Our desire to physically resemble the other is the result of our devaluing of our own features as we make a "reinvestment in color-caste hierachies" (hooks, 1994, p. 181). So pervasive is the notion of beauty as dictated by the dominant other that Harvey (1995), in an exploration of

psychotherapeutic interventions for Black clients, focuses on the salience of skin colour for some individuals of colour. Ironically, some people of colour take on the view of the dominant other — that less value is placed on dark skin. By vilifying dark complexions frequently found amongst their own people, they themselves perpetuate the "paradox of blackness" (Harvey, 1995, p.4). Of this paradox, Harvey writes:

> This skin color paradox suggests that light-skinned women are preferable as wives and girl friends because they are moral, chaste, and intelligent. Dark-skinned women, on the other hand, are viewed as sensual and promiscuous. Lighter-skinned men are viewed by women as desirable and by darker-skinned men as "punks"; black-skinned men are viewed as dumb and aggressive. The adage "the blacker the berry the sweeter the juice" (Thurman, 1970) has an obvious sexual connotation, that is, the darker the person, the better he or she is as a sexual mate. (p.4)

Given the influence of the dominant ideal, it is not surprising that Canadian youth of colour seek out borrowed beauty with a vengeance. In his exploration of the stigmatized, Goffman (1986) claims that the quest for borrowed beauty, regardless of the success of the outcome or the extremes taken, is a telling action:

> Whether a practical technique or fraud is involved, the quest, often secret, that results provides a special indication of the extremes to which the stigmatized can be willing to go, and hence the painfulness of the situation that leads them to these extremes. (p. 9)

While our actions reflect our desperation to present as the ideal other, the transformation

is merely cosmetic. These surface changes cannot alter our connection with a people — a fundamental aspect of who we are. Nor do they change how the other sees us; we continue to be viewed as people of colour who have attempted to change aspects of our outward appearance without eradicating tell-tale phenotypical features marking us as racially distinct. Recognizing that to be the case, there are some people of colour who choose to abandon the futile pursuit of beauty ideals which we have borrowed from the other to rediscover the beauty of our own people.

Reclaiming Ourselves: "This is no Borrowed Beauty, this is Home" (Tynes, 1991, p. 105)

In the social context of our ethnocultural communities, we can reclaim the beauty of our people. Mori's (1995) fictitious character, Mr. Hamada, reminds a Nisei teen of the ethnically-bound beauty possessed by one who dons a kimono, in his attempt to convince her to perform a traditional odori — the dance of the parasols.

> "I hate to wear kimono."
>
> Hamada-san looked horrified. "Ah, Sachi-chan!" He cried. "Please do not say that. Don't you Nisei girls realize the truth? When you wear your bright, colourful kimono you are the most beautiful women in the world. Your eyes brighten up, your figure becomes symmetrical, your gestures move naturally. Don't you see, Sachi-chan?" (p. 29)

Our culturally-specific adornments enhance the features of our people, highlighting features unique to our places of origin. By shedding our day-to-day garb and instead

enrobing ourselves in traditional wear, we create an ethnocultural backdrop. It is in this context that we are judged on our beauty according to the merits of our people rather than the criteria of the dominant other. And it may be, as the character, Hamada-san, intimates: enhancement of our unique phenotypical features enables all others, including the dominant other, to recognize the beauty of our people.

In Maracle's novel (1993), *Ravensong*, Stacey — a young Native woman living on a West Coast reserve — is suddenly struck by the beauty of one of the elders:

> She looked again at Nora's hands, large and strong, and at her body, lean and vigorous. She sat in the chair much the same way Stacey's father did, legs slightly apart, with her chest leaning into her conversation. When she was on a roll with some story or other she stood up and assumed the beauty and cadence of Speaker. Her eyes were large and shaped like raven's, snappy and black, her skin dark but her hair auburn, almost red. She kept it sleek and tied back away from her handsome face. She was beautiful when she spoke. Her gestures expressive, perfectly timed and graceful. (p. 98)

Because of Nora's sacred gift as a storyteller, she captures the attention of the audience, and we are entranced at this moment, as is Stacey, by her beauty. As in the previous example, it is only through the eyes of another member of this ethnocultural community that we, as outsiders, can come to see Nora as beautiful. Her features and gestures, ordinarily considered plain or masculine, take on a beautiful quality when Nora is engaged in the act of storytelling. She encapsulates the spirituality of these people: an ethereal, sacred beauty that is tied to her Indianness. Only in this context is she viewed as beautiful,

since it is through her gift as orator that Nora is viewed as special and significant. Nora is a source of deeper understanding and wisdom and as such becomes beautiful to Stacey in a profound way. So, in this case, beauty is not tied to physical attraction but to a dawning awareness of the power of spirituality — the power to transform an unremarkable person into a person of entrancing beauty, given a specific setting, circumstance and readiness on the part of the onlooker to acknowledge yet another form of beauty.

Similarly, Sears (1990) discovers an altered version of beauty exists in the places of origin for persons of colour. For some Canadians of colour, redefinition of beauty cannot happen without transporting ourselves back to our homelands. The notion of "Black is Beautiful" was not apparent to Sears until she ventured to the African continent. Of that time, she says:

> I began to notice that a lot of women, well — had behinds that were just like mine — very well developed. Yeh, they had these voluptuously developed hips. And their lips, their lips were sensuous and full. And their hair — oh, you should have seen some of the coifs and the many intricate styles of head wraps. God, this is beautiful! (p. 64)

It is not just seeing the beauty of her people that has an impact on Sears, it is also coming to understand that she potentially has the features to be considered beautiful in another culture. It is realizing that she could be perceived as beautiful by others without having to alter the natural tendency of her hair, skin colour or body shape. But is the admiration of our people in a distant place or in a segregated ethnocultural community enough to sustain our feelings of being differently beautiful in a society where other benchmarks of beauty

predominate? Once accepting that we are beautiful by a standard — our own, our people's, or the society's in which we live — we become examples of what beauty can be. Inclusion of our differing standards of beauty broadens the range of that which is acknowledged as beautiful. As individuals of colour gain acceptance as beautiful, then we broaden the range of what beautiful is in Canada.

Perhaps membership into this group should be enough for us; it shouldn't matter who we were nominated by, only that we were nominated. Hasina, a Black teen, readily admits the confusion she feels while trying to establish whether she herself would be considered beautiful in a Canadian context. Much of her confusion stems from the disparity of opinions offered by her three older brothers. Each one prefers young women from a specific racial group.

> Anthony, he's Mr. Designer. He's into his fashion thing. I guess he just sees the Oriental models [and says], "She's pretty.". . . It's hard for me. It [determining her own degree of beauty] is a topic for me all the time because I live with three brothers and the only other Black girl that I really know is Annabelle because that's Lyndon's [Hasina's oldest brother] girlfriend and he sees her as pretty. Well, she is pretty. But I can never look like that because there's just a difference there. Then he [Lyndon] thinks that other girl is ugly but this girl I think is pretty. And so sometimes, I get a little confused because I don't know where to go. Having three brothers with judgement, really affects me a lot of the time. Because Carlton goes out with White girls, that affects me because I'm like, "Are White girls prettier?". . . Pretty much, I think I look nice [not beautiful], that's all. My hair

looks pretty nice today. I was happy with my hair. I thought I looked okay. (Hasina has her hair chemically treated so that it hangs straight to her jawline and is curled under all the way around.)

Like Hasina, many of us wonder if others have begun to broaden their definitions of beauty to include alternative archetypes of beauty and thus consider persons of colour in their definitions of what is beautiful. Are we to remain on the margins of the dominant definition, unacknowledged? Perhaps it is only our perception that the widely accepted criteria of beauty are stringent and exclusive. In reality, the dominant other's world view may be more generous and accommodating.

Beauty from Within

Part of what it is to be beautiful is to acknowledge that others appreciate our beauty and then to exude it, or to be confident of our beauty. This confidence makes us even more beautiful. It says, "We too see the value placed upon our beauty as identified by others. We are indeed beautiful." For Winter (1995), a growing confidence in her own beauty develops when she returns to her homeland and then remains with her when she returns to Canada, where previously she felt exotic and alien but not beautiful. For Winter, these newly acquired, alternate notions of beauty accompany her, having a continuing impact on how she views herself, even after she is once again surrounded by the dominant other and the notions of beauty that predominate in Canada.

I, like the mango

become a present from this land

an embodiment of her beauty.

On this land deep in my mind

I am beautiful (p. 85)

This same confidence is something that Miss Terrell, a fictitious Black grade school teacher exhibits each and every day at school:

> When she mentioned this to James William, he had said, "Child, that Alveeta Terrell be a regular proud woman. Why wouldn't her chest be as proud as the rest of her? She mighty good lookin' and one smart lady. You know you just as lucky as can be to have proud Alvetta Terrell be your teacher!" (Brand, 1990, p. 119)

Her carriage sends forth the message that she is proud of who she is, which is a beautiful Black woman; beautiful by the standard of the Black race — imperial, majestic and therefore, worthy of respect in all circles. Such confidence is possessed by this woman of colour, yet evades many young persons of colour. Perhaps this confidence comes with age, and so it is not a beauty possessed by the very young. While, as youngsters, we are concerned with the acceptability of our beauty, sensing that our beauty is tenuous in the larger forum influenced by the dominant other, perhaps maturity allows us to see that our people deem us beautiful and that makes us equally as worthy of praise and admiration as others who are deemed beautiful by their people, regardless of who the people are or the position they hold in society.

Seeing Beauty in One's Children

On the topic of beauty, George Eliot (1859/1968) differentiates between the

beauty which is intoxicating for persons and the beauty which is associated with newness and innocence. She writes:

> It is a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks making gently rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief — a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. (p. 72)

From a parent or grandparent's perspective, there are none so beautiful and exquisite as their children and grandchildren. These children are immediately and forever adored. Constant, unfailing looks and words full of love reinforce for these children that they are unquestioningly and matter-of-factly beautiful. As the relationship continues, adults come to associate specific physical attributes with a definition of beauty that is tempered by the affection they have for their children. And so, in reference to a particular child, an asymmetrically dimpled cheek, almond shaped eyes, or a halo of unruly hair become markers of beauty. By including these subjective markers of beauty, we alter our previous criteria to encompass this person we have come to value as beautiful.

In the act of grooming her granddaughter, a Native grandmother teaches the child of her traditions while shaping her into a traditional image of beauty. The young girl never stops to question the legitimacy or currency of her grandmother's view of beauty but instead agrees that she must be beautiful if the one who cares for her says that it is so:

> "Sorry Grandma. Are you almost done now?"
>
> "No. You know better than that. We still have to make your braids. All

> good little Indian girls have nice braids — without tangles — and they sit still so their Grandmas can make them look pretty!"
>
> "Okay," I said.
>
> I sat while Grandma put the comb in the water and wet my hair down with it. At last my two braids were finished. They were nice and tight and smooth and wet. Grandma told me that I was the prettiest little Indian girl around. I smiled. (Freeman-Villalobos, 1991, p. 102)

The young girl is beautiful now in her grandmother's eyes because she is her grandchild. The grandmother expresses her affection and love for the child by painstakingly untangling and then braiding her hair, with practised hands, doing the braids as she has done on many others over time. "You are beautiful because you are my granddaughter. My gift to you is doing your hair, enhancing your Indianness in a way that I am accomplished." Whereas in a previous example, beauty was tied to a specific place, here, a sense of what is beautiful is tied to a specific time: the time of the Grandmother's understanding of what constitutes beauty. It is a view developed over time. It includes the grandmother's experience as a girl and young woman. It is the time taken to develop her sense of what it was to be beautiful. Of the time taken to establish these values, Hedley (1994) writes:

> However, individuals change little over a lifetime, despite sometimes vast changes in their environment. The basic values that comprise an individual's identity form during childhood and remain relatively stable throughout life. (p. 203)

It is in this image that the grandmother lovingly grooms her granddaughter. While it is apparent to the audience that such a definition of beauty may be sadly outdated, the young

granddaughter never doubts that she is anything but beautiful because her grandmother's words hold truth; it is the unquestioned legitimacy that the young grant to the words of those adults who care for them.

Like the young Indian girl, whose image of self was bolstered by her grandmother's preening and words of praise, Jennifer, a young Chinese Canadian girl, is also confident in her own beauty. It is a confidence that has been built on the praise of the elders in the Chinese Canadian community. Jennifer identifies which of her facial features she perceives to be beautiful:

> My forehead's nice. In the Chinese beliefs, if you have a nice round forehead, it's considered nice. Well, just everyone I know they say, "Oh she has such a pretty forehead." And I ask Mom why and she says it's nice and round and big.

At this point in her life, it is the Chinese adults in her ethnocultural community and her mother who influence Jennifer's image of beauty and encourage her to view herself as beautiful. Jennifer wears her hair off her face, often pulled back with a barrette to show off her forehead. According to Jennifer's mother, much can be predicted about one's future, given the shape of one's forehead. Jennifer's outlook is one of long life. According to the Chinese, Jennifer is charmed and remarkable; she is beautiful.

Similarly, Logan uses an ethnically influenced measure to judge the beauty of his little sister. According to Logan, Connie's beauty lies in her Vietnamese visage. He articulates, with words and gestures, which of her facial features he deems beautiful:

> CHERYL:What about Connie, does she look Vietnamese or Chinese?
>
> LOGAN:She looks more Vietnamese.

CHERYL:What does Vietnamese look like?

LOGAN: More chubby, brighter skin — brighter yellow. They have long hair, nice eyes. The eyes are wide. Most Chinese people's eyes are like this. (He stretches his eye out towards his ear with his finger.) They're [the Vietnamese people's eyes] are wide. (He opens his eyes in an exaggerated, startled look.) Their mouths are out, long.

CHERYL: Who has a mouth like that?

LOGAN: She does. She looks Vietnamese. My mom looks Chinese more.

CHERYL:What part of her looks Chinese?

LOGAN: Her eyes. Chinese eyes, right? They're just more down, not as wide.

As Connie's older brother, Logan's evaluation of his younger sister may be biased by the affection he has for her, not unlike the beauty that parents see in their children. Yet, in his criteria of beauty, Logan has begun to attribute certain physical features to specific ethnic groups and to place greater value upon some attributes over others in his personal view of beauty. Interestingly, his criteria for beauty have not been influenced by the dominant view of beauty which he would encounter on television or at high school.

While young girls of colour may be proud of traditional beauty and bolstered by the elders' words of praise which we accept as truth, or sound judgement, as young women we become more guarded in what we will accept as praise for our beauty. In the same nurturing way, Hasina's mother compliments her teenage daughter on her beauty, yet Hasina no longer acknowledges her mother's opinion as an accurate appraisal of her aesthetic value:

> If my mom tells me I'm pretty, it does not mean a thing to me when she says it. I say, "Don't bother saying it, it doesn't mean anything, Mom." It doesn't! If she says it, it's just Mom. Your mom's going to say that, so who cares?

Every offspring is beautiful to a parent because of the love that the parent has for the child and the admiration a parent has for a child grows as the child grows. It is not a beauty that is relative — comparing this child objectively with others. Rather, it is a beauty associated with uniqueness and an allegiance that is blind to the comparison of others.

What Do They See When They Look at Us?

Hasina recollects what it was like walking down the corridor of her high school during her first semester of Grade 10. She was adamant about not being a typical Black student who associated strictly with her own people. After careful examination of what Blackness looked like in her school, Hasina set out to look differently. She avoided a specific style of dress, a specific cadence of speech, a specific style of hair and a specific attitude in order to make it apparent that while she was a Black student, she did not want to be affiliated with the Blacks who had separated themselves from the rest of the school body. And yet, she was very uncomfortable walking past this Black group in the hallway and was curious about what they thought of her:

> I want to know what people see in me. That's always a question in my mind: What do they see when they look at me?

Is it visible ethnicity that others see when they look at us? We cannot see ourselves as we are viewed by the other so we can only conjecture about how we are perceived. We have

a notion that our ethnicity or race is immediately noted by the other, although we cannot always be certain whether skin colour difference is viewed by the other with interest, attraction, ambivalence or disdain. Like Hasina, some of us try to create a visage that fits with our perception of the accepted look, even if it is at the risk of being ostracized by some of our own people who choose to uphold other distinct, sometimes ignored or refuted norms as the ideals of beauty. On occasion, we stop to wonder what our own people think of us. Can those who choose to celebrate differentness understand that while we too are of the people, we are striving for an appearance that will bring about acceptance in a larger social context even if it means being ostracized by our own people? What remains unalterable is that we remain of the people. Our skin colour and facial features prove our birth right or membership. But by striving to be embraced by peoples other than our own — particularly the dominant other — we hope to achieve acceptance in a larger arena, thereby increasing the possibility of desirable outcomes such as favourable recognition, prestigious friendships or romantic relationships. So, we attend to mainstream youth trends in dress, make-up, hairstyle and life-style, taking on those attributes which make the statement: We want to be treated and accepted as the admirable, likable, attractive and potentially desirable, beautiful other. We make the assumption that for each ideal of beauty there is room for some variance. We hope that, since we can only take on some aspects of the accepted other look, we sufficiently resemble the ideal in ways that are valued by the other and deemed passable or more desirably, beautiful. While we can straighten our hair to resemble a specific coiffure or wear baggy jeans riding on well-developed hips, we do not look exactly like the models in

the advertisements of the trend-setting clothiers. But our hope is that we look enough like the prototype to be accepted as part of the group rather than to be deemed an anxious, ridiculous imposter. For those who are forced to present ourselves differently by what we wear or how we adorn our bodies, there is the irrational hope that casting aside this attire and donning the clothing of the other will be all that is needed to have others accept us. Patsy, a Native teen, struggles with her look which she feels betrays her. She senses that the others view her as a poverty-stricken Indian:

> Patsy didn't like public school. She didn't like the kids and she didn't like living "on the other side of the river." She would wonder if it was the way they dressed that made the kids make fun of them. . . . Their clothes were second-hand, but pressed and clean. Mother would braid their hair using strings of leather woven through the braiding. On their feet they wore moccasins that Nokomis, her grandmother, had made. (Bourdeau, 1993, p. 188)

Certainly being ostracized for her clothing is less serious than being shunned for her socio-economic status or her ethnicity, since the latter are difficult or impossible for a Canadian child of colour to alter or disguise. If it were only a matter of changing our clothes to fit in, then those of us feeling left out could easily change our social stature amongst our peers. Yet to hang on to such a belief is to be naively optimistic and brings us no closer to accepting who we are and why it is that we dress the way we do, talk the way we do, believe what we do. Instead, by focusing on ways to change what is visibly different yet possibly alterable about ourselves, we begin to despise the way we were before the influence of the dominant other. Patsy's appearance was the culmination of care in self and

of being cared for by others. She began to consider rejecting both forms of caring, looking instead for ways to be like the others — regardless of what that did for her sense of self or what that did to her relationship with her caregivers.

Females of Colour: "Roses, You and I" (Alexander, 1993, p.6)

Alexander (1993) creates a striking analogy between roses and women of colour, simple in its wording, yet evocative in meaning. The rose — bred for its heady fragrance and wide ranging, rich colour palette — has a beauty highly valued by others. The metaphor illustrates how language alters our way of thinking of others and ourselves. Through this metaphorical comparison, Alexander elevates the beauty of women of colour beyond exotic curiosity worthy of momentary consideration, beyond the plain, ordinary and commonplace, to the stature of deeply appreciated and formally, publicly prized. For some, the words confirm what we already knew; for others, the words introduce new possibilities — new ways of viewing women of colour. By examining the descriptors which accompany phenotypical attributes or ethnic or racial identity, the value of self and other emerges. For instance, the language used to describe our physical features discloses whether these physical attributes are viewed as admirable, beautiful, ugly or dismissable. Tynes (1991) celebrates the physical features of the Black woman in her poem entitled "The Profile of Africa":

> we wear our skin like a fine fabric
>
> we people of colour
>
> brown, black, tan coffee coffee cream ebony

beautiful, strong, exotic in profile

flowering lips

silhouette obsidian planes, curves, structure

like a many shaded mosaic . . .

Read the map of my heritage in

my face

my skin

the dark flash of eye

the profile of Africa (p.104)

In Canada, to redefine words like "Black," "Indian," "immigrant," "colour," and "visible minority," is to leave behind the previous connotations of inferiority, ugliness and undesirability and to attach new meaning to words or labels that in themselves have no meaning or connotation, except those which we and the others have attached to them over time. Harris (1992) begins by looking at her Blackness differently. For her unborn daughter, Harris promises that Blackness will be something precious to be celebrated, rather than something that is despised and representative of unworthiness or baseness. She writes:

holding out her arms she sings from Solomon

'Yes you are black! And radiant

the eyes of many suns have pierced your skin' (p. 24)

The notion that colour is a gift of the sun; that Black skin is radiant as a result of exposure to sunlight over generations, is a different view of Black skin. Blackness of skin becomes a

proud testament of the longevity of this people, rather than the marker of subservience, inferiority, and impoverishment — a marker that has historically diminished this race of people in North America.

Pigment labels to categorize people according to race are socially constructed over time. However, categorization according to skin colour rather than lineage can be a precarious act, since skin tones vary from one Canadian of colour to the next:

> Once, in a hardware store, I found our exact shades on a paint mixture chart. Mom was Almond Joy, Dad was Burnt Clay and I was Maple Walnut. (Dorris, 1991, p.52)

The markers of colour refer to a race, and with that label comes a history of generalizations and inter-racial interactions. But the colour label is sometimes arbitrarily applied not by a person of colour's ancestry or lineage, but rather by the actual colour of our skin or the presence of stereotypical physical features (Shadd, 1994). Hill (1994) recalls how as a lighter skinned Black child, his "colour, such as it was, generally went unremarked" (p. 43). During his teen years, Hill asserted his heritage by styling his hair in an Afro. But again, it becomes apparent to us that we are often defined by others on the basis of our visible attributes rather than our heritage:

> Only one student, whose name was David, gave me a hard time about it.
>
> "Jesus, Larry, you look like a French poodle!"
>
> "It's an Afro. It's common among Blacks."
>
> "Black! How can you say you're Black? You're not Black! You're barely darker than me!"

> My mouth dropped, but I said nothing. The words made me burn with anger. They rang in my ears for weeks to come. I wanted to wrench out David's hair and yell: "Yes I am! Yes I am Black!" I wanted to scream that Blacks had been defined for centuries on the basis of their racial origin — something not necessarily emphasized by skin colour. (p. 45)

A colour label takes on meaning: generalizations about individuals sharing specific phenotypical features. In Canada, as in some other parts of the world, categories along colour lines exist, so that while we may be persons of visibility and difference here, that is not necessarily the case elsewhere — thus the notion that colour referents are socially constructed. The nomenclature "person of colour" is dependent upon the composition of the dominant other and their inclination to delineate between themselves and others along phenotypical lines. In a predominantly Caucasian country such as Canada, the colour label is applied to all other races. And so it is that individuals who were previously unremarkable along phenotypical lines can immigrate to Canada and become part of the visible minority, or Canadians of colour. Rodriguez (1995) writes about the new label of colour she assumed when she left her homeland, Chile, to live in Canada:

> But the interesting thing is that since living in Canada I have been forced to see something that I had never seen before: colour. In Chile I didn't have a colour. I was like everybody else. Colour was not an issue. Here, I have been forced to see myself as a dark woman, "a woman of colour." (p. 217)

Identification by colour is not derogatory or debilitating in itself, but has become laden with negative meaning in some instances. Colour, when used to generalize a race of

people, stands for otherness — not of the White race — and so it is on this basis that we have been excluded or treated poorly. For these reasons, some of us come to despise this visible difference and wish that we could eradicate it, that perhaps underneath this layer of colour is colourlessness: the desirable White of the dominant other in Canada. In vain, we work to bring this colourlessness about, certain that it is only skin colour that marks us as alien.

> His face was pale, almost the same as the grey his hair had turned into. Gone was the shiny brown sheen which she had so hated. For years she had tried to scrub the same sheen off her own face. A constant reminder of her otherness, try as she might, she had been unable to erase it. She was cursed with his skin which set her apart. Alien. Immigrant. (Kumar, 1995, p. 13)

Perhaps it is the naive, spontaneous reasoning of the newcomer — both new to Canada and new to this world — that the colour that we are cloaked in is the reason that we are treated the way we are and that if we could eradicate the tint of our skin to become White, then difference would be eliminated and there would no longer be a way to view us as separate, distinct and distastefully different from the White other. Just as the newly-arrived immigrant holds that desperate vision, so too does Foster's (1991) young son:

> My son, only five years old, had dashed home from school and headed straight for his bedroom, burying himself under his brother's blanket. Sensing something was dreadfully wrong, I eased into the room and softly asked why he was forsaking the usual television cartoons and raids on the refrigerator to be in bed so early. . . .
>
> Some darling in his kindergarten class, he explained between sobs, had shattered

> his world by telling the class he was not welcome at her birthday party. The reason: he was Black. In confusion, my son reasoned he was different from all the other children in his class. He even thought himself inferior to his older brother, who has a lighter shade of skin. He reasoned that his brother, whom he thought of at that time as white, would have been invited to the party. If he adopted the ways of his brother — sleeping in his bed, under his blanket — he too would lighten his skin by morning and get that invitation. (p. 1)

It is not the colour of our skin that has literal meaning or value. It is the collective nature of the term, the accompanying notions of valuelessness and the history of being treated as alien or irreparably different or inferior, that should be cast off — not the colour of our skin, but what the label of colour has come to mean for us as part of the collective of Canadians of colour.

The Value of Distinction

Being Canadians of colour means that we interact with our family, peers and acquaintances without thought to the colour of our skin or the generalizations that accompany these labels. Our skin colour is not something we contemplate every moment, nor is it something that is continuously noticed by the other. Yet, by skin colour, we can group or be grouped in a subsegment of Canadian society labelled "visible minorities." Colour simply becomes a way of separating persons of colour from the dominant others. We take for granted how colour is an aspect of living in Canada, how we use colour to make initial delineations until we go somewhere where the markers of colour are altered.

In a homogeneous community dominated by our own people, we become the other and lose our status as visibly different; because we are the same colour as all of those around us. It is a loss. We can no longer rely upon our skin colour as a marker of our difference and as a means to efficiently find those who are like us. Terrence talks of going to Japan and coming to this realization in a crowded common area:

> I didn't really think that my appearance was that important to me. It didn't play a huge role in my definition of who I was. But when we went to Japan, there was a time where I became separated from my parents at a festival and there were literally hundreds of people. So I went up to this playground in the middle of this festival and I climbed up on the monkey bars and looked out over this crowd to see if I could spot my folks. At that point, it was kind of odd because it really hit me that everyone looked the same as me. I looked the same as everybody in that crowd. I found that a little bit disconcerting. So my action of going up to these monkey bars and trying to survey the crowd, if I were to do that here, it would be very easy because I'd say, "Oh, there's some Asians, they're Chinese. Oh, there's more Asians, that's my family." You do identify yourself in some respects by the fact that you look different. Up until that point, it was kind of a subconscious thing but after surveying this crowd of people with black hair, it certainly struck me as, "Geez, you know, I do look different back home." I'd be able to pick me out or persons like me, but here I'm indivisible from anybody else.

Terrence clearly views his people's discernible physical attributes as special because of the distinction between Asian Canadians and the predominantly Caucasian populace, but these

same physical attributes take on less value when he is amongst like-coloured people. While colour and easy identifiability are seen by some as precursors to the devaluation of specific peoples (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990), others view this distinction as special and advantageous, or, practically and neutrally, as merely a matter-of-fact. Not being able to immediately identify his family and knowing that he himself did not stand out in this crowd of Japanese natives, Terrence's pragmatic appreciation for the difference that colour brings is not unlike the despair that a recently colour-blinded artist shared with Sacks (1995) in regards to his new inability to recognize acquaintances. Without colour, "Faces would often be unidentifiable until they were close. This seemed a matter of lost colour and tonal contrast" (p. 10). Not only did Terrence view his discernable minority status as an advantage, he also felt sorry for the dominant other once he was in a position to be a part of the majority. To be other in his eyes was to be common. To strive for recognition amongst the dominant other as a majority member meant that one had to work extra hard to be recognized, while he was immediately discernable because of the colour of his skin. By others noting his ethnic difference immediately, he felt recognized and memorable for being himself. Terrence contrasts his impact on others with the impact left by his Caucasian girlfriend, Stacy:

> If I have friends over and I make this Japanese dinner for them, they like it; it is a memorable meal. Or they think it's very gross. But either way, it's very interesting to them. Whereas when we go to Stacy's house for dinner she makes something very delicious, but she makes chicken with some sort of seasoning and you enjoy it but a year from now, it doesn't really stand out in your mind as an event. Not like

> going over and eating raw fish with chopsticks. I take some pride in that.

As people of colour, there is the pragmatic advantage of being valuably distinct. But there is also the deprecating sense that racial difference is sometimes the reason that we are rejected by the other. Bissoondath (1994) recounts the suspicions of a Black fashion model, in regards to missed opportunities in the fashion field:

> Trudi Hanley, a twenty-one year old black woman who works in a field — modelling — where exoticism can reasonably be expected to be an advantage once spoke to a reporter of the excuses used by those reluctant to hire her: "My nose was too big. I was too black. I was too different. We have enough ethnics. I heard them all." (p. 116)

While we are prepared to accept our exoticness as an advantage, knowing that others who lack this difference are at a disadvantage because they are ordinary or dully common as part of the dominant other, we are not willing to accept that that same difference can become our disadvantage.

Looking in the Mirror: Perpetual Surprise

Placing value on our visible, external selves — our image — is not something that consumes our thoughts in all that we do as Canadians of colour. In our daily lives, where comfortable, taken for granted relationships have been established with our friends and acquaintances, we do not think back on the time of first impressions, where our visible difference was noted by the others we have come to know well. Over time, the outward differences no longer appear remarkable. Of her longtime circle of friends in Toronto, Yee

(1993) recognizes how her ethnic self goes unconsidered by her peers:

> amidst friends who know me even if they cannot know me in the most basic sense of skin and blood and pain. (p. 17)

Ironically, while it is this acceptance that we seek, we, like Yee, sense that important aspects of ourselves go unrecognized by the other when colour and other phenotypical features are no longer noted. It seems to us that when the marker of outward difference is ignored by the other, so too is the recognition that there may be fundamental, important differences between the world view of Canadians of colour and those of the dominant other.

From where we look out on the world around us, we do not register the colour of our skin, even when we glance at our skinned knuckle in irritation and sudden pain, when we pull the stockings over our feet, when we look in the mirror to adjust the slant of our hats. When the public notion of skin and body type is presented in one way, we accept that as the universal body, without stopping to consider that it does not represent our bodies. It is startling sometimes to recognize that our skin, our body covering is not that of the one commonly accepted even by us as the Body — the body of everyone, the public body, the generic body. James (1995) recollects a jarring instance of self-recognition:

> Where else could I find detail but in my parents' medical journals. This is where I first glimpsed the female genitalia. As non-traditional casting was not yet in vogue; all the photography models were white-skinned. I saw pink vagina, pink lips, and white asshole. "Hmmm. . . so this is what it looks like." I decided a self-examination was long overdue. You can't imagine my surprise when, at nine years old, I

> squatted over a small hand mirror to discover that my hot pink vagina was modestly covered by purplish lips and leering at me from behind was the wrinkly eye of my little brown asshole. It was mocking me, saying, "ha ha we fooled you!" Did I really think that my genitals would resemble the ones in the photos? (p. 137)

In this instance, it is the reflection of herself in the mirror — when her intent is to really look at herself, to look at her body — when it strikes James that her skin colour is other than white. Sometimes a person who shares our heritage becomes our mirror; by looking at the other, we are reminded of our ethnicity or race.

> I was so busy smelling that, until we sat down, I didn't really notice the people. The first thing I thought was that all of them were Japanese; the second thing was all of *us* were Japanese. (Irwin, 1987, p. 86)

Sometimes recognizing ourselves in those around us is simply that — a reaffirmation of who we are. But sometimes, it is confirmation of an association we would prefer to ignore. Tyman (1995), a Native, recollects what it was like going into town with his Caucasian step-mother in his pre-school years:

> Before I started school, I spent the days with my mother. We went shopping together, and it was always thrilling when people I didn't know came up to us. I'd get my hair tousled and a warm smile. "This must be Jimmy. Oh, he is darling." If I was lucky they'd give me candy. I noticed other Indian kids on these excursions. We'd stare at each other in fascination — I, the nicely dressed young native with this white woman, and they with their stringy hair and worn clothes. Their parents looked just the same. . . . I was beginning to understand what I was from these

> visits to the grocery store. They were dark-skinned, and so was I. (p. 10)

Young Jimmy's initial inability to see himself in those who shared his heritage could be attributed to his unique upbringing as a Native child in an Anglo home. Or his reaction may have been similar to those documented in numerous studies of youngsters of colour. In their comprehensive literature review of identity processes among racial and ethnic minority children, Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) summarize the findings of studies focusing on young children of colour:

> Taken together, the studies cited indicate that preschool and young school-age children demonstrate a (pro) white bias in ethnic and racial preference, attitudes and identification, and reference group orientation unless an intervention is introduced. (p. 295)

However excerpts from participants in this study suggest that attributing our wistful desire to be the dominant other does not pass with age, as is suggested by the previous studies favouring developmental theories. Like Jimmy, Hasina unabashedly associates herself with the dominant other. However, Hasina is a Black adolescent working hard to dispell the notion that race constitutes difference. Hasina sees the Blackness in another young woman and passionately disassociates herself from this other student, claiming that her classmate epitomizes and perpetuates the stereotype of Blackness — a familiar notion that made her popular with her White peers, yet a persona that Hasina works hard to dispel. Hasina ordinarily tries to seek recognition solely on the basis of her own individuality. According to Aboud (1981), self-identity is typically constructed with internal rather than external attributes such as appearance. Essential aspects of self overlap with ethnic identity only

when external attributes such as values or beliefs are common to both. So, in her retelling of the following episode, Hasina reflects her strongly-committed notions of what it is to be of her people — a vision that does not focus on the visible or external aspects of ethnicity or race:

> Then it was me left — just one Black girl. There were Black guys but then when Jackie came, it really turned it upside down for everyone. When she came, it was a stereotypical Black person. But I guess she came to fit in because she would do this because everyone laughed at her. I guess she thought people were friendly but really people were talking behind her back all the time. . . . When she first came she acted like she just walked out of New York. She would talk like that on purpose and some people would walk up to her, "Hey, Jackie. What up?" Then they'd come up to me and say the exact same thing and I'm like, "What are you talking about?" . . . All that Black crap. And then they would wonder why I'm not doing the exact same thing. I was trying to make a name for myself, get my own identity and when she came, it really ruined that because people were trying to make me into her and it just wasn't going that way.

While others may view Jackie's portrayal of Blackness as a novelty, Hasina's fears were realized. In seeing Blackness in this appealing way, Hasina's classmates encouraged her to embrace this way of being. Hasina was confronted with an image of Blackness which, while accepted and enjoyed by the others, was one she was trying to separate herself from. Just as Hasina cringes at the possibility of being associated with a particular dialect and a particular way of presenting herself, Jennifer — a Chinese Canadian child — winces at the

Chinese accent that gives some of her people away as immigrants or recent Canadians.

> It sometimes makes me embarrassed because some people that come here, the ones that don't really want to speak English, it's really annoying. . . . For some reason, I feel very bad for them. If I were them, I think I'd feel very sick. I wish they'd just come over knowing how to speak English.

In this instance, halting English is one of the markers of the newcomer. Jennifer's and Hasina's reactions to speakers with telling dialects or alternate heritage languages cannot be discounted as oversensitivity on their part since Scassa (1994) addresses this very issue and concludes that those of us who do not adhere to the language standard upheld by the dominant other are disadvantaged. Scassa claims:

> Communicative problems are natural where a common idiom is not shared. Nevertheless, the law can have a profound influence in shaping the response to communicative failure. Where language policy elevates the dominant idiom to the status of a national symbol, failure to meet the dominant language standard is more than just a communicative breakdown, it is a failure of a duty of citizenship. Further, where the dominant group conceives of its dominance as natural, inevitable and desirable, communicative failure will always be blamed on the nondominant speaker. Failure to master the dominant idiom becomes a fault. (p.115)

When the notion of newcomer is cast generally over a people, naturalized members like Jennifer take exception to being viewed in this way. The sickness she feels arises each time she sees someone that physically resembles her yet differs in a way that is crucial to how she views herself. In an effort to be accepted as part of the dominant other, identification

with those who have just arrived is perceived as a set-back. "In our daily lives we are reminded that no matter how banana we are (white on the inside, yellow on the outside), we 'look like immigrants, like others'" (Wong, 1995, p. 128).

But seeing ourselves in another person of shared heritage can remind us that we are not alone in our physical difference, we are not the only child of colour in "a sea of white unfriendly faces" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p. 513) on the school bus. In conversation with parents of her kindergarten students, Paley (1995) discovers that her students of colour eagerly seek out faces that are like their own, as a confirmation of their physical reality. Such is the case with Alice, an adopted Korean child:

> "Alice doesn't talk of it often," Marlene adds, "but it's interesting that even before she could speak, whenever she saw an Asian face, in a magazine or on TV or in the supermarket, she would point and smile. Only at Asian faces, mind you." (p. 102)

This need to see ourselves in others helps us to confirm our place in this world, to confirm that we belong and that we are of a people. Recognizing oneself in another is something that Canadian children seek out, but we are not always successful in this quest, as Robert, a Black Canadian explains:

> The problem at home stemmed not from negative images but from no images of Black people. Black images at home existed only in the odd visitor to the house, or television specials depicting some exotic tribe from the dark continent, or Saturday morning cartoons with Sambo and Bugs Bunny. (Richardson, Richardson, & Richardson, 1994, p. 211)

While Robert acknowledges that the lack of Black representation in his world was indicative of a time in Canada several decades ago, this lack of representation is still the case for some more recent arrivals of colour (Yoon, 1995) and so there are those children who grow up in Canada without seeing themselves represented in the books they read (Aboud, 1981; Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990), the children and adults they interact with in the community, the television shows they watch (Moore, 1992; Ungerleider, 1991), or the commercial advertisements they encounter. Robert, like Hasina, was not looking for a peer group but rather he was looking for proof that he and his people were part of the norm of what it is to be Canadian — to be publicly represented in the print, images and media as first-and-foremost a Canadian who is incidentally of colour.

"Beautiful face!" My mom laughed with delight at the picture I had drawn of her. Ajax Cleanser was sponsoring a Mother's Day contest. Yesterday I'd heard about the contest on the radio. "Draw a picture of your mom doing her housework, then send along a proof of purchase. Winners will receive an array of gifts for their mothers in time for Mother's Day." So, all morning I'd been working on my entry. There was my mother standing on sparkling parquet linoleum floor, her hands and feet positioned awkwardly in the paper doll pose that came most easily to me as a young artist. In the depicted kitchen, the pantry door was open, revealing a cupboard full of canned goods and boxed products, each with a different coloured label — a crayon patchwork of foodstuffs. By my mother's left high heeled foot was a canister of Ajax and a bucket. A mop leaned awkwardly against her right side, since rendering a handle in a gripping hand was

beyond my expertise. She wore pearls, baubly earrings and a dress protected by an apron. I drew in black swirls of hair around a bespectacled and carefully made-up face. I concurred with my mother's summation, this woman was beautiful because she looked as mother did. I grabbed mom's knees and buried my face in her terry towel apron. It had been a great morning and I was sure to win.

Thinking back on the picture, I recall, she had no skin. My mother's outline was there, her surroundings and wardrobe were beautifully vibrant. The detail on her body adornments were accurate down to the trim on her favourite apron. But where the tint of her skin should have gone, there was only the white of the paper showing through. I wonder, did I see my mother's skin? Perhaps there was no crayon with which to render my mother's beautiful face, or perhaps I had believed there was no colour for beautiful.

CHAPTER THREE

NAME

There was a knock at the staff room door and a tiny voice requested that I go to the office to settle a dispute involving one of my students. While climbing the stairwell to the main floor of the primary school, I had time to shift back into my teacher persona. This year, I had a number of scrappers in my charge. In this segregated special education class, the majority of students were there because they had displayed their frustration for learning through disruptive behaviour; instances of verbal outbursts and physical violence had decreased since their learning needs were being met, but still, it was not unusual for conflicts to occur during the lunch hour. One of my students was Marty. Marty was a rough-and-tumble Métis kid who showed a natural talent for sports. Like his three older brothers, Marty had been placed in a special education class early on in his school career. Marty was a charmer but he had a mean, tough streak that would not allow him to back out of any confrontation. And so, when I saw that it was Marty sitting on the bench outside of the principal's office, I wondered good-naturedly what had happened this time.

On the opposite end of the bench sat Ashley. Unlike Marty, Ashley came from a comfortable middle-class home. His parents were respected in the community for their liberal goodness. As a case in point, they had adopted Ashley — a child of South Asian descent who emigrated from a mission orphanage in India — and raised him to be confident of who he was, even in this predominantly Anglo-Saxon town. Ashley was a well-adjusted, bright, articulate youngster who was popular amongst staff and students. I

had never seen Ashley sitting on the bench before. When I sat down between the two of them, my voice was calm and reasoned. Not surprisingly, my opening request for an explanation was followed by silence. I directed the question again, this time specifically to Ashley. In a quiet, resigned voice, he described how a group of Grade Three boys had been playing soccer and how part way through the game, Marty had shoved him. According to Ashley, the shoving incident escalated into the scuffle when the lunchroom aide intervened. I turned to Marty and asked him for his side of the story. Marty, who had been leaning back on the bench with stoic composure, became taut as he replayed the incident in his mind. His shoulders began to heave as he took short, angry breaths and his warm brown eyes glared down at his scuffed runners. "He called me a stupid Indian, so I hit him."

For Marty, and other youth of colour, being subjected to a pejorative name is a painful and frustrating experience. A collection of similar lived experiences supports the notion that what makes name-calling painful for Canadians of colour is our preestablished sense that names are significant, important and integral to our sense of self, so much so that we cannot be separated from the names associated with us. We are our names. Because of the value we place upon all bestowed names, pejorative names inflict unshakeable pain upon the recipients. And so it seems appropriate to begin this chapter by first exploring the phenomenon of naming children of colour.

My Name is Real: Becoming Somebody

In Brant's (1992) fictional piece entitled "Turtle Gal,"a recently orphaned Native

child seeks consolation from her elderly neighbour. The aging Black man gently rocks the youngster in his arms and, as the sun sets on that day, the retired blues musician begins to sing:

> Blues about home. And home was a hot, sweet, green and brown place. Home was a place where your mama was, waiting on a porch, or cooking up the greens. Home was where you were somebody. Your name was real, and the people knew your name and called you by that name. (p. 113)

Old man William and tiny SueLinn sing the blues, her thin voice hesitantly joining his fat one. They sing the blues for the sudden passing of the young girl's mother and they sing the blues to reminisce about a happier time — a time when each had a family, a home and a name. Both long for a time when they were intimately significant and remarkable to others.

Somebody. To be somebody is to be a person worthy of distinction, to be significant in the eyes of others, and to be both heralded and cherished. One of the gifts that parents bestow upon their child is an initial title — given names and a surname. Each name is a gift in the true sense, since a gift, according to Langeveld (1983), is something given by the giver to the recipient, out of love or friendship.

The Surname: An Inheritance

A surname is a patrilineal connection to a clan of grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and siblings. It is also a claim to a specific history; it connects each of us to a past and a country of origin. In inheriting a parent's surname at the time of birth, infants

— as newcomers to this world — are immediately linked with a past and a present. Muhammad is aware of the lineage represented in his surname.

> Kanjii — I don't think there's actually a meaning to that name. It's just been my father's name right through his family for years. It originated in India.

Of his surname, Terrence says:

> Nagata means long field. I asked my grandpa who we descended from. I thought maybe samurais or warlords, something glorious. Turns out we come from a long line of peasants and farmers in Kagoshima — we had to bow down to the samurais! (Laughter)

For Muhammad and Terrence, the surname acts as a marker. It represents generations on each father's side and marks a land of origin. By bestowing a surname on a baby, a parent makes a proclamation to the world: "This is my child. He is a part of this family and a part of this people." And so it is that each of us comes to belong. And in our belonging, we become somebody.

"And How Shall We Name You, Little Warrior?" (Dunham, Meyers, Barnden, McDougall, Kelly, & Aria, 1991, p.156)

While the act of bestowing a newborn baby with the caregiver's surname is a common everyday practice among Canadian parents, mothers and fathers determine the given names for infants in a variety of ways. The thoughtful planning and careful consideration given to the name of a child is one of the first acts of love that parents engage in, prior to and shortly after the arrival of the baby. Often parents are the first to give name to

the newborn child, although the honour of naming the child can be entrusted to someone deemed worthy of that responsibility. It becomes the task of the bestower to ensure that the name is appropriate for the child. To be a parent is to be committed to the well-being of the child in a myriad of respects and, not surprisingly, this commitment manifests itself in the selection of a fitting name. Alternatively, parents may trust the task of naming to someone considered wise; they trust that the selected name will be the result of careful, enlightened thought, characteristic of the bestower. However, regardless of who names a baby, the selection of a given name is never done in haste.

Throughout the selection process, parents are driven by a desire to achieve a fit. The Didinga of East Africa recognize the need for fit between the name and the child in a verse that describes their naming practices.

> And how shall we name you, little warrior?
>
> See, let us play at naming. (Dunham et al., 1991, p. 156)

For parents, the process of selecting a name is characterized by careful deliberation, whereby many names are considered before a name is finally selected for the child. Not only must the names themselves fit with one another, but each name must fit the child. Suitability is frequently determined by considering the meaning given to the name. Some parents consider the derivation of name, others attach meaning to a name in their recollections of those who already possess that particular name. If the parents decide that the infant should be the namesake of another, then it is intended that the child so named receives a blessing through association. Muhammad talks about the meaning attached to his given name.

> My parents named me, of course. It's a Muslim name. It means virtuous and handsome, so I don't know if it worked out! (Muhammad laughs.) I'm named after the prophet, Muhammad.

In making the child a namesake, the parents hope that the child will go on to develop the attributes they found admirable in the other so named. It becomes an act prompted by faith in the connection between a name and the one so named; it is conceived as a means for securing a desirable future for a child. Through this gesture, parents send an unspoken message to the child: "You share this name with a noteworthy individual who has come before you. May you share his good qualities along with his name." As a means of ensuring that the one so named takes on the desired attributes of the namesake, parents often tell the story of how the name was selected. As a result, the child develops an early and everlasting awareness of the thoughtful selection process and the expectations meant to be upheld by sharing this name with the namesake who was held in high regard by the parents. "Who was my namesake?" like "Tell me again about when I was born," becomes one of several invitations that a child extends to a parent, repeatedly over a lifetime to hear, once again, how it was that their relationship of caring and love began.

The term, namesake, originated in the 17th century and was "said of persons or things coupled together 'for the name('s) sake'" (Hoad, 1986, p. 308). So it can be said that the child is named like previous others, for the sake of the name. There is the sense that one so named will contribute to the significance or worthiness of the name, already established by those who have held it or by a meaning attached to the nomenclature itself. Naming becomes an act of faith for parents; by recommending the child to a name, they

are proclaiming their confidence in their child's worthiness: "This person will become worthy of this name." A parent's confidence in a child is not immediately earned or proven by the child, rather it is the result of unconditional love for their infant and an unfaltering hope in the child's future.

Wally Houn, a second generation Chinese Canadian, often explores aspects of his ethnicity in the poetry that he creates. Of his given names, Wally Houn writes:

Name Me

Mother was superstitious:
My boy will have a name
that pleases the water gods
— and the world met
Woy Tien, Little Brook
who, perhaps due to the levity of some winking heavenly host,
surfaces in Medicine Hat —
nowhere near sea or ocean
and is permitted a second rite of nomenclature

*

The water son finds himself in the Shasta Cafe
home of inch thick toast
coffee that stirs itself
and now and then, I suppose, a christening
This is my grandson

What should we call him in English?

Uh-oh

Was I to be Marvin? Reginald? Ernest?

Voice from behind sportspage:

Wally That's a good name

Wally Hergesheimer scored three last night

*

Well . . . from Little Brook

(who might have been fated to cavort with gods)

to Wally

No wonder I'm confused

(Houn, 1993, unpublished piece)

In this instance, the given name is significant for yet another reason, unique to those of us whose heritage is an important aspect of who we are but is not a part of the world view of the dominant other. For the parents of this child of colour, a connection to the past remains. The name, Woy Tien, was meant to appease the water gods from a distant homeland. But this safeguard is unnecessary in their new surroundings since monsoons and typhoons are absent on the prairie. Instead, this warding off of fatal outcomes becomes a symbolic gesture rather than a spiritual preventative measure. It is indicative of the parents' desire to protect their child and to ensure his safety and well-being in the future, in a way that they know how — a way that they realize seems strange, quaint and impotent to the dominant other, yet a way that they stubbornly uphold because it is the

way they know. But as Wally's words so effectively illustrate, the dominant culture influences his parents' actions, as well. Wally's father is pleased with his selection of an Anglophone name for his son. This name offers Wally protection in a different way. It is a good name because it is recognized by Canadians as common, rather than foreign, exotic or alien. In its sameness, it wards the evils of difference away from the bearer. To accept this child as Wally is to accept this child as a Canadian.

Children of colour recognize their parents' intent behind given names that reflect the language of the dominant other. Logan, like Wally, recognizes that his given names reflect who he has become, a citizen of Canada who seeks acceptance through acculturation while still embracing aspects of his heritage.

> LOGAN: My name — my dad just thought of a name. He thought of Logan because he went to the mountains before I was born and he saw my name: Logan Mountain. So he just named me. I think it just clicked.
>
> CHERYL: Do you have a Chinese middle name?
>
> LOGAN: I do. [It means] happiness, always smiles, he wouldn't be sad that much — See Koong.
>
> CHERYL: What about Connie's [Logan's younger sister] Chinese name?
>
> LOGAN: Ee An: the sun is rising — bright — because she's a quick learner.

Logan recognizes how the selection of his first name was a pragmatic choice by his father; circumstances presented a name and it "just clicked." Perhaps this was the case because of his immigrant father's limited knowledge of the English language.

However, the nonchalance of the naming practice was abandoned with the

selection of the Chinese names for both Logan and his sister. In his heritage language, Logan's father was able to consider the traits of each child, to contemplate a desired future and then to search for an appropriate name based on etymology. Logan considers the meaning of each name and appreciates the sound fit. Knowing both children, it appears that Logan's father's choices were apt since they have lived up to their respective names: Logan is a jovial, easy-going youth while his sister is gregarious and full of mischief. While each child possesses a name significant with meaning, it is interesting to note that it follows the English first name, and is seldom disclosed in public. It is sufficient that the middle name belongs to the child — tucked away as an intimate, truthful, private aspect of self — but it was not deemed necessary or helpful to the parent for the child to make this name known to friends, teachers, acquaintances and prospective employers, thus it remains the seldom-disclosed middle name.

Similarly, Jennifer retells how it was that her parents, recent immigrants from Hong Kong, selected her English first name.

> I'm Jennifer Tim Ching Huang. My parents named me that. You see, what my dad did was [to] choose a few names. Around four or five — something like that. My mom doesn't remember all of them but two of them were Jennifer and Jessica. At that time Jennifer wasn't as popular and she just thought that it was a really neat name and crispy sounding.

According to Jennifer, the significance of each name was less important than the image it evoked for her mother. While her family hoped that a less common name would advantageously mark their child as noteworthy or unique, they did not bestow her with a Chinese

first name — one that would mark her mistakenly as alien — of another land.

Logan's and Jennifer's families are not alone in their belief that an individual's name could determine the degree of acceptability on the part of the dominant other. Szepesi (1994), a Hungarian-Canadian, sees her own name as an unshakable marker of difference. In her opinion, her nomenclature is a bane of which she is made painfully aware, each time she introduces herself to another.

> I want to call myself Canadian, but I'm not allowed. My name is Hungarian by origin so therefore I am Hungarian. It doesn't matter that on my mother's side I'm seventh-generation Canadian and before that our family came from Great Britain. It doesn't matter that I can't speak Hungarian and have only a marginal understanding of the culture. It doesn't matter that I was born and raised in Canada. It doesn't even matter that I'm white. Katalin Szepesi is not a Canadian name, so Katalin Szepesi will never be Canadian. . . . Sometimes they call me Cathy. If my name were Cathy I could be Canadian as long as I didn't tell anyone my last name. (p. 29)

Whether Szepesi's allegations are true for all Canadians with names of non-Anglo origin is less important than her perception that this is the case, for her candid thoughts illustrate the strong desire that some Canadians, including many individuals of colour, have to fit in and to avoid the curiosity of the dominant other which may be construed as painful scrutiny. Of her feelings of hostility towards these frequent encounters, Szepesi writes:

> Longing for it
>
> not to happen

ONE MORE TIME.

And what's your name?

Wrinkled nose, puzzled eyes.

Spelling not helpful.

Nationality then requested

to excuse the unintended butchery. (p. 31)

These examples illustrate how some of us would willingly abandon, as part of our public personae, any telling labels of our heritage, including a name.

Regardless of how parents determine the first real name, their intentions are clear. The child's name is meant to be uniquely identifiable with the individual. But it is also meant to offer the child the security of clanship, the suitability of fit, and the promise of a bright future. The responsibility of naming is perceived by all as a serious task since the bestowers recognize that it is this first real title — the given names and the surname — which becomes the child's legal, formal, public name. More importantly, this first title becomes a significant part of each individual. Its significance stems from its temporal relationship with the child. It is this first real title that becomes the referent of this newcomer and it continues to be the means by which the individual is introduced to the world. It also influences how the individual will be defined, since we often marvel at how children become their names or hope that they will resemble their namesakes. In its first-ness, this first title takes on significance.

I Am: Asserting One's Name

There is more to naming than the bestowing of a title. There must also be an acceptance on the part of the one so named. According to Gadamer (1991):

> But a name is what it is because it is what someone is called and what he answers to. It belongs to its bearer. The rightness of the name is confirmed by the fact that someone answers to it. Thus it seems to belong to his being. (p. 405)

How is it that Canadians of colour determine what they should be called?

Rizwan, a South Asian youngster who recently emigrated from Tanzania with his uncle's family, is seldom called by his given name. Teachers and students who know Rizwan well call him Riz at his request. Similarly Osami becomes Sam, Gagan goes by Gag and Jitsuya is shortened to Jits. Like a nickname, an abbreviated version of a given name is an indication of intimacy. There is a sense of ease and familiarity between the caller and the one being called. Perhaps its inception is a moment of impetuous abandonment, when calling out a shortened version of a name seems more appropriate than the convoluted formality of a given name in its entirety. Therefore, the shortened version is used only in relaxed, informal settings amongst those we know well. In a formal setting, callers revert back to the given name in full.

But the shortened version of a given name only becomes an indicator of familiarity when the one so named chooses to accept it as part of one's self. Some Canadians of colour actively encourage the use of our abbreviated names, by introducing ourselves in that manner. Others will give passive approval by answering to shortened versions of their names created by others. It becomes a marker of belongingness — a casual name nominated by our friends — a testimonial of our ability to fit in and be accepted by the other.

While an Anglicized abbreviation of a foreign sounding name is viewed as beneficial by some Canadians of colour, there are those who demand that their names remain untouched rather than "renamed, or more accurately, misnamed to suit the purposes of the dominant culture" (Kirtz, 1992, p. 37). Of his first name, Matheyalagan Nagaranthy comments:

> My father said, "My son. . . No, no, our son! He is very beautiful — like a moon! And very bright — like a sun!" So my parents decided to give me the name Matheyalagan — Mathey means "moon," "beauty," "sun," and "stars." Another meaning is "good," "intelligent," and "brave." Alagan means "beauty."
>
> When I was old enough to learn the meaning of my name, I asked my parents, "Why did you choose this name? It embarrasses me. Could you please change it?"
>
> My mom was angry with me. She said, "Don't ever be ashamed of your name. It will bring you good luck in your life." I remember my mother's advice now. When Canadians get impatient with my name because it is hard to say and it is too long, I remember what my name means, and I never consider changing it. (Porter, 1991, p. 17)

While Matheyalagan made the choice to retain his given name in full because of the meaning it held, others still choose to adopt shortened versions of their names.

The monosyllabic version of a given name serves an additional purpose when the first name comes from an unfamiliar language. Often times, as this next example illustrates, these names are difficult for English speaking Canadians to pronounce. Sandra tells of her experience, trying to master the correct pronunciation of a new acquaintance's name:

> I was listening intently — panicky that I would botch up the pronunciation, even after being told. I heard what she said, yet I was unable to replay the pronunciation moments after hearing it. Out of her mouth came a sound that I had never heard or made before; I felt embarrassed by my sudden deafness and muteness.

By answering to abbreviated names, Canadians of colour avoid the inevitable task of correcting or ignoring mispronunciations — a task which is reserved for newcomers or those who persevere with linguistically unfamiliar names. The burden, according to Laing (1984), can be immense:

> Such names can be hard to pronounce and spell, to communciate and to remember, so that the child is burdened by the name, unable to convey or make it understood, "I have been fractioned by it, the way people defined me by what they could handle. I felt submissive — call me what you can — and apologetic for such a difficult name" and may withdraw. (p. 263)

By shortening one's foreign-sounding name or allowing others to do so, one hopes that the pronounceability of a name will lead to acceptability of self. Other times an individual may choose to change a given name in its entirety. Porter (1991) tells of a Chinese immigrant, Ma Chung Yau, who arbitrarily took the name, Kirby, when he arrived in Canada. Similarly, Canadian poet Sharon Lee's pen name is Sky Lee — an acronym for her given names, Sharon Kwan Ying (Women's Book Committee, 1992, p. 96).

Inevitably, the taking on of an Anglo-Saxon name is done at a specific time. It is done upon entering into a new situation, for it is the newness of the situation that allows a change of name to be accepted. Ma Chung Yau crossed the Pacific Ocean before shedding

his Chinese name and adopting his Canadian name, Kirby, and Sharon introduced herself to the writing community as Sky Lee. In each instance, the new environment invites change. In this new place, all others are strangers, meeting this individual for the first time. They will accept any name and henceforth connect that name to the individual. And so, out of his own choosing, Kirby became one of Ma Chung Yau's real names just as Sky became part of who Sharon Lee is.

With the acquisition of each additional real name, there is a sense that yet another facet of one's identity is established. But it is not always clear initially how a name will contribute to the identity of the individual. Like Wally Houn, one may initially claim a name because of the purpose it serves. Wally was given his Anglo-Saxon name for utilitarian purposes only; his parents gave no consideration to the meaning of this name. Yet as soon as a name is accepted as part of the individual, the name begins to accumulate significance. Wally remembers hearing about King Wallace of Scotland. "I used to tell my friends that I was named after this king who slept in a cave with spiders." As a child, Wally was fascinated by the king's infamy and so he chose to take on this story as part of his own history. Wally's affinity for this tale is not surprising to me since, like the king, he is his own person — undaunted by the opinions of others. In fact, his way of being has shaped my perception of who someone named Wally is. He has created meaning for his name: for himself and for those who know him.

Just as one can select a preferred name, so too can a people assert how it is that they would like to be named. For Anne Fong and other Canadians of colour, the pairing of ethnicity with nationality allows us to identify with our historical place of origin as well as

our country of citizenship:

> I would really be bugged when people would say, "Are you Chinese or Japanese?" And I'd think, "I'm Canadian. I was born here!" They would say, "You? How can you be a Canadian?" Then I'd say, "Well you don't even know the definition of Canadian. Canadian means anybody born in this country, you know." Later on, my answer to their question would be, "Chinese Canadian," because I knew they wanted to know where you're from. (Women's Book Committee, 1992, p. 163)

Anne is not alone in her frustration over the ambiguity of stating a country of origin. For the person of colour, it identifies one's personal historical or geographical beginnings. However, the Canadian of colour senses that this statement of origin is occasionally construed by the other as a statement of preferred homeland; we sense in the other the occasional belief that we have recently arrived in Canada and that we will inevitably return home. We also sense that it is expected by the other that our ethnicity is an integral part of who we are. While that is indeed the case for some Canadians of colour, not all of us have maintained a strong cultural tie that enables us to talk passionately about distinctive values or beliefs, speak knowledgeably about our people's history or cultural practices, or converse in a heritage language. Yet we perceive that the other holds one of these expectations when they ask, "Where are you from?" Of the Black youth born in Canada, Clarke (1992) reminds Canadians:

> So he is not going "back where he came from": whether it is the West Indies, Africa . . . He cannot leave because there is no place to go. This is home. This is where he belongs. (p. 17)

For most Canadians, there are several choices. All Canadians may choose to hyphenate their identity, to make public their ethnic or racial origins; this personal information is proffered out of cultural pride. But sometimes ethnicity cannot be defined by a single place of origin, or ethnicity is perceived as an insignificant aspect of who the individual is — one is simply Canadian. And so members of the dominant other may choose not to disclose this information in their statement of self-identity. Yet some Canadians of colour are denied this choice by those they encounter. Our skin tone and hair colour rescind the freedom of going unnoticed. To the curious, visible difference always invites the question of ethnicity. Once asked, we feel obliged to respond. Ethnic origin cannot be a private or personally insignificant aspect of what it is to be a Canadian of colour. We sense that pairing the two markers of place is not always our choice; sometimes it becomes an obligation.

Invisibility and Namelessness

During his discussions with Black Canadian youth, James (1990) continually asks them to speak of their experiences in the work force. One participant, Brian, recalls an instance of discrimination which happened to him while he was on the job:

> I was the first Black assistant manager there. . . . A person came to the cash and I guess they had a complaint and she looked at me and I said "Do you have a problem, can I help you?" She looked at me, she gave me a funny look, so I figure, oh, oh, here we go. She didn't say anything then she turned around and I said to her again, "Can I help you?" Her friend goes: "There's another nigger." I did not

> say anything. I tried talking to her. I heard what she had said. I did not say anything. I tried to be as polite as possible even though it hurts. (p. 23)

With customers unwilling to acknowledge his managerial status, Brian was left feeling impotent and unheard. By refusing to respond to his conciliatory offer and then commenting about him rather than speaking to him, the women strip him of both his professional role and his personal right to acknowledgement. For the two women, Brian is invisible — not worthy of their notice. On the experience of being invisible, Ellison (1990) writes:

> I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination — indeed, everything and anything except me. Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a biochemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. (p. 3)

Brian senses that he has become invisible, and that his invisibility is the result of his race. In an instance where it would seem reasonable to speak with the manager by addressing him formally or by using the proper name given on his name tag, the customers make their point by rendering him unnamed. In choosing to ignore his name, they are also choosing to deny his existence as a person. Instead, as shown in the work of Schutz and Luckmann (1995), it appears that the two women view him as a type — one of those niggers —

permitting only a they-orientation rather than a thou-orientation to prevail. Brian's frustration stems from the fact that the initial encounter between himself and the customers was a reciprocal thou-relationship, whereby both he and the women appear to each other as an Other in temporal and spatial immediacy. While Brian is prepared to continue this acknowledgement by serving the women in a managerial capacity, the women no longer grant him attention, thus making the previously reciprocal thou-orientation unilateral. They talk *of* his people, rather than *to* him. From the perspective of the two customers, the social relationship with Brian takes on a they-orientation, as defined by Schutz and Luckmann.:

> It must be stressed that these relations concern not concrete and specific other persons but rather types to which I ascribe certain attributes, certain functions, certain behavior. They are relevant for me only insofar as they conform to these typifications. (p. 77)

By denying this Black man his particular singularity and refusing to interact with him as a unique individual, these disgruntled customers render him invisible.

What is frustrating for invisible, nameless individuals is that invisibility and namelessness are cast upon us by another. It is not our choosing, for we are certain of our existence, just as we are certain of our name. Yet, we cannot force others to see us if they choose to ignore our presence. It is difficult to reconcile that we only exist in the eyes of some; in the eyes of others, we are transformed into no one — a nonentity. Even more frustrating is the realization that once we recognize that invisibility has been cast upon us, we also become involuntarily aware of the one who chooses not to see us. How ironic that

we cannot reciprocate by deeming the other invisible and nameless. In our invisibility, we are powerless to will away both the powerful other and this situation.

Being Called a Name

Name-callers implicitly recognize the power they hold over those that they target. For, according to Kirtz (1992):

> To be able to name is to be able to define, to set limits, in short to control. Above all, naming is a social act; it is the groups' imposition of language and therefore of power over the individual who will thereafter be known by the name thusly acquired. (p. 36)

The potency of any ethnophaulism lies in the knowledge that others hold the one so named in disdain. Pankiw and Bienvenue (1990) define ethnophaulisms as "terms of ethnic degradation used at the face-to-face level of social life. They include nicknames, disparaging phrases, and figures of speech containing negative allusions to specific categories of people" (p. 85). Yet some Canadians of colour have discovered that there are ways to combat the power of a disparaging name while others continue to suffer hurt and perceive that they are helpless to combat the name-calling, thus indeed assuming powerlessness.

In his historical novel, *Star Fisher,* Yep (1991) captures the tension felt by a family of colour when they recognize that they are the objects of hatred and distaste by one of the townsfolk.

> On an old wooden bench in front of the station lounged a man with red hair. He was wearing old coveralls, but the bib barely contained his huge stomach. Taking a

can from a pocket, he took out a pinch of snuff with all the regal majesty of a king and stuck it under his tongue.

"Darn monkeys," he said, staring at us.

Mama turned to me sharply. "What did he say?" she asked.

Papa spoke even less English than Mama, but he could read the man's expression. "Never mind. Just ignore him. That kind doesn't even have a spare shirt to wash."

As we began to walk along the platform, I glanced behind me, looking over Bobby's head at Emily. "That's right," I said meaningfully. "We don't want any trouble."

Emily gazed at me, the picture of innocence. "Bobby wouldn't think of it," she said sweetly.

In the meantime, though, Mister Snuff had begun to swear; and the more he swore, the louder he got — like a dog working up its nerve to bite someone.

As they neared the man, Mama and Papa both kept their eyes straight ahead. I tried to copy their example, but it was hard because passing by him was like trying to walk near the edge of a volcanic crater. I knew, though, that Bobby would do the same; but I wasn't sure about Emily. Too late, I regretted that I hadn't followed her. (p.7)

In contrast to the curse of invisibility felt by Brian and Ellison, this Chinese family would prefer the anonymity which is granted to most strangers as they pass one another on the street. Strangers who are indifferent towards one another allow each other to pass without

calling out or giving name to the other. In passing, there is also the mutual agreement that each person's space will not be violated; the passers-by often sidestep each other to ensure that this space is maintained. The courtesy of silence and distance is reciprocal amongst strangers. Yet, while it is unlikely that Mr. Snuff would acknowledge the presence of other townsfolk with more than a glance or a nod of the head, he is prompted to initiate dialogue between himself and the Chinese family he disdains. Clearly the family would prefer to pass unnoticed, for to pass by without eliciting comment is to be accepted as part of what is ordinary. But they assume that the choice is not theirs and that they cannot curtail the words of the dominant other. In her book, *Bittersweet Passage*, Omatsu (1992) recalls a similar incident:

> One evening you came to walk me home from a Brownie meeting. Holding your hand as I excitedly described the secret knots I had just learned, a group of boys yelled at us: "Chink, Chink." I immediately dropped your hand and if I could have I would have crossed the street. (p. 39)

Unlike her father, who continues unwaveringly down the street, Maryka wants to flee from the taunts of the boys. While the outward response of father and child appear similar to the name-callers, each is motivated by a different emotion. Mr. Omatsu's reaction is one of stoic pride; Maryka's is one of fear and shame. The latter is the reaction of one who feels powerless. The former is a direct challenge to the attempt by the other to humiliate and degrade. The comments may be brutally harsh, yet many parents of colour advise their children to ignore the pejorative comments cast their way, as one way of combatting ethnophaulisms (Pankiw & Bienvenue, 1990). But as I can attest, what a

difficult response that is to master:

> "Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, what are these?" jeered a group of children on the playground. My parents repeatedly recommended that I should just turn my back and ignore their taunts. They also reassured me that it took more courage to walk away from situations like these then it did to fight back. So I would walk on, but I could feel my cheeks burning with quiet indignation. (Oishi, 1991, p. 33)

To successfully ignore a tormentor requires persistence and control. It means acting as if the pejorative comment were never made. Those of us who have mastered this response do not allow our faces to grow red with heated anger. Nor do we allow our bodies to strain; we will our knotted fists and stomaches to unclench. We do not respond outwardly to the taunt. Instead, we resume our interrupted activity with disciplined, yet seemingly natural calm. This practised response sends the message to the taunters, "Your gestures go unseen and your names go unheard."

In a comical, theatrical description of a boy growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown, Chin's (1991) main character, Donald, asks his father for some advice. Earlier in the day, a gang of kids had been harassing him about his contrived name, Donald Duk. Donald's father has this advice for him:

> "He can agree with them and laugh at his name," Dad says. "He can tell them lots of Donald Duk jokes. Maybe he can learn to talk that quack-quack Donald Duck talk."
>
> "Whaaat?" the twins ask in one voice.
>
> "If he keeps them laughing," Dad says, "even if he can just keep them

> listening, they are not beating him up, right? And they are not calling him a sissy. He does not want to fight? He does not have to fight. He has to use his smarts, okay? If he's smart enough, he makes up some Donald Duck jokes to surprise them and make them laugh. They laugh three times, he can walk away. Leave them there laughing, thinking Donald Duk is one terrific fella." (p. 5)

As humorous as this play on words is, Donald's dilemma mirrors the everyday experiences of those who are subjected to jeers. To do as Donald's father suggests is to seemingly go along with the derisive comments, but in doing so, to dissipate the taunting. Like the attempts to ignore such comments, this response saps the power to hurt from the hateful words of those who taunt since both responses are prompted by the resolve to show no hurt. But that resolve does not come immediately to the novice; rather, it is an inner strength that develops with time and experience.

> Threats . . . only strengthened the samurai knot that was forming in the pit of my stomach. Unlike the Brownie knots that I had practised as a child, a samurai knot tightens with each twist until it turns to stone. (Omatsu, 1992, p. 133)

Besides the unwanted negative attention that name-calling creates for those who are targeted, victims of racial or ethnic slurs take exception to the specific names they are called. In an anthology entitled *Come With Us*, immigrant children tell of their experiences as newcomers to Canada. One youngster describes his first encounter with name-calling:

> *When I Came From Jamaica*
>
> When I came from Jamaica and I went to my new house, when I got up in the morning I never know any of the kids. I went up to my auntie's, and I saw this boy

> and I made friends with him. He was Black. His name was Garnet. He was with a friend. His friend was white. His friend started to call me names. I never knew about Canada, like I never knew how to ride bike, and that's why he called me names. I didn't think nothing. I never know words like "dummy" and "that word," so I just sit down and look at them ride bikes. When I start coming to school I find out about those words. When I went to the Tubman Centre I find out it means they're telling us that we're ugly and they're beautiful. (Anonymous, 1978, p. 98)

For Canadians of colour, "that word" is often a derisive reference to ethnic background or racial attributes. It is not a neutral description of what is, rather it is a value-laden classification. While some slurs like "rug rider," "wagon burner," or "slant eyes" emit degrading caricatures of a people, other terms become slurs because of the intent of the speaker. It could be argued that Paki, Jap, Nip, and Chink are all simply abbreviated forms of an ethnic identity: Pakistani, Japanese, Nipponese, Chinese. Yet the terms are used to show the speaker's contempt for a people. In each instance, the abbreviation is not an act of intimacy and relaxed familiarity as discussed previously in the early part of this chapter. Instead, it is an act of loathing. By amputating the complete term and using only a part of the name, the speaker says to those he targets, "Your ethnic identity is not worthy of my respect, so I will attack the name of your people ." According to Allen (1988), this attack can take subtler forms. He cites the mispronunciation or the decapitalization of a group name as examples of sly, yet wilful slurs.

Sometimes the disrespect of a people is more insidious. Nathan and his siblings all remember their grandfather — a second generation Canadian of Anglo origin — with a

great deal of affection and respect. Nathan recalls that when he spent summers with his grandfather on the Gulf Islands, his grandpa often spoke of "going down to the Jap store" for miscellaneous items. Of his grandfather's choice of words, Nathan claims, "He didn't mean anything by it. Everybody called it the Jap store. He thought the grocer was a fair man to deal with and he didn't mind doing business with him." Yet as Canadians of colour, we are leery. Was his grandfather really unaware of the negative connotations associated historically with this term? Either ignorance or a reluctance to change an established habit may account for the man's words, but from our perspective, it does not vindicate him. In our minds, the term remains a slur whether it is intended or unintended, for no other reason than because it is heard by the named one as such. Is this a hypersensitive reaction? Perhaps. But sadly, this wariness which is brought on by unrelenting verbal abuse sometimes stifles our ability to forgive, to have patience, or to have hope. Clarke (1992) too, senses that the tolerance of Toronto's Black youth has begun to erode:

> No longer will the protest against injustice, police brutality, racial discrimination, and plain black frustration be couched in respectable, conservative duplicity. No longer will the victim be ashamed to voice his resentment of this victimization. And we will no longer find it prudent, as it used to be, to express this resentment in an ambivalent manner. (p. 3)

Some Canadians of colour sense this "silent, festering of the wound" (Clarke, p.4). We wish that the name-calling would cease, but hold little hope for that outcome. And each time the situation recurs, we are frustrated at our inability to ignore a name which we would prefer to denounce. That frustration stems from the experiential contrast between

the two forms of naming: being named and being called a name. Up until the time that Canadians of colour are confronted with name-calling, we have only known and accepted names of love, hope, self-affirmation, affiliation, and camaraderie. These names are an integral part of each of us. They shape our beliefs about who we are — a child, a male, a female, a Canadian of colour — and they connect us with family, friends, and communities.

The power of the ethnic slur lies in its ability to sever associations. In contrast to the gesture of naming, the act of name-calling isolates the one so named from the name-caller. In essence, the name-caller states, "What I call you, I am not and we are not. You are the subject of our disdain, mistrust, and ridicule and as such, you will never belong." Some Canadians of colour choose to challenge their exclusion through angry or conciliatory actions. Others choose to retreat from the hostile situation or to avoid instances where name-calling may begin anew. In either instance, the ones so named view the pejorative terms as indications of hostility and rejection and as such, the slurs succeed by inflicting the pain of ostracism upon Canadians of colour. But those of us with strong resolve and a positive well-established sense of self do not internalize the slur as part of who we are. The derogatory name remains unclaimed; it does not become real.

Sadly, some Canadians of colour not only accept this banishment, they also accept the pejorative name as part of who they are. In a heart-wrenching story about two Métis sisters who struggle through Ontario's foster care system, Culleton (1992) exposes the thoughts of the main character, April Raintree:

"A book about Louis Riel?" I said and crinkled my nose in distaste. I knew all

> about Riel. He was a rebel who had been hanged for treason. Worse, he had been a crazy half-breed. I had learned about his folly in history. Also, I had read about the Indians and the various methods of tortures they had put the missionaries through. No wonder they were known as savages. So, anything to do with Indians, I despised. And here I was supposed to be part-Indian. (p. 45)

By allowing herself to claim the pejorative names associated with the Métis people, April engages in the debilitating act of self-loathing. She accepts that she is a "crazy half-breed" and a descendant of "savages." At the moment the slurs become real names for this Canadian of colour, the hateful fancy of others become April's truth.

> Little black girl
> Standing on the corner
> Waiting for the school bus,
> Optimistic as the dawning sun,
> Pretty as the Morning Glory
> Winking on the wall behind you,
> Vulnerable as Impatiens
> Before the cold touch of October.
>
> "Nigger," screamed the white youth
> Speeding by in a battered old car,
> His mouth armed with lethal poison
> And double rows of crooked teeth.

The poison spread like lightning,

Freezing her being, turning her into stone,

Twisting her pretty face into a Gorgon-like grimace.

Passers-by now marvel at

The consummate skill of the unknown sculptor

Who captured the immeasurable pain

Of the little black girl

Standing on the corner

Waiting for the school bus.

(Franco, 1985, p. 78)

My intention was to act as mediator to bring an end to this squabble, but, throughout a procedure that should be second nature to an experienced teacher, my impartiality began slipping away. In a trembling voice that grew louder and higher in register, I found myself bullying Ashley, pummelling him with my counter-aggressive words, "How would you like it if someone called you a Paki! Paki!" In the position of unchallenged adult with authority, I continued on. Throughout this tirade, Ashley didn't meet my eyes or respond to the reprimand. I thought, "That's what you get for hurting my Marty, calling him names, Stupid Indian! Chinky Chinaman! Jap, Jap, Jap. How dare you?" The bell rang and I sent Ashley back to his classroom. Walking away, I was taken aback by the remnants of my spitting rage: racing pulse; blotchy cheeks; a throat,

parched and achy from an extended period of strained misuse. And I am left wondering at the power of a name.

CHAPTER FOUR

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

After spending six months at home with my newborn daughter, I was hopeful that returning to work in January would be an easier transition if we had the right caregiver in place. Following the advice of a friend who had successfully found a nanny for her sons only two months previous, I placed an ad in The Calgary Herald. *I was amazed by the number of applicants who phoned inquiring about the job. Several nights after the advertisement first ran, I received a call from a woman identifying herself as Marie. Marie's voice was deep and warm, with an accent hinting of the Caribbean. She spoke articulately about her previous experience and the circumstances which brought her from Toronto to Calgary. After I invited her to submit her resume she said, "I going to tell you right off, I'm Black."*

For Marie and other Canadians of colour who have been subjected to racist actions or words, the impact of discrimination resonates in our memories long after the actual episodes. So much so, that when we explore these memories, emotive responses surge in our guts, get stuck in our craws. And we find ourselves wanting to spit the hurtful memory out. This chapter examines how racist beliefs and discriminatory words or actions affect Canadians of colour. The exploration begins by revisiting the impact of name-calling and then goes on to analyze the varied responses of Canadian children of colour in regards to discrimination.

Fatso, Stupid, Fag, Paki — The Epithets of Canadian Childhood

When asked, most Canadian children and youth can recall times when we were subjected to painful, isolating epithets. While children are susceptible to name-calling at some time in their childhoods for a variety of reasons, visible racial or ethnic difference becomes one more way in which Canadian children of colour are vulnerable. Terrence — a Japanese Canadian youth — sees ethnically related epithets as no different from any other derogatory name:

> Whenever I interacted with her, she would refer to me as Chink. It bothered me a little bit that she wouldn't call me by my name but I didn't really tie it to, at that time, that I was different looking. I think I would have felt as bad had she called me Shorty. It would have had the same effect on me.

Like all derogatory names, the impact on the one so named is burdensome and hauntingly memorable. We are left feeling bad about ourselves when we come to sense that we are the object of ridicule for those who make fun of us. Sometimes we can eliminate the laughable or deprecating aspects of ourselves by losing weight, straightening our teeth, growing several inches or masking a telling accent. But in instances where it is a permanent physical attribute, disability or phenotypical feature, nothing can be done on our part to change that feature. And so for Canadians of colour, derogatory names based on race or ethnicity are especially painful because there is no escaping who we are; it is for all to see. In response to the argument that all people face discrimination periodically, and that racial discrimination is but one of many kinds of victimization, Henry and Tator (1994) counter that in a predominantly White society where negative value is placed upon non-White phenotypical features, the position of the racial minorities is distinctly different from

the plight of other minorities because of the detrimental permanency of marked difference upheld by the dominant society:

> In a society which uses racial characteristics as a basis for discrimination, people of colour inherently carry the permanent potential cue for discriminatory practices. Skin colour, therefore, is not incidental, but is in fact, the central crucial factor in relations with the wider White society. (p. 9)

Henry and Tator are not alone in their claim; some Canadians of colour sense that we are even more vulnerable to name-calling than our White peers and that both the severity and frequency of occurrences escalate for people of colour. In a study focusing on the types of ethnic hostility directed at Indo-Canadians, Nodwell and Guppy (1992) found that verbal abuse was the most common form of discrimination experienced by their participants of colour. Abusive language directed to the participants personally, or to their ethnic groups in general, exceeded instances of vandalism, discrimination in the workplace or physical harm. Enid Patterson — a Black teen growing up in Ontario — says, "I think everybody gets called a name in school, and when you are a different colour other than white you really get it" (Silvera, 1989, p. 5).

But not all Canadians of colour agree that we are all targeted by others because of our ethnicity or race. Jennifer, an 11 year old of Chinese descent, cannot recall an instance where she was subjected to an ethnic slur. She is aware that it happens to some of her people, but is confident that it will not happen to her.

JENNIFER: I hardly have any troubles.

CHERYL: Does anyone ever call you names?

JENNIFER: No, never. But my mom knows a few people that have been called Chinese names.

For Jennifer and other Canadian children of colour who have not been subject to such explicit forms of ethnic hostility and therefore hold the same view, there is the belief that we are not all necessarily susceptible to name-calling because of our ethnic origin or racial background — that there are other factors which determine whether or not we will be accepted or publicly rebuked by members of the dominant group. In support of this view, Moghaddam, Taylor, Tchoryk, Pelletier, and Shepanek (1994) propose that "majority group members differentiate between minority groups and are more accepting toward some than others" (p. 117).

Henry and Tator (1994) counter this notion, bleakly proposing instead that Canadians of colour like Jennifer may be unaware of subtle expressions of racism — those less obvious personal assaults that are part of her interactions with the dominant other but go unnoticed by her because of the indirect nature of the implied discriminatory act or word. Kuo (1995) also supports the notion that less blatant forms of racism may keep all Canadians, including citizens of colour, from recognizing that isolated instances of racial discrimination are valid, even though the number of reported instances seem few and are perhaps attributable to factors other than rampant racism in Canadian society:

> Moreover, within the racial attitudes of the present social environment, minority individuals who experience racial discrimination may have difficulty in persuading others that their problems are caused by prejudice. Racism is increasingly manifested in subtle or covert ways, thus becoming more difficult to detect and combat.

(p. 113)

Nodwell and Guppy (1992) offer another possibility. In their study of Indo-Canadians living in Vancouver, they hypothesize that the noticeably high numbers of reported discriminatory acts against Sikhs are due to a keen sensitivity on the part of this religious subgroup:

> One factor may be that a characteristic of Sikhs born in India is a particularly strong sensitivity to discrimination. That is, Indian-born Sikhs may more readily notice discriminatory acts directed towards themselves and be more strongly affected by such acts than are others. (p. 94)

Nodwell and Guppy propose that while characteristics of the victims may not be the cause of discrimination, it may be possible that a sensitivity to racism is part of an ethnic group's ideology. While the study focused solely on Indo-Canadians, the notion that some ethnic groups may be more sensitive to verbal assaults provides yet another explanation for why some Canadians of colour seem unaffected by racist remarks while others are annoyed and impatient with the frequency of assaults or alarmed by the intensity of ethnic epithets hurled their way.

Often individuals of colour who deny the presence of discrimination based on racial or ethnic grounds worsen the problem, thinking that individuals who are targeted somehow bring the problem on themselves, or that if these people made more of an effort to become accepted by the dominant other, then their troubles would be over. Or perhaps, it is as Moghaddam et al. suggest, some ethnic minority groups are better accepted by the dominant other than other groups. Indeed the seemingly divergent experiences amongst

ethnic group members of colour lead me to question: Are our life-chances determined individually or do they hinge on our membership to a specific ethnic group? Berry (1987) proposes a conceptual framework whereby acculturation takes place. According to Berry:

> In plural societies such group contact is a fundamental feature of social life. . . . In addition to this focus on groups, from a psychological point of view there is a parallel phenomenon of *psychological acculturation* in which individuals may change in a number of ways. These changes may involve personal values and habits (dress, eating), beliefs (religion, political ideology), social relationships (marriage, clubs), and identity (as belonging to one's heritage group or to the new society). . . . Not every individual participates in the acculturation experience of his group in exactly the same way. We cannot assume that because the group generally acculturates in a particular way. . . that each individual wants to do so, or indeed eventually does so. (p. 224)

So Jennifer's claim, seemingly the antithesis of the experience of other Chinese Canadians or indeed other Canadians of colour, may not be deemed untrue, unrealistic or naive. Jennifer's perception could be correct: she is never the target of racial slurs. But acknowledging that this is so for Jennifer is not to deny the feelings of alienation or victimization felt by others. Instead, as Berry suggests, each of us makes choices about the beliefs we will uphold and the visage we will present, and by doing so, we can pursue assimilation to varying degrees and in various ways, acknowledging that our way will be made easier or more difficult, given the collective intention of our people in this regard.

Those Days and These Days: Is our Canada Different?

A recent reprint of Robert Louis Stevenson's (1885/1989) *A Child's Garden of Verses* features lavish illustrations and children's poetry from the turn of the century. One of the poems from the collection is telling of the mindset of the dominant other during that period of time.

Foreign Children

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,

Little frosty Eskimo,

Little Turk or Japanee,

O! Don't you wish that you were me?

You have seen the scarlet trees

And the lions over seas;

You have eaten ostrich eggs,

And turned the turtles off their legs.

Such a life is very fine,

But it's not so nice as mine:

You must often, as you trod,

Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

You have curious things to eat,

I am fed on proper meat;

You must dwell beyond the foam,

But I am safe and live at home.

Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,

Little frosty Eskimo,

Little Turk or Japanee,

O! Don't you wish that you were me? (p. 50)

There is the sense amongst several of the participants in this study that our Canada is a different Canada from the one our predecessors knew and our parents remember, and that racist beliefs, name-calling and discriminatory actions were incidents that the former generation of coloured youth had to deal with to a greater degree than we do now. Muszynski (1994) describes, in broad terms, the historical struggle of the ethnic other to overcome overt systemic and personal discrimination, to be accepted in first the European nation state and then Canada. Muszynski suggests that a manifestation of racism accompanied the European colonization of other parts of the world.

> While the history of the emergence of the European nation state rests on a discourse of who is to be included within a community by virtue of who is not included (for example, the qualifications required for citizenship), inclusion/exclusion was not initially valued in a postitive/negative sense. That is, the Other was different but not necessarily inferior. Categorizing the Other as inferior developed with colonization, and incorporated the development of a changing

ideology that we call racism. (p. 9)

More specifically, other Canadian sociologists and historians have focused on specific ethnic groups documenting how the life-chances of these Canadians of colour were affected by overt racism in Canada (Christensen & Weinfeld, 1993; Hesch, 1992; Ward, 1990). In conversation with Silvera (1995), Talbot remembers what it was like to attend public school in Windsor, Ontario. Of her first years, Talbot recalls:

> TALBOT: Well, in those days we were called coloured, eh? And you didn't want to be coloured because it was a derogatory term. Then, of course, in school we weren't taught any of our own history, or if we got any history it was about the Underground Railroad, and there wasn't much of that, so it was about being slaves, eh? So as a child you didn't want to be associated with coloured. Not that I wanted to be white. I think my mother was trying to be white and trying to get us as close as they could because it was painful being Black, you didn't get anywhere. I remember not wanting to be associated with the negative connotations, and so I didn't want to look poor. So, for example, I didn't even want to take brown bread to school. I wanted Wonder bread and it had to be wrapped in wax paper not in bread wrapper, which the poor kids had their sandwiches wrapped in. I remembered in school we didn't have any literature at all except *Black Sambo*. I remember that in public school.
>
> SILVERA: How was that for you as a Black child?
>
> TALBOT: I liked the book, but I didn't want anybody to know I liked it because of the pancakes. (laughter) It was in the back of my kindergarten room.

> SILVERA: Why didn't you want anyone to know you liked it?
>
> TALBOT: I didn't want anybody to associate me with Sambo. We didn't want to be called Sambo, I didn't want anybody to think I identified myself with Sambo. I was six years old at the time. (p. 163)

Talbot's recollection is marked by historical details which appear to separate her experience from the experience of Canadian children of colour today. Her struggle to gain the respect of the dominant other meant grappling with sparse literary representations of her people heavily influenced by colonial thinking, with the distasteful label "coloured," and with the desire to mask her poverty with visible claims of sameness by eating Wonder bread and using wax paper. Hers was a story that occurred long ago, and thus, upon first consideration, seems less relevant to the lived experience of Canadian children in a contemporary Canada. Muhammad recaps how it was for his parents, arriving in Canada over a decade ago, and then contrasts that with how it seems for him now:

> I know my parents used to tell me about it sometimes when they came down first. They used to tell me it was really bad. . . . Someone called you Paki . . . and you're really not liked. It's scary. Especially coming into a new country, not knowing the language and stuff. That was probably 15 or 20 years ago. I think a lot of the people in my grade now, this has become a lot more multicultural. I think people have learned to accept that we're going to integrate into society and we're just normal people. They've got to know us as more human beings than foreigners or someone who doesn't belong here.

Muhammad perceives that the initial wave of immigrants from his homeland were

misunderstood and perhaps unwelcome by some Canadians. He sees cultural and linguistic misunderstandings as well as a perceived lack of commitment to a new country as the reasons that they were targeted by some more established Canadians. But as a second-generation Canadian, he reasons that he has become less foreign and more like the other in important valued ways. Muhammad offers to participate fully in Canadian society by adapting culturally and linguistically in ways that he deems bring him acceptance by the other while privatizing aspects of his culture such as his religious beliefs. In return, he reasonably expects that the reasons for singling him out with racial slurs have been extinguished; that indeed, others would no longer have a need to single him out, to be angry or threatened by his presence, or to vent their hostility towards him by using ethnic epithets. The findings of Isajiw, Sev'er, and Driedger (1993) support Muhammad's notion; they conclude that there is "a positive relationship between the number of generations in the host country and social mobility" (pg. 183) and furthermore, that external cultural dimensions of ethnic identity, such as frequently and publicly speaking a heritage language and subscribing to ethnocultural media and consuming ethnic food, most likely retard the socio-economic mobility of the visible minority group in question. Like Muhammad, Jennifer feels confident that she is accepted by all of her peers, and that her ethnicity is merely a visible difference rather than a liability. Hers is a confidence that comes from Jennifer's wealth of Canadian cultural commodities — personal attributes which she senses are valued by the other. She is an articulate speaker of English, a strong student, a talented musician, and the child of two professionals, living a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. For now she feels impervious to the angry, vengeful sting of racism.

Jennifer is well-liked and respected by her classmates — classmates who share many of the same cultural commodities, regardless of their ethnic or racial backgrounds. Her parents have ensured that Jennifer has certain cultural capital so that she remains valued by her peers and by the broader community: educational institutions and the work force. She is heavily involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities and her parents push her to work towards excellence in all areas of academic study. Jennifer discloses her weekly routine in a flurry:

> There's something I have to say. I sometimes think it's unfair how other kids get time to play and stuff like that. I guess it might not have to do with Chinese people but to me, because I have so many things to do, I have hardly any time to go out and play with friends. You want to know my whole week? Weekdays: Monday I have [music] academy. Tuesday I have speech. Wednesday I have skating and violin. Thursday I have theory lessons and piano lessons. Friday I have orchestra and Saturday I have another violin lesson. I used to go to Chinese school on Sundays but I'm like, "No way!"

While wanting Jennifer to embrace two cultures, clearly the high culture of the dominant other is viewed by her parents as a more valuable commodity to acquire, and so it is that Jennifer is allowed to strike Chinese Language school from her weekly regime. In a paper grieving the marginalization of minority art in Canada, Li (1994) contends that ethnic minorities ourselves are contributing to the lack of value placed upon ethnic art or culture:

> Parents of minority children often frantically encourage their children to pursue lessons in European art in an attempt to provide what is socially perceived as

> authentic cultural training for their children. When it comes to their "ethnic" arts or "heritage" arts, they would only casually entice them to take up training in their spare time after the rigorous piano or violin lessons of European music have been attended to. (p. 383)

Like Jennifer, Cheryle Anderson possesses the valued cultural capital of the other. Anderson, a Black American woman, recollects aspects of her childhood in conversation with Lawrence-Lightfoot (1994). She contrasts her personal experience with the experience of another family of Blacks:

> The "other black family had a pig farm, and their experience was very different," recalls Cheryle. Even though they had lived in Bedford much longer — for three generations — they were never accepted in the same way. "The kids called them niggers. The racism was explicit and overt." They were always made to feel like outsiders and second-class citizens. The Andersons experienced the opposite response from the white community. They were seen as the "exceptional Negroes" — sophisticated, well mannered. "Our family was viewed as a *model* family. They thought we fit in well," says Cheryle. (p. 436)

For Jennifer, Cheryle and other children of colour, upbringing and opportunity may shield them from virulent forms of racism, like name-calling. By being like the other in ways that are noticed and valued by them, we become honourary or passable members of the other and therefore are no longer prone to teasing or taunting because of our glaring physical differences. We hope that the other begins to view us as like them in all other respects, so that in the mind of the other, our physical differences are no longer paired with behaviours

and beliefs that appear foreign, threatening, laughable or uncomfortably incomprehensible. As Canadian children of colour with the "right" cultural commodities, we sense that few doors remain closed for us. We take for granted that we are welcomed into all institutions and we expect that we will not be denied opportunities or relationships because of the colour of our skin or the land of our people's descent. Indeed many recent studies support the notion that Canadians of colour from various ethnic groups are becoming full participants in Canadian society. For instance, Johnston (1988) documents how the younger generation of Indo-Canadians are becoming actively involved in federal politics. And it seems reasonable to generalize that the success of third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans in their public school system (Matute-Bianchi, 1986) is also enjoyed by Sanseis and Yonseis in Canadian schools. Of this particular group of colour, Matute-Bianchi suggests:

> Hence, as third- and fourth-generation Japanese-Americans who have educated, middle-class status, their identity as Japanese is not constrained by the negative attributes and subordinate status that their parents and grandparents experienced. Theirs is a group identity that enjoys a favourable reputation and is virtually synonymous with being a good student. (p. 254)

Yet, there are also substantial research findings which indicate that Canada is not yet an equitable place for all minority groups of colour (Depass, English, Kwan, Novlan & Sonpal-Valias, 1991; Lautard & Loree, 1984; Li, 1992; Porter, 1989; Rajagopal, 1990; Ralston, 1991). For instance, while federal and provincial policies have been put into place to ensure equality for all Canadians, including Canadians of colour, some members of the

Indo-Canadian community remain concerned about the life-chances for future generations of South Asian children who will make Canada their home:

> A recent conference of Indo-Canadian business executives and professionals in Toronto expressed concern that many of their children, despite growing up in Canada and the reasonable success of their parents, will even as young adults need special support infrastructures to overcome their stereotyped image and permit them to compete equally. The group urged the Indo-Canadian community to be resourceful in developing strategies and policies to challenge barriers to mobility and to establish sophisticated Indo-Canadian data base resources for Indo-Canadian business, service, or educational needs. (Rajagopal, 1990, p. 99)

Socio-economic standing may indicate the degree of success Canadians of colour have achieved in our quest to gain acceptance by the dominant other in ways that are lucrative and beneficial to us. Individuals who enjoy relative socio-economic prestige may be spared from prevalent incidents of racial discrimination, while disadvantaged citizens of colour struggle against the manifestations of racism in daily interactions with the dominant other and in the established systems and institutions. The recent slaying of a Native prostitute by two middle-class White youth in Regina and the controversial verdict of manslaughter, according to some, is an example of how urban Natives have become tied to the underclass and as such, are subject to systemic discrimination. After interviewing University of Regina criminologist, Barrie Anderson, Gerein (1996) writes:

> The case has captured the public interest because it illustrates so starkly the two cultural solitudes in Saskatchewan, where natives make up about 14 % of the

> population. In Regina, three out of four prostitutes are aboriginal, a statistic attributed mainly to economic circumstance. (p. A6)

Later in this same account in *The Globe and Mail*, Ron Bourgeault, a Métis professor of sociology at the Saskatchewan Federated Indian College, is quoted as saying that this incident was an example of "systemic economic racism . . . What options do you have if you're poor and native? . . . Chances are you are going to try to make ends meet any way you can, and you might do a bit of hooking on the side" (p. A6). From the example cited above, it could be assumed that there is a correlation between ethnicity and social standing in Canada, however, after analyzing the relationships between ethnicity, earning power and education, many sociologists (Darroch, 1980; Li, 1988, 1992) have concluded inequality amongst Canadians is not due primarily to ethnicity, as proposed originally by Porter (1989), and then supported by subsequent researchers (Lautard & Loree, 1984; Rajagopal, 1990). Instead, Li (1988) offers a viable alternate theory to challenge Porter's longtime established vertical mosaic model. While Li acknowledges that the vertical mosaic was "useful in understanding the emergence of industrial Canada, during which time the use of ethnic labour was essential to capital formation" (p. 140), he proposes that:

> . . . social class is one of the main determinants of social inequality in Canada, and that ethnicity and race serve as a basis of fractionalizing the class structure. The proper meaning of ethnic inequality cannot be fully understood outside the context of a class society. (p. 141)

And so it is not surprising that while some Canadians of colour bear the brunt of discriminatory words or actions, others, like Jennifer, are unencumbered by such challenges.

Cannon (1995) best illustrates that this might be so:

> I went to curriculum night at my daughter's school. . . . It is a private school, expensive and exclusive. . . . Once the school was reserved for the pretty blond daughters of the Toronto Establishment. In many ways it still is, but there are as many kids celebrating Passover as cheering for the Easter Bunny. Muslims, some wearing traditional headcoverings, share classes with Hindus, Sikhs, and Agnostics. There are plenty of Chinese, Japanese, and a small but growing group of Blacks. All of them get a thorough grounding in Canadian and European history and literature, Greek philosophy, English games, and Western art and music. The ambiance is Church of England and Protestant Christian, all of which is usually referred to as the Canadian Establishment. . . . It has always been the training ground for the next generation of establishment power. What has changed is the Establishment. Power is passing, and, in the places where power is taught, race and religion are no longer barriers to entry. (p. 116)

What also remains undetermined is whether being on the margin of Canadian society will remain a reality for some individuals of colour and for some ethnic groups of colour, determined by the changing social climate in Canada at any given time — unaffected by systemic advances to make it otherwise.

By recognizing that some Canadians of colour still perceive that their life-chances are suppressed in Canada, Talbot's seemingly distant childhood memories still have potency in their power to inform. For if Canadian children of colour lack the opportunities or the financial backing to counter the negative connotations associated with the coloured

poor or the cultural underclass, then we, like Talbot, are not granted a reprieve from overt discrimination or racial malice. In shocking contrast to Jennifer's, Muhammad's and Cheryle's stories of earning and expecting acceptance, Jamal's (1995) poem, entitled "Making a Cultural Schizophrenic," tells of the horrifying experience of a newly-immigrated South Asian child on the playground of a Canadian elementary school.

Then in the playground
it begins
"Hey, Paki! Go home!
What was it like in the African jungle, Paki,
swinging with Tarzan?
Hey, she's Cheetah —
Ape-face, Ape-face!"

I am numb in shock
I don't even know what "Paki" means
I feel only hostility and hate
alone alone alone
an island in a sea of faces
confused hurt brown ones
and sneering jeering white ones
taking pleasure in tearing off our wings one by one. . . .

Back to school again

so much to learn

but nothing to do with school books.

They make fun of us all

they follow us home

they scream names at us

they throw rocks at us

they beat us up

waving baseball bats

in halo-like circles

around their heads. (p. 126)

From these jarring experiences, Jamal says that her people "became chameleons" but that despite her own efforts to assimilate into the dominant Canadian society,

I am on the outside looking in

wishing hoping craving

to be accepted as one of them

and knowing it will never be so. (p. 129)

Canadians of colour who have not experienced discrimination to this degree are sceptical that this experience is a prevalent aspect of what it is to be a Canadian child of colour. After attending a conference for Sansei youth sponsored by the National Association of Japanese Canadians, Terrence — a third-generation Japanese Canadian — was dissuaded

by the stories other Japanese youth had to tell about pervasive racist encounters in Canada and their continual feelings of being outsiders in this country.

> At university, I began to attend a number of youth conferences put on by the NAJC. I got together with Japanese youth of similar age throughout Canada and we would discuss issues and challenges on just being Japanese and how to deal with it. I found a lot of it very interesting because a lot of my peers had some very negative experiences. There were very polarized attitudes about who they were and how they fit in. They really felt they were different and that it really affected their interactions. I didn't do much talking at those seminars because for myself, I thought the multicultural thing was working; it seems we all get along fine. I never really viewed it as a negative thing. I sort of wondered whether some of these negative situations that they perceived, I wondered how many of them were created self-fulfilling prophecies where you elicit that response. It's almost like you're looking for it and you create that situation or generate that response to further reinforce your belief that the world doesn't accept you.

For those of us who have taken appropriate actions and made serious commitments to be like the dominant other and have subsequently begun to perceive that we are accepted by the other, it is tempting to view another's experience of alienation as self-imposed (Henry & Tator, 1994; Nodwell & Guppy, 1992; Moghaddam et al., 1994). While we, as seemingly unaffected Canadians of colour, wince at the paradoxically different experience of some of our people, it is difficult to entertain that their conundrum is beyond their power to change. For if they are victims of ostracism by the dominant other, regardless of

their efforts, then it becomes profoundly apparent to us that we cannot take acceptance by the other for granted, regardless of how much we feel we deserve this status; our favourable status may be less secure than we had believed. Fickle and insidious racism fills us with unease:

> If . . . racism lives in us all, in our need to define ourselves as being distinct from the Other, that we have to have someone to despise and look down upon, then it is imperative that we know that, recognize the sweet stench of racism for what it is, and resist its spell. As one group — like the Jews — passes into the mainstream, they are replaced by another — like Blacks, or South Asians, or Orientals. Whatever the group that is defined as the Other, the method is always the same. The Other is inferior, a bearer of disease, a harbinger of death, a polluter of language, culture, or land. Every racist knows the signs. (Cannon, 1995, p. 18)

Countering Ethnic Stereotypes

"But I'm nothing like that." (Hasina)

Just as there is the sense that we have earned the right to belong, we are somewhat anxious about some of our people who are glaringly, purposely or unavoidably different from the other. While we work hard to become like the other, there are those individuals who publicly claim the culture and the language of another place and another people. Magocsi (1991) captures this mind set when he identifies Ukrainians who live in Canada as separate from those who view themselves as Canadians of Ukrainian background. Of the former group, he says:

> Inwardly, however, they have set themselves apart . . . struggling to be Ukrainian in a non-Ukrainian world. That struggle may take various forms: speaking Ukrainian wherever possible, marrying only other Ukrainians, attending Ukrainian religious services and secular events, and vicariously transforming themselves into compatriots of the Ukraine by following with devotion the fate of those in the homeland who protest the Communist regime. (p. xiii)

But, as Canadians of colour, who would prefer to be accepted as Canadians in accordance with Magocsi's latter notion, we are annoyed with the broad stroke of the other that paints us like the former group. Within our people, we recognize the cultural range of world views but we struggle with the generalizations imposed by the other which fail to acknowledge the degrees of assimilation amongst individuals within our ethnocommunity, instead viewing us collectively as another people, outside of and different from the dominant other. Hasina talks candidly about how she tries to distinguish herself from those Black students who take pride in their place of origin, to the exclusion of their Canadianness. This revitalized trend towards peoplehood is one that Allahar (1994) identifies as a reaction against the "atomization and apparent heartlessness" (p. 28) of contemporary society. While other Black youth may be reacting in this manner, Hasina adamantly refuses to follow suit. Instead, she risks being an isolate:

> Their attitude is they're walking around school and they've got all their baggy jeans, and just by the way they're walking, they have this rough, different air about them already. . . . In my school, most of the Black girls dress like that and when they talk, they talk in their Jamaican thing. They're all proud to be Jamaican. They

> really express that, "We're proud to be Black," and that kind of thing. A lot of the other people get intimidated by that. Then they transfer that over to me. But I'm nothing like that. I'm not even friends with them. I don't know these people.

For Hasina, it becomes a liability to be associated with a particular segment of the Black school population. Perhaps because acceptance by the other has cost Hasina a lot — moderation in appearance and dialect and selecting friends from various ethnic groups while intentionally avoiding some of her own people — she is hesitant to have any association with her more radical Black peers. For Hasina, the risk of losing acceptance by the other is far greater than the need to "have back up." While Hasina is confident that she can control how others view her through her associations and disassociations, Muhammad senses that the greater, more difficult challenge is dealing with pervasive ethnic stereotypes or generalizations.

> You get one person that can't speak the language [English]. All of a sudden, every brown person can't speak the language. Or one person doesn't know math, for some reason, that one person seems to create the image for the whole society. . . . This image is referred to a lot: people who drive taxis, people who speak with an accent, people who don't know anything. Basically, taxi drivers are referred to lots and having the accent, working at a KWIK E Mart or something like that. The Simpsons have Apu who works in the KWIK E Mart. . . . It just attaches that name to everyone who's brown or tan. You can't do anything about that.

As impeccable speakers of English, well-educated Canadians of colour, we are frustrated by the pervasive view of our people, the image that is exaggerated through the media or

through the common lore of jokes and anecdotes. Pankiw and Bienvenue (1990) describe how it is that stereotypes, such as Apu, are conceived and then perpetuated.

> The conception conveyed involved descriptive, evaluative, and emotive qualities which become associated with the object to which the term refers. These connotations may or may not be true, but they become bonded, through repeated association, with the symbol or name for a given object. Eventually, it is assumed by the public-at-large that the connotations are true depictions of the object in question. In this manner, a social object or a category acquires a particular status or value within the social scheme of things. (p. 80)

Clearly, what is different about our people makes us susceptible to initial misunderstandings and ridicule as well as perpetuated misconceptions or generalizations, but we would like the other to begin to acknowledge the presence of those like us: assimilated members of Canadian society, despite our colour. Charmé (1994) confirms that the construction of ethnic identity is as both Hasina and Muhammad imply — it is a constant struggle between the individual of colour with both an ethnic enclave and the collective other. Charmé specifically addresses the formation of Jewish culture, yet his thinking can be generalized to describe the plight of the lone Canadian of colour, constantly trying to deconstruct the notions of what it is to be a member of a specific ethnic group in Canadian society:

> Authentic Jewishness is not an object, or a quality passively received. It must more properly be described with a discourse that emphasizes Jewishness as a dynamic process or "project" in which dialectical contradictions, constructions and deconstructions are always occurring on both the individual and the collective

> level. . . . Every Jew must determine his or her own point of insertion into the ever changing stream of Jewish culture, and in so doing minutely influence the future direction of that stream. (p. 188)

In a review of contemporary literature addressing individual and cultural identity, Hedley (1994) also concurs that as individuals "we now have much more autonomy to determine for ourselves who we are and who we will become." (p. 209)

With the belief that we may shape who we are and influence how it is that we are perceived by the dominant other, we work towards the ultimate goal: full acceptance by the Canadian majority. We sense that acceptance comes about only when we become more like the dominant other (Williams, Himmel, Sjoberg, & Torrez, 1995). What we have not stopped to consider, however, is that perhaps acceptance by the other is our right, even if we choose not to become other-like.

"They hadn't wanted me to join, that was clear." (Walsh, 1994, p.7)

While we sense that we are a part of most Canadian activities and institutions, there are still frontiers that remain predominantly White, where Canadian youth of colour have just begun to seek entry. Ron, a Sikh boy, in Walsh's (1994) fictional work entitled *Shabash!*, senses that it will not be easy for him to be accepted by the community when he decides to join the town's minor hockey league. After encountering hostility and resistance at the registration booth, Ron returns home, wondering whether it is worth his while to pursue this notion:

> I was hurting as I walked home after trying to register for minor hockey. *What was the big deal?* I wondered again. Hundreds, thousands of kids play minor hockey

> right across Canada. . . . they hadn't wanted me to join, that was clear. (p. 7)

Being allowed access to a majority of activities which epitomize Canadian life is something that we as Canadians of colour take for granted. So it is always jarring and shocking to come across a group or member-oriented gathering where we are denied or grudgingly accepted with reticence, hesitance or even grumbling hostility. Until such instances arise, we feel we are just Canadians, not Canadians with a race or ethnicity that marks us as different from the other Canadians — the White Canadians. We are jarred and enraged, and then find ourselves — should we choose to pursue the membership — painfully aware that some of those around us think we do not belong there, that we are someplace where they have come to believe we have no right to be. Muhammad, like Ron, felt some resistance when he joined a hockey league. The resistance came from players on the opposition, who on occasion, showed their discomfort and their animosity for a brown person in the league. Muhammad talks candidly about these interactions, noting that the ice was one of the few arenas where he experienced others being antagonistic towards him primarily because of his race.

> I don't think I've seen another brown person at my league, at least at my level that plays ice hockey so it's really difficult there to fit in sometimes because you get heckled a lot because of your colour just from the other team. Occasionally [you get razzed] from your team at the beginning but I've always gotten along with my team. But when you're playing on the ice with another team, you get very rude comments thrown at you and especially if you score or do something against them, it really annoys them. I don't understand why. You're just another person out

> there, but in their eyes, you're not supposed to be as good as them or something like that, so it gets frustrating at times but for the majority, it's all right. Usually I just take it. There's not much I can do. I can just brush it off or say or make a comment back. "Oh yeah, look at the scoreboard!"

Muhammad senses that he is being tested — sized up — and that his opponents don't believe that he has the skill level to belong here, that he could not be there because of merit. They are incredulous of his presence and tell him that he doesn't belong. But for Muhammad, satisfaction comes from proving that he does belong, proving that he is an integral part of the success of his team. Through skilled play, Muhammad comes away feeling he has proven his worth to his leery opponents, that he has exploded the myth that he in particular, and his people in general, are not worthy opponents in a game where few Canadians of South Asian descent are represented. He is confident that his skilled, persistent presence has initiated the demolition of a previously unchallenged boundary.

While we as Canadians of colour can orchestrate some opportunities to gain the desired cultural capital, part of how we are received is dependent upon the mind set of the other. For as Williams et al. (1995) remind us, assimilation occurs only when "members of the minority group (will) be willing to assimilate. . . and members of the dominant group . . . allow them to do so" (p. 384). Muhammad identifies the changing world view of Canadians as the substantial difference between the way Canadians of colour are accepted by the other now, and how we were received over a decade ago. According to Muhammad, Canadians of colour are embraced more frequently by the other because Canadians in general are more accepting of various ethnic groups and races. Hasina, herself a Black

youth, speaks frankly about her circle of friends:

> I'm friends with some of them [the Black kids] but I don't care — it doesn't matter to me. I wouldn't care if they were White or Black, they're nice people, so I'll talk with them. That's all that matters to me really.

For Hasina, friendships do not hinge upon racial or ethnic origin but rather upon personality, areas of common interest and other intrinsic qualities. But not all Canadians are as open minded as Hasina. Perhaps having been categorized and eliminated because of her race, Hasina is less likely to use race or ethnicity as a criterion for accepting or rejecting relationships with others.

The Power and Impotence of Racism

However, to be a Canadian of colour does not exclude us from also using generalizations about races and ethnicity to influence our selections of those with whom we socialize positively and negatively. Logan talks about the annoyance he feels when others make stereotypical assumptions about him and his circle of multi-ethnic friends, yet he also perpetuates the negative stereotype of Canada's Native people when he talks about his school's interaction with the students from the Plains Indian Cultural Survival School:

> Sometimes we get kind of annoyed because we were playing soccer outside in the field and they [the students from PICSS] go, "This is our court. This is our soccer field. It's not yours." "Just be quiet." They started going, "Come on, let's go." Later on the Lebanese in the Manning group saw that and they came out and they wanted to beat them up, too. They had a baseball bat and went away, and so did

> [the Native students]. They were like a gang thing. They were playing football and then these Indian guys were making fun of them,"Ah, you guys suck! You can't catch a football." So that's why after school [the Lebanese students] wanted to meet them out.
>
> It's better to have my kind of school, more multicultural because then you can understand other Natives and cultures. Well, if you just stay in one group [like PICSS], your own, you will just understand yours. Theirs you won't understand.

It seems ironic that Canadian students of colour recognize our potential or real vulnerability for being the brunt of racial slurs or discriminatory generalizations about our own people, yet these same tendencies go unchecked in ourselves when we take on racist beliefs or actions, or when we ridicule other Canadians because they are different from ourselves. In Jen's (1991) novel, entitled *Typical American*, a Chinese immigrant family mocks the uncouth ways of the dominant other from the perspective of the smug self with the superior culture:

> Entertainment: Ralph took to imitating Pete's walk. He'd slump, a finger cleaning his ear, only to have Theresa gamely cry out, "*No, no like this*," and add a shuffle, turning out her knees as Helen laughed. They studied the way Pete blew his nose, that they might get it right; they studied his sneeze, his laugh, the self-important way he flipped through his calendar. "Well, now, let me have some look-see," growled Theresa. "Typical Pete!" Ralph roared in approval. . . . And pretty soon, no one knew quite how, "typical Pete" turned "typical American" turned typical American this, typical American that. (p. 67)

Yet it is only in the conspiratorial safety of our heritage language or within the confines of our homes or ethnocultural enclaves that we can speak admonishingly of the "gwila" or "white devils" who shock us with their crass ways. Cynthia, a Japanese Canadian woman, remembers how she would commiserate with her closest friend Janis — a Chinese Canadian — as they went through junior high school and senior high school together. They frequently shared their trials of having to interact with "dumb Whities" who did not pick up on subtle cultural differences which both girls valued and shared even though they came from two different Asian communities.

> I couldn't believe it! All through junior high and senior high, the same stupid guys. They ask, "Are you guys sisters?" One of us was an Ohama, the other was a Leong. We were the same age and in the same grade! Bunch of dumb Whities!

Sandra, another Canadian of colour, remembers a time when her mother, a fluent speaker of English, reverted back to her heritage language, Japanese, to vehemently admonish an uncooperative customer relations clerk at Woolco:

> Mom was really steamed because the woman was giving her a hard time about the merchandise she wanted to return. So then, she starts cursing away to me in Japanese, like I would know what she was saying and agree with her. I only caught part of it, but she said a thing or two about that woman!

While casting racial epithets or negative ethnically-related generalizations may bring about a momentary sense of cultural superiority or the fleeting satisfaction of retaliation, hooks (1992) an American critical theorist, differentiates between powerful racism wielded by the dominant other and the impotent racism of people of colour.

> Why is it so difficult for many white folks to understand that racism is oppressive not because white folks have prejudicial feelings about blacks but because it is a system that promotes domination and subjugation? The prejudicial feelings some blacks may express about whites are in no way linked to a system of domination that affords us any power to coercively control the lives and well-being of white folks. That needs to be understood. (p. 15)

While hooks is speaking specifically from the point of view of a Black American, her point is well-taken in Canada. As Canadians of colour we are not exempt from voicing our racist beliefs and taking discriminatory actions, however, the impact of our words and deeds pales in intensity compared to the impact of the dominant other, whose discriminatory words and deeds are coupled with institutional discrimination. Jabbra and Cosper's (1988) comparative statistical analysis of ethnic groups in the Atlantic provinces indicates that specific subgroups within Canadian society are subjected to forms of institutional discrimination that have a negative impact on the lives of their members. Specifically, the maritime's aboriginal people and Afro-Canadian population have relatively low educational, average income and occupational levels. When racist beliefs are coupled with the power to influence systems, the adverse effects for some Canadians of colour are far greater than the hurt that is inflicted by individuals who strike out at us because of our ethnicity or race. Logan's words summarize the impotence that Canadians of colour experience when we brandish a weapon that both we and the other recognize as relatively inconsequential, in comparison to institutional discrimination:

> One time I was being harassed for being my colour in high school. They just

> wanted to bug me — the White guys. They do it one period because they're in my class. They keep on bothering [me] during class. They're like, "Ah, look at this guy. He's a nerd. He's a geek. He's a White chink." And I go, "Yeah, right." I can't say something back, because I can't think of anything that's bad to them.

The Role of the Canadian Parent of Colour

While many of us have harsh episodic memories of name-calling incidents, it is difficult to recall when we first realized that we had become objects of disgust and ridicule because of our race or ethnicity. Jennifer remembers hearing about one of her mother's former piano pupils. Like Jennifer, this young girl was a Chinese youngster attending a public school:

> There was this one student of hers and she was going to ECS. Everyone called her "Ching, Ching, Ching" and everyone meant it to not make her feel very well but she didn't know that because it was part of her name.

Since "Ching" was a part of her given name, the young girl was confused. In another context, it was a reasonable way in which to address her and refer to her. In her phenomenological inquiry into the notion of "home," Winning (1991) speculates on how it is that particular meaning is attached to specific terminology:

> The word, glance, or gesture of someone with whom we have a common bond can throw a different light on the experience of a situation. . . . It is the understanding of the meaning of the things being referred to by two people that can endow particular words with particular meanings. . . . The language learners' revelation of

> themselves must learn a new way of being with others. Language learning involves coming together with people in understanding a new way of looking at things of the world. (p. 174)

It was not the word itself, but rather the relentless goading, the sing-songy assault that led this child to realize that the other children are not referring to her, calling her or experimenting with the beautiful musicality inherent in her name; they are taunting her. The difficult lesson of life that this preschooler of colour learned in the ECS setting was that to be Ching amongst Matthews, Ryans and Vanessas, was to be separate and worthy of verbal disdain because of the foreignness or difference inherent in the name. The lesson is all the more jarring and unexpected because it does not correspond to feelings of belonging, recognition, acceptance and affection that she had previously associated with being called by name in her home. In their sociological inquiry into ethnic name-calling, Pankiw and Bienvenue (1990) describe this face-to-face form of ethnic degradation as a verbal attack with a non-verbal component, frequently characterized by nicknames, figures of speech, disparaging phrases, facial expressions, gestures, teasing, chasing, mimicking, joking or physical intimidation. For the young child of colour who has never previously experienced such taunting, it becomes quickly apparent that such social interactions are meant to humiliate, ostracize and hurt. Goffman (1986) suggests that the first school experiences ruthlessly draw our differences to the forefront and deem such differences undesirable.

> The point in the protected indidvidual's life when the domestic circle can no longer protect him will vary by social class, place of residence, and type of stigma . . .

> Thus, public school entrance is often reported as the occasion of stigma learning, the experience sometimes coming very precipitiously on the first day of school, with taunts, teasing, ostracism, and fights. (p. 33)

As part of caring for us, our parents look for ways to prepare us for instances where others will be reticent to welcome us because of our ethnic origins. At home, as pre-schoolers we are relatively safe from racial ridicule. We know ourselves only as the children of our parents. And while we may begin to recognize racial difference amongst those we see, we, as Canadian children of colour, are seldom witness to overt attacks of racism on our people. Other children are seldom bold enough to call out ethnic slurs when we are in the company of our parents. But, as we venture out of our homes, unaccompanied by parents who protect us, into the larger community, we discover that our ethnicity may be viewed by the other as markedly different enough to taunt us on this basis. As adults of colour, our parents are well aware of the random attacks that occur upon citizens of colour in this country. While they may be many or few, limited to certain areas of the city or certain frames of mind, the possibility of being the victim of racism is real. Parents struggle with how best to protect their children from the stings of racial and ethnic slurs. Some children, like Jennifer are warned of the possibility through worrisome parables, still others are given strategies for dealing with the impending interaction. Rose (1995) recalls a conversation she overheard between a Native woman and her child:

> I saw a Micmac mother call her young daughter "little squaw face" and when I asked why she said it, it was to protect her for what was to come later. . . (p. 29)

For this mother, the likelihood of her child being subjected to racial slurs was inevitable.

Our parents recognize our vulnerability, since the home is seldom the place where this kind of verbal abuse occurs. There is the anxiety on the parents' part, knowing that as their children grow, they will move beyond the safe embrace of the home into a wider world where ethnic and racial difference is sometimes both noted and commented upon negatively. Parents of colour grapple with how best to prepare children for these encounters. While one may question this mother's approach, none would argue that her desire to prepare her daughter is both an admirable and natural response by a caregiver.

Just as many Canadian children are upset by being called names by others, so too do we seek out solace from our adult caregivers. Sometimes we come to our parents with tears, sometimes we are strangely quiet, sometimes we come to them with boisterous objections about the way we have been treated by others. In their study of how children respond to ethnic name-calling, Pankiw and Bienvenue reported that the responses of children varied:

> Some responded initially, by crying; others with general moodiness and irritability; and still others withdrew either into solitary activities or into a close circle of friends. A small number of youngsters had tried to avoid going to school or were 'sick' during periods of harassment, using this as an excuse for avoiding the bullying at school. (p. 85)

Naturally, part of what children will do is to seek out clarification and guidance from their parents after being targeted by the other (Pankiw & Bienvenue, 1990). Hasina remembers what it was like to first encounter the term "nigger":

> I lived in Edson for about six, seven years. We moved there when I was about

> three. That was a tough place to live in kind of because all the time there was one little kid. I don't remember his name but he always used to call, "Nigger, nigger, nigger!" And then, I'd always end up beating him up. . . . I was probably a little taller than him. I was always taller than everyone. He never used to hurt me. He just used to run around and say it. Run around me. At first it used to hurt. I'm like, "I don't even know what a nigger is but whatever it is, it sounds mean." After a while, then my mom told me something about any dirty little thing is a nigger. "But, I'm not dirty!" So I told him he's a nigger. He didn't believe that but I dealt with it eventually because I started to believe I'm better than this kid.

Again, without ever having heard the offensive term in her home environment, Hasina sensed that the name being hurled at her had malice backing it. Her attacker was relentless, badgering her continuously with this word that initially held no meaning for her. During these encounters, Hasina began to associate taunting with being singled out for something distasteful in the mind of the other. After a while she approached her mother. In Hasina's eyes her mother was someone who would know the meaning of the word, someone who would help her solve this problem and someone who would alleviate the hurt she felt every time the boy teased her. She sought both comfort and answers from her mother. Her mother's thoughtful answer separated Hasina from the despicable term, maintaining Hasina's view of self, which included race but did not discount the value of being Black. Clearly after listening to her mother, Hasina understood that she was not a nigger. However, Hasina's interpretation of the derogatory term lacked the historical context and the resulting insinuation of calling a Black person "nigger." In taking her

mother's definition literally, Hasina removed a crucial attribute of the term nigger: that it is used by the other to refer with superiority and disdain to Black people. Historically, Blacks considered unclean or indecent were called niggers. Hasina's indignant rebuttal was confusing to her classmate, but clearly her intended message is comprehensible to us: I am not unclean and unworthy. It is you, who can see no value in me who is despised and unclean in character. Hasina rediscovered her flagging dignity by refusing to allow herself and her people to be denounced. While the young boy may have gone away bewildered or amused, Hasina felt strongly about denouncing his accusations of inferiority. For Doctor (1995), parental support went beyond consoling and advice. Doctor's mother actively sought out retribution for her child's mistreatment, by challenging the infrastructures which left her daughter open to racist comments and actions. In this poetic tribute to her Banu, Doctor speaks of the impact of her mother's actions on her life as a Canadian woman of colour:

I grew up in a small suburban white town.
I went to Brownies, said the Lord's Prayer,
Disliked Friday evening Gujariti classes and
Always wanted to fit in.

"Paki go home."

My mother swelled in fury
When her little girl repeated the ugly words

She had been told at school.

And so she went out to find justice.

Banu marched to Ed Broadbent's office

and spoke of her children.

And of racism and Pakis.

"And we are not from Pakistan." . . .

Did she know that on that day,

She planted a gem in her little girl's mind

Which many years after her death

Would grow

Inside my Indo-phobic

Multiculturized

Coconut head?

Did she know that her one act

Would help create a

Woman who would love herself

Her brown skin

Her dark eyes

The beauty of women?

If I could know her today

We would sit together

And have *chai*.

We would speak of our lives

Of truth

Of justice

And of "Pakis" who

Would not go home

But stayed to change the world. (p. 220)

For their children and sometimes for themselves, it sometimes becomes necessary for Canadian parents of colour to formally address their concerns about disquieting acts of ethnic violence that occur in the homes of others, on the playground or in the classroom by those who are genuinely unaware or those who are purposefully threatening (Endrezze, 1993; Henry & Tator, 1994; Keeshig-Tobias, 1995). Yet this is only one way in which Canadian parents of colour demonstrate their fortitude in character to us.

Some parental advice is solicited after jarring experiences of our own, but sometimes parents bring their own stories home and share them with us in an attempt to guide us through example, to show us how cultural misunderstanding and ethnic or racial tension can be dealt with. Logan remembers a time when his father felt disheartened with his staff because of the unfair criticisms they had towards his managerial style. Logan listened intently that night, and still abides by his father's maxim when he encounters instances of ethnic tension or cultural misunderstanding:

LOGAN: He comes home and tells me what people say and what to do in a situation. When my dad was home and people were bothering him about how he's working, so he goes, "What other people do, man don't listen to them."

CHERYL: What were they referring to?

LOGAN: About how he supervised. He doesn't look. But my dad does look, he just doesn't seem to, really. His advice was don't listen to what other people say because they don't understand what you do. He gives me good advice.

This notion of staying true to one's beliefs even if the surrounding, predominant beliefs are markedly different, is something that Logan, like his father, grapples with each day: Logan, with his friends and peers; his father, with his colleagues and employees. It has to do with not striking back, not justifying our beliefs or actions, in the face of ridicule or accusations. It is a confident, silent pride or faith in our world views. And a sense that as a people, we have the dignity and the wherewithal to survive the taunting and the criticism.

Children of colour watch and listen to determine how it is that their parents deal with instances of racial tension or ethnic misunderstandings. Through example, we come to know how to respond appropriately to such incidents. For the most part, reason, humour, and ignoring are techniques that children of colour use to dissipate uncomfortable situations surrounding racial tension, techniques that are amongst several used by stigmatized populations in general (Goffman, 1986). Ron, the Sikh protagonist in Walsh's (1994) *Shabash!*, speaks cogently about the strategies he uses when confronted by those who dislike him primarily because of his ethnic background.

You pretend you don't hear the teasing words, you try to laugh, you choke down

> anger. You let it roll over you and think that you really don't care any more, that it doesn't bother you, that words can't hurt you. (p. 7)

Ron attempts to disarm the other by failing to outwardly acknowledge the verbal abuse. Yet what is critical to recognize is that he is only seemingly unscathed by the teasing word, when in fact his reaction is a determined facade. His hurt and anger are choked back and remain unvoiced. He gives the outward appearance of being nonchalant, self-deprecating or untouched, yet the feelings of hurt and vulnerability remain inside and do not disappear quickly.

Hasina recollects the exact wording of a joke her friends told her. While the telling of the joke may have been inconsequential or trivial in the mind of the teller, Hasina still remembers the wording of the joke, with annoyance and with wonder:

> Sometimes they'll say racist jokes like, they'll have a chocolate bar and inside, if there's something else, they'll go, "Oh look, the Black people are covering the little brown people," like if they're peanuts or something. I'm like, "Yeah, okay, whatever!" They think it's funny, I don't. I never tell racist jokes. They're a waste of time. I remember one friend said to me, "Do you know why you're so tall?" "Why am I so tall?" "Because your knee grows." I go, "Gee, thanks. That sums it all up for me!" (Hasina laughs) "That one was retarded."

In an attempt to be collegial, we choose not to react, since we anticipate that a reaction would be viewed by the other as an over-reaction to a harmless comment. While ignoring verbal abuse is one strategy used by Canadian children of colour, we may also work actively to avoid potentially confrontational situations. Hill (1994), whose father was

Black and whose mother was White, reminisces about such a situation:

> I remember standing nervously in a school yard during the spring of my second grade, while classmates were about to determine who would be "it" to start a tag game.
>
> I knew how their rhyme went. I knew it couldn't go unchallenged. But the prospect of losing new friends terrified me. So I jumped in to recite it myself, changing one key word as my parents had suggested:
>
> Eenie meenie minie moe
>
> Catch a tiger by the toe
>
> If he hollers let him go
>
> Eenie meenie minie moe.
>
> Again and again in the following years, I sanitized that rhyme before the offending word could be spoken, secretly grateful for the chance to avoid confrontation. (p. 42)

Yet for some of us who continue to internalize dread, annoyance, frustration, anger or hurt in response to a myriad of jokes and epithets, previously inconsequential incidents begin to evoke a strong response from us. In Mootoo's (1993) short story, entitled "Out on Main Street," members of the Fijian community become enraged by the treatment of local restaurant proprietors by well-meaning but ignorant White customers. The proprietors respond calmly and patiently to the men's comments and questions, but the locals are outraged by their racist attempts at humour and camaraderie:

> De exchange make mih blood rise up in a boiling froth. De restaurant suddenly get

> a gruff quietness 'bout it except for a woman I hear whispering angrily to another woman at de table behind us, "I hate this! I just hate it! I can't stand to see our men humiliated by them, right in front of us. He should refuse to serve them, he should throw them out. Who on earth do they think they are? The awful fools!". . . Everybody was feeling sorry for Chum-chum and Brother. One a dem come up to de table across from us to take a order from a woman with a giraffe-long neck who say, "Brother, we mustn't accept how these people think they can treat us. You men really put up with too many insults and abuse over here. I really felt for you." (p. 54)

Reaction to instances of verbal abuse or voiced ignorance varies from person to person. Our reactions are tempered by the offender's perceived intent, the severity of outrage we feel, the frequency with which we are exposed to such comments and the company in which we are in. By choosing to respond diplomatically to the offensive remarks, the restaurant proprietors maintain the patronage of the two outsiders. Financial gain and possibly furthering their exposure within the community of the dominant other become the priority of the Fijiian entrepreneurs, and so the offenders are free to leave the restaurant unchallenged. Clearly, the other diners disagree with their choice of actions. Sharing the same heritage as the restaurateurs leads them to feel vicarious outrage for the way their people are treated by these two Canadians from the dominant culture, but such outrage is not tempered by the factors that only the two businessmen see as priorities in this instance.

While many Canadian children of colour will often allow ethnic epithets to go unchallenged, there seems to be a breaking point for all us, where ignoring or shrugging

off an offensive comment is no longer possible for us. One such situation is described by Janet Sears, the creator of the one woman show, *Afrika Solo*. In desperation, Janet tries to convince her friend V.D. to stop teasing her. She seems to sense that she is moving to dangerous ground, a point where she will no longer be able to hold back her anger, and where the fear of retaliation is overcome by the desire to physically stop the other from continuing the verbal onslaught. Janet relives that incident from her childhood:

V.D. Enie, meanie, minie, mo, catch a nigger by the —

JANET Hey, V.D.! Don't say nig — the "N" word! My mum said you're not supposed to say that word. She said it's the nastiest word you can say to any black person. . . V.D. Don't . . . V.D. I'm seri. . .! V.D. !! But she just kept saying it, over and over and over again. And I slap her. I slap her. (Sears, 1990, p. 36)

With common-sense, calm, rational knowledge we accept that responding in word or action to the derogatory comments of others only leads to an escalation of anger and that potentially, violence will also be an outcome. In this instance, V.D.'s older brother comes along and seeks revenge. It is then that Janet realizes that retaliation regardless of the nature and degree of instigation can only lead to escalation. Thinking back on the thrashing she got, Janet says, "Try to imagine what it would feel like if someone took a Mack truck and rammed it into your face. Everyone thought I was dead" (p.37). Similarly, a young Black man talks candidly about his growing anger and frustration with name-calling as an adolescent:

I couldn't let someone call me a nigger without hitting them (unless they were

> bigger than me). By the time I reached high school I had had it. I had been disciplined for fighting in every school I had ever been to and was considered an academic problem by all concerned. My ability to fit in was nearly nil and my ability to articulate this was less. (Richardson et al., 1994, p. 242)

He acknowledges that his experiences were markedly different from his younger sister's since she appeared "seemingly indifferent to being a Black girl in a white man's world" — a trait he envied, while he "was oversensitive" (p. 212). Personality, it seems, becomes a major indicator of how the Canadian child or youth of colour will react to incidents of ethnophaulism.

While only some of us choose to act upon our frustrations, all of us dream of wreaking havoc on our perpetrator. The "sense of deprivation, injustice, and anger towards mistreatment" are feelings associated with being the target of discriminatory actions or words (Kuo, 1995, p. 111). We fantasize about ways of getting even, of feeling smug, of teaching the other a long overdue lesson, or of gaining their respect through awe and fear. Nina recollects an incident where she sought revenge on a classmate who was relentless in his teasing:

> This kid used to bug me on the playground as well. Really used to annoy me and at the time I was going through a witchcraft stage. I'd read up on books. I read where these normal kids, I don't know how it happened, had these powers and I thought it was interesting so I'd sort of cast my own spells on him. I actually believed that they might actually work. I put a hex on him. He didn't bug me for a while. We were doing all these hexes and the next day I saw him. He had a broken

> leg and a broken arm. And after that, the funny thing, he never bugged me again. He was calling me names, "Chinaman!" But after that, he never bugged me again, so then I think, "That was kind of neat." I was 11 or 12, in Grade 6.

Still for many of us, actually acting upon these fantasies seldom occurs. When we do find ways to act, it is in covert, subtle ways, like Nina. Perhaps part of our hesitance is due to fear of escalation or harm. But too, part of our hesitance is due to the sullen acknowledgement that in stooping to retaliation, we become "every dirty little thing" — we become niggers — much to the satisfaction of those who tempt us into becoming what we believe we are not.

"I'm going to tell you right off. I'm Black."

I was surprised by this comment dropped into the conversation with a stilted casualness and randomness, indicating instead how this disclosure had weighed heavily on her mind until she finally made the decision to spit it out anxiously like a fishbone caught in the throat. I reassured her that race was not an issue, given that I myself was Japanese. We laughed and then in the conspiratorial way of those who feel morally superior, she went on to tell me about the time when she went to a home for an interview and was turned down because of her colour. "The woman said to me that I would scare her baby because I was so black."

CHAPTER FIVE

FRIENDSHIP

Moving from one place to the next always awakens within me the grim resolve to pare down the boxloads of possessions that I have accumulated over the years. And so, with sleeves rolled up, I approached the endless stacks of dusty packing boxes in the storage room. Part way through one pile, I rediscovered a box of old photo albums. While my initial intent was to do a cursory evaluation of the contents of each box, determining efficiently whether the items should be stowed away once again or cast out, I was hopelessly drawn to the photo albums; they caused me to linger. As I fingered each page, I found myself remembering episode after episode from my childhood and my youth. One of the colour snapshots — like many taken before it — was discoloured; the greenish tint to my child face and the yellowing stripe on my teeshirt gave away the duration of time since the candid shot was taken years ago by my father. It was a snapshot that captured my sister, my cousins and me in the midst of childhood. We were a raucous clan of cousins, brought together from far reaches of the province for family events such as memorial services, birthdays, anniversaries, retirements and Christmases.

In the common surroundings of our grandparents' home, we took the business of play seriously. There was the time we ran relentless laps around the dining room table, with my oldest cousin in the lead. Cindy had a nylon stocking pulled over her head. The toe and part of the leg dangled from her crown like a cock's comb as she led us in a breathless, exuberant rendition of "She'll be coming round the mountain when she comes." Or there was the time when we discovered Obaachan's odds and ends in the

cylindrical rice bins. We strung the twine, salvaged ribbons and neglected neck ties between bed posts, chair legs, dresser knobs, and door frames. The creators of this dastardly web hid in the darkened bedroom, yelling to the participants in the hallway, "Come on in!"

Inevitably after a day and night of play, we collapsed in a puddle of arms and legs, on the sagging bed of one of my now-grown uncles. Our black heads gleamed with the sweat of exertion; our cheeks were rosy records of the fast paced fun we had had. It was on an occasion such as that, that my father came in and took a picture.

Towards the end of a photo album is another picture. The snapshot captures us in our brooding adolescent years. This time we were in the middle of a confidential discussion, and we looked up from where we were stretched out on the now-crowded bed at the intrusion — my father, again armed with a camera — and stopped what we were talking about to glare sullenly, grimly. We tolerated his presence, knowing that he would leave us to our talk as soon as he was done. Each time when we came together in our teenage years, the discussion lingered on the day-to-day issues that brought us angst: demanding parents with unrealistic expectations; developing bodies that seemed far from the ideals of beauty; the paucity of Japanese boys worthy of dating; our impatience with those who thought we fit the Japanese stereotype; what was to be learned from attending mandatory weekly church services at the Buddhist temple.

It is during our childhoods that we surround ourselves with acquaintances and forge friendships. We strike these relationships with children we meet at family gatherings, in the neighbourhood, on the playground and in the classroom. Acquaintances are those

with whom we come together with, to play; our more intimate friends are those we confide in. The Canadians of colour with whom I spoke also had remembrances of a variety of everyday relationships: acquaintanceships and friendships within and beyond their ethnocultural communities. Their disclosures revealed instances where ethnocultural distinction influenced their interactions with their peers and shaped their beliefs about what it is to be befriended by others. This chapter examines what can be further uncovered about the lived experience of Canadian children and youth of colour by examining these peer relationships.

From Acquaintanceship to Friendship

When asked about who he associates with in school, Muhammad lists an impressively long and varied list of acquaintances and friends:

> I have a wide variety of friends at William Aberhart. Anywhere from the cool group — the guys who smoke and are sort of the cool guys — and then more of the workers and inside men — student council — because I'm involved as well in a lot of the activities inside the school so I've got a lot of friends that way, through the band and just from social situations like, just from eating lunch in the cafeteria or whatever, we build friends. Relationships build up. I've just got a wide variety of friends. I guess, now that I think about it, I have a lot of very multicultural based friendships, a lot of foreigners but not that many. Not an excessive amount, I don't think.

For popular students like Muhammad, a plenitude of acquaintanceships are struck in a

variety of school settings: the classroom, the gymnasium, the cafeteria. Muhammad enjoys the wide spread popularity associated with the respected youth elite — those who are comely, athletic, intelligent and confident. Given his earned social status in the school, Muhammad can navigate between several social circles, always confident that he is welcome amongst his many acquaintances and that he can select, make and keep friends for personal reasons, rather than for peer acceptance. Just as he recognizes in an afterthought that some of his acquaintances are youth of colour, his own ethnicity does not appear to be disadvantageous in his making and keeping of friends. He seems proud of his associations with other students of colour, including those who have recently immigrated to Canada. These relationships, he believes, are evidence of his open-mindedness and his accessibility. Later in our conversation, Muhammad remarks, "Maybe sometimes people don't think you're as intelligent because you come from a far away place or maybe have an accent when you talk, but then they realize you're a pretty normal sort of guy." This platitude further underlines his belief that he is generous in his acceptance of a variety of individuals. Yet curiously, he is quick to follow his initial statement with a disclaimer. While some of his friends are recent immigrants, they do not make up an "excessive" proportion, perhaps because there is the risk of being perceived as noticeably different through association, an anxiety voiced previously by participants in the chapter that dealt with the perpetual surprise experienced by Canadians of colour who discount the importance of race in their senses of self. We recognize that such an association brings with it the anxiety of being dethroned as one of the popular elite in high school. It is a vulnerability that is unique to youth of colour, since choosing to associate with recent immigrants is

an observable, obvious allegiance to the newly arrived. To undiscerning members of the student body, whose degrees of successful naturalization starkly contrast with the language, overt behaviours and, occasionally, the appearance of those on the social periphery, a sympathizing student of colour can be mistaken as an immigrant student, simply through similarity in phenotypical features and social proximity. Given that the newly arrived are seldom the social elite in a school, Muhammad's status would be threatened if he chose to affiliate primarily with the immigrant students in his school. And so it seems that even if we have a wealth of acquaintances, the title "friend" is not extended haphazardly to all whom we meet. What then distinguishes a true friend from a casual friend or an acquaintance?

Not all acquaintances become our friends, but all friendships stem initially from acquaintanceships. As Muhammad confidently bumps into one acquaintance after another in his daily routine at school, we are struck by the impromptu, informal, momentary interactions that characterize acquaintanceships: a cheerful greeting, a shared laugh, the patter about neutral, impersonal topics. Sometimes we are indifferent to the presence of an acquaintance. Other times we attribute spontaneous, enjoyable moments with acquaintances to happy accidents, where we have stumbled upon casual friendships — those collegial relationships in which time and effort are not invested and where the friendship is not tested by a difficult trial. While we are prepared to accept an unpredictable outcome from our interactions with mere acquaintances, we yearn for and purposely seek out our true friends, sensing that meaningful, caring interaction will be guaranteed or promised from those whom we have befriended. In the previous excerpt, Muhammad is generous

with his language, labelling all of those whom he has friendly interactions with as his friends, yet as we continued our conversation, it became clear that within this large group of friendly peers, there is a smaller group with whom he is more intimate — a group with whom he deliberately spends his time and with whom he shares his secrets: his friends, in a deeper, less casual sense of the word.

In her well-known work entitled *The Dance of Intimacy*, Lerner (1990) writes: "'All beginnings are lovely,' a French proverb reminds us, but . . . when we stay in a relationship over time . . . our capacity for intimacy is truly put to the test" (p. 2). Friends spend time together in conversation, activity or compatible silence, accumulating shared memories — the testimonial of a relationship. A friendship results from and is maintained through the continuous, reciprocal sharing of the many aspects of self. Initially, friendship is not unlike courtship, for newly-established friends show each other their best, most attractive character traits. Once that knowing is done and the fledgling friendship is still intact, then bit by bit, each begins to show the other additional aspects of self. In being together, each continues to witness admirable or endearing qualities along with the weaknesses, foibles, and grating traits of the other. The expectation is that a friend acknowledges and then addresses or ignores these unpleasant qualities. A successful friendship allows us to embrace each other, fully cognizant of both the imperfections and the likeable qualities which drew us together initially as jovial acquaintances, mutually considering friendship as a possibility.

In coming to know our friends, and being known to them, there is the mutual agreement to witness the private lives of the befriended other and reciprocally, to share

aspects of our own life worlds. Friends differ from acquaintances in that we trust friends to witness aspects of our lives that we otherwise choose to remain hidden from those who do not know us in this capacity. Logan, a first generation Vietnamese youth, talks about what it is like to bring friends into his home for the first time:

> They see it's pretty different but nothing that odd. They go, "Wow!" They nod their heads in amazement. When they walk up the stairs they see the Buddhas and the shrine. They're just amazed! I've been to their houses and they too have shrines. I have an East Indian friend. I went to his house and I saw a big shrine. It was amazing. It was kind of the same thing: the Buddha [and] how they were praying. Theirs had a special dot on top [of the forehead] like the Buddha.

Indeed Logan's family shrine is the first installment that a visitor would see when ascending the stairs from the entry way to the living room. Religious icons, scrolls and ornaments fill a shelving unit that extends the full length of the wall. Logan brings his friends home knowing them well enough to expect an overt reaction reflecting acceptance and respect. Regardless of the exotic nature of the private home, friends recognize their obligation to outwardly display interest in the difference or to ignore that a difference exists at all, rather than to denigrate on the basis of that which is different, since one of the premises of friendship is nurturance or acceptance of the other. Logan demonstrates this same generosity when entering the home of his friend. He notes difference, but in a gesture of friendship, looks for ways to connect the evidence of difference to his own experience.

Canadian children of colour risk ethnocultural disclosure with their close friends, anticipating the reaction demonstrated in the previous example or expecting a response

similar to the one Terrence recollects:

> I keep thinking back to one girl I dated for about a year. She was Caucasian — English, actually. In month eight or nine of the relationship, I met one of her friends. This friend of Liz's flew into town and I met her. We did a few things together and had a lot of fun. Afterwards, Liz and I were talking about her friend. She said [to Liz], "Gee, you never told me that your friend was Japanese." I guess because as a person being part of a racial group, I get clumped into a classification. Liz and I discussed it a bit. She said her friend had just assumed that I would be Caucasian, based on all of Liz's stories about what we had done, where we had been and how we interacted. According to Liz's perception, she didn't really think of me as being Japanese even though I would take her to certain Japanese events and do things that had a certain ethnic flavour to them. She viewed me as a person and didn't see the ethnicity.

Sometimes when a friend denies that difference exists at all, the Canadian youth of colour is relieved, for such a judgement is an indication of our ability to successfully be like the dominant other. In this latter reaction, our ethnic or racial selves are denied or downplayed by our friends. Muhammad describes this process: "Sometimes there's an initial double check. They don't know who you are or what you'll act like because of your colour. But once they get to know you, it's not a big deal." Instead they acknowledge only those ways in which we are like them. Once these ways are established, we feel even more secure in the friendship. But this gracious gift of "losing face" in the eyes of our friends — losing the physical features that immediately mark us as culturally distinctive — sometimes

becomes an impediment in our friendship. When it is assumed that no differences exist, we are sometimes caught in a situation where the distinction is real and important to us, yet goes unnoticed by our friends, since part of their perceptions about caring for us is the generalization that ethnocultural difference of any kind is not desirable and should therefore be ignored.

The Dance of Friendship: Coming to Know the Canadian of Colour

Once a friendship is established it must be nurtured in order to continue. To hold a friendship is to keep fast and to cherish a relationship with a friend, doing all that must be done in order to keep the friendship valuable, nurturing and worthy of retaining. While sound friendships are maintained by both parties, faltering friendships are feverishly maintained by one but neglected by the other or abandoned by both due to the mutual acknowledgement that the reconstruction of the crumbling friendship would take a harrowing commitment of energy and time to overcome a chasm that seems daunting or insurmountable. Bisoondath (1994) recalls how his friendship with his deskmate, Zaid, sputtered to a halt after the death of Zaid's father:

> Zaid was Muslim, I was Hindu, but this meant only that our families celebrated different religious festivals: Mohammed and Krishna exercised no influence on our friendship. Yet, when Zaid's father suddenly died, a silence descended between us. He had no words to express his loss, and the language of condolence was unknown to me. I knew that Hindus cremated their dead, and I wondered what Muslims did. But my curiosity seemed an intrusion. I could not bring myself to

> ask. Our friendship ended in a wordless ballet of pained glances. (p. 11)

What is it about this particular situation that would make wondering and curiosity inappropriate? Most often in the company of a friend, a wonder is an invitation to discuss. The receiver of a question views the inquiry as a way for the asker to learn more about the answerer. It is a safe way to disclose information about ourselves because the asker is curious to know and has initiated the exchange of information about the self. Question and answer in this context is one of the ways that friends come to know more of each other. The asker entreats, "Stop and consider the answer to this inquiry. Help me to understand." Friends enter into the interaction together: both asker and answerer. The time spent on the topic is a reciprocal gift. The asker implies, "I hold you in the position of knowing; I ask that you share, so that I may come closer to understanding you." The respondent can be flattered by being viewed as one who knows and generously shares the information, inviting the asker to know what was previously a secret. But what kind of information is easily shared and requested, and what kind of information is more guarded and costly?

Seeking out dining experiences featuring unfamiliar ethnic food is viewed as a safe, non-threatening yet enticing adventure, especially if the outing is guided by someone we hold in high esteem, someone who knows and cares for us, someone we hope to know better through this experience: a friend. Norris (1990) reflects upon her experiences dining in the homes of persons of colour where the unspoken understanding between guest and host is that the proffered gift is meant to nourish and elucidate the outsider:

> As I sample Punjabi roti, Vietnamese spring rolls, and Guatemalan enchiladas (different from Mexican enchiladas, I'm told), I understand food is more than

> eating; someone's home is embedded in each dish. In our offer of food to others, we offer what our world is. (p. 240)

Terrence describes how he introduces his friends to Japanese food when he senses they are curious:

> When I have people over for dinner, if I believe they can handle it, I cook Japanese food. I make Sukiyaki, cut up some sashimi. That's my method of entertainment and that's part of my heritage, as well. I enjoy sharing it with them and explaining it to them. . . . Some days I take sandwiches to lunch and some days I take rice and chopsticks. People come and look at what I'm eating and ask me about it. I tell them about it, and share that with them if they want. It's just a part of who I am. I don't feel any need to flaunt it [but] I don't feel the need to hide it, either. So this is the package guys, this is how I am. Take it or leave it.

It is with confidence that Terrence introduces his friends to foods reflecting his heritage. Friends who initiate the knowing become the source of his confidence and reassurance because they display genuine interest in the dining experience and trust that as their friend, he will lead them to try foods that are culturally distinctive yet palatable. In the unspoken contractual agreement between friends, the act of asking to know is evidence of the asker's intent to reassuringly give value to the information before even attaining it because of the high regard we have for our informed friend.

While gastronomic adventure is a pleasant, non-threatening way in which others come to know more about the ethnocultural influences that shape the life world of a friend of colour, further opportunities for intimate knowing occur over time as one friend

sensitively entreats and the other responds with a generous, truthful, complete answer. Muhammad shares how his schedule is noticeably different from the lives of his friends who do not share his faith. Of the inquiries that arise from his friends, Muhammad says:

> Depends on who. Actually I've got some friends that are very interested. "What do you do? How do you do. . .? Do you meditate? Why? Why do you do this?" Other friends don't know very much. Most of my friends know I go to church every Friday and Saturday. I go during the week sometimes and on special occasions but I guess the whole understanding of the faith and how it works, that's a little ambiguous to them. I don't go out and advertise but if someone wants to know, I'll definitely answer their questions. A lot of people are interested. They haven't met a lot of Ismailis so people are, "How do you do this?" or "Do you go?" or "Wow, that's really neat!" or "What's this about?" So I definitely tell them and explain to the best of my knowledge.

Muhammad recognizes that it is in his best interest to provide his friends with an accurate knowledge base about his religious practices. It allows him to act in a way that is consistent with his faith, without his unknowledgeable friends repeatedly making unrealistic demands of his time or making awkward requests that compromise his beliefs. Yet not all youth of colour are as patient with their friends' inquiries. In Sadiqu's (1985) collection of short stories featuring Canadian youth of South Asian descent, a fictional character, Raj, resents being bombarded with the same question from his friends.

> "Why does your dad wear a turban?" was a question Raj was tired of answering. One Halloween, Brent had asked if he could borrow one. Raj had to explain that

> Bapu's turbans were serious stuff, nothing to horse around with. Bapu had explained to him that it was a sort of togetherness symbol, but much more important than everyone wearing Blue Jays caps for the baseball game. (p. 29)

Still, regardless of how tiresome this question becomes, Raj feels obliged to educate his friend about his faith. He "had to explain to Brent." There is a sense of drudgery and impatience in his self-talk, as if the role of teaching the dominant other is a painful obligation. To explain that which is part of his private sphere to Brent — an outsider — is to risk having the disclosure belittled or to be questioned in ways that Raj is unable to answer. Given that Raj has a fuller understanding of the turban's significance, it is his obligation to correct his friend's misconceptions; it is an obligation that comes with being a member of this religious and ethnocultural community whose members deliberately adhere to a world view that is distinct from the dominant other. In so doing, he gives his friend the gift of knowing. He hopes the gift will be well received. He senses his friend is likely unaware of the inappropriateness of the request to borrow a turban as part of a Halloween disguise. Once given this knowledge, a true friend would withdraw such a request out of respect for Raj and his faith. As a result of procuring understanding, Brent will be able to interact with other Sikhs with greater tact. And perhaps the result of this frank discussion will be a newly-developed sensitivity towards others who are ethnoculturally distinct. By assertively educating his friend and correcting the presumption that a turban is more than a marker of exoticism, mystique and savagery, Raj also bestows a gift upon himself. It is the gift of self-acknowledgement. In publicly articulating the significance of personally valued cultural markers, Canadians of colour define for others

and for ourselves ways in which ethnocultural influences have a significant impact on our lives.

These four scenarios differ in the stance taken by the youth of colour. Bisoondath is uneasy about approaching his friend, Zaid, for information. Raj feels resentfully obligated to help Brent understand an aspect of the Sikh faith. And in contrast, both Terrence and Muhammad offer information freely and confidently to their friends. Perhaps in the first two instances, the timing of the interaction is wrong for the person of colour. At a time when Zaid is dealing with the consuming emotions of mourning and loss, it is unlikely that he is even aware of Bisoondath's discomfort surrounding this awkward and seemingly morbid curiosity. Likewise, amidst the hurried preparations for Halloween night, Raj realizes that a topic deserving dignity and solemnity is best left to another time. The invitation to inform another about cultural and religious difference is accepted by the person of colour when given time to explain fully — to engage in authentic interchange where the focus is on developing understanding, not providing a quick answer in passing. Without extending these authentic invitations, our friends may only come to know that we "go to church on weekends but the meaning of the faith [remains] a bit ambiguous to them."

Additionally, however, these interactions of teaching and learning also hinge on our acknowledgement that we are the holders of the sought knowledge, thereby claiming these ethnocultural attributes as part of our identities. Terrence talks about how he feels about teaching his Caucasian friend the Japanese art of origami:

As a kid back in junior high school, I used to be fairly involved in the Japanese

> community. I would do paper folding demonstrations at all kinds of different places: the Heritage Festival or I remember I used to end up doing it at really odd places like the equivalent of the Devonian Gardens. They'd have something going on and they'd want someone to do something like that so I would go and I'd take a little display with me. I'd show people how to fold different things. So I guess that's a display of your ethnicity and I enjoyed doing that. Actually, I often did it with my friend, Andrew, who was Caucasian. He thought it was a neat skill so I taught him most of the figures I knew. So when I was asked to do demos he and I would often go. I didn't really view it as a Japanese display. I guess maybe self-consciously I thought that's what it was. But to me, it was: "This is a display of something I can do that's unique. They're asking me to come and show something that not many people know," and that's how I viewed it, as opposed to: "This is my sacred culture."

While it could be argued that less personal risk is involved in the sharing of an artifact or culturally bound skill than in the disclosure of religious beliefs or world views that contrast starkly with those of the dominant other, children of colour share aspects of their ethnic selves with those who seem appreciative. In the true sense of gift giving, Terrence gives something of himself to Andrew: his knowledge of a particular skill, made valuable because of the interest the dominant other and, more specifically, Andrew, shows in it. While the skill is a part of Terrence's ethnoculture in the materials used and the objects portrayed, Terrence simply views this skill as an aspect of who he is: paper folder, amongst other things like swimming instructor, older brother, intuitive friend. Given a

friend's curiosity, Terrence sees the transmission of this knowledge as a way of maintaining a friendship. During the times of teaching and learning, practising together, and then demonstrating to others, Andrew and Terrence share both the compatible silence of two craftspeople working side by side and the easygoing banter between friends engaged in work where practised hands work through a memorized task. While it would be fair to acknowledge that a world view enhances this cultural display when it is done by a formally trained Japanese artisan, it is likely that it cannot be articulated by Terrence. Indeed, for him, minimal risk is involved in sharing this aspect of ethnic self with his friend, since it is merely a skill void of personal, fundamental importance. From Terrence's perspective, paper folding is simply an acquired skill amongst members of his ethnocultural community: he watched as his grandmother repeatedly folded cranes out of wrapping paper for the senbazuru; he studied the diagrams that accompanied the step-by-step instructional leaflets that accompanied origami paper imported from Japan. Given his knowledge *how*, rather than his knowledge *of*, Terrence can only offer his friend limited understanding. But perhaps it is enough that those we befriend gain an appreciation for aspects of our culture, regardless of how limited. The substantial opportunity belongs to the Canadian of colour, for while we may only know by doing, the act of teaching others and fielding their inquiries may nudge us to explore previously unchallenged yet accepted practices and ways of being. The result of such an exploration is a clarified understanding of self.

When children of colour object to being associated with an ethnic attribute that friends automatically associate with our people, we react with disdain, closing down the opportunities for discussion. Hasina is troubled by the stereotypes that her friends have

about Black people and denies racial generalizations that her friends attempt to associate with her in a misguided attempt to give her stature and to place her in the position of knowing and teaching.

> The topics often I find a lot of my White friends want to talk to me about being Black or something Black people do. They'll ask me if there was a gang fight for instance, would I know about it? Do I know the people in it? No, I don't know the people in it, but they want to know. Or if I can dance good because I'm Black. It's because I'm Black. Yes, it's in my genes. [Hasina's tone is sarcastic.] No, it's not! They just expect things. . .

At the literal level, this interaction between Hasina and her friends is no different from the interaction between Terrence and Andrew. Yet, while Terrence responded generously to Andrew's entreaty for more information, Hasina is annoyed with her friend's inquiries to know more of her and her people. Perhaps the difference is due to the longevity of the friendship. For those of us who have recently entered into friendships, or for those who have been negligent in the effort and time spent nurturing a friendship, it becomes apparent to us that initially coming to know a person of colour may mean for our friends that existing, predominant stereotypes are the basis for which they make assumptions about who we are. It is through further interactions, where they mindfully recognize our responses to situations, listen and watch for cultural differences, that our friends will get beyond stereotypical understandings to the place where more meaningful dialogue occurs, allowing our friends to refine what it is they know about us as individuals and what they have come to understand about our people. Part of who we are as Canadians of colour is

determined by our ethnocultural heritage. In his discussion of stereotypes and intergroup relations, Taylor (1981) suggests that stereotypes naturally occur when groups interact with one another. Taylor defines a stereotype as a "consensus among members of one group regarding the attributes of another" (p. 155). According to Taylor, an ethnic stereotype may encompass personality characteristics as well as any other shared beliefs about a specific group. Additionally, many stereotypes contain a kernel of truth and are upheld by a group of people rather than an individual. The functions of stereotypes are two-fold: to organize knowledge we possess and acquire about a specific group, and to fulfil our need to view ourselves positively. However, most strikingly, Taylor counters the generally accepted notion that stereotypes are negative evaluative pronouncements of a people. Instead he suggests:

> The multicultural ideology [present in Canada] implies that ethnic stereotypes which reflect a group's cultural distinctiveness may be highly desirable and even perhaps necessary for effective relations between groups. . . . Stereotyping is a cognitive process that operates in us all because of the functions it serves and hence the basic definition of stereotype should not contain evaluative judgements. (p. 157)

Participants in this study confirm that stereotypes do surface in the daily interactions between Canadians of colour and others. While a stereotype may, as Taylor suggests, be a significant step in the process of coming to know the other with no intended malicious intent, some of us find ourselves impatient with the lack of information, the grossly overgeneralized attributes, or the unquestioned source of these attributes that others

associate with our people and ourselves.

The dance of friendship is a complex interaction characterized by a rhythmical moving forward, sometimes in synchronization, or sometimes with one partner leading and the other following. The synchronicity of friendship is apparent when friends compatibly engage in a common activity: Terrence and Andrew folding side by side, or Logan and his friends shooting baskets at Lindsay Park. Friendships fortify through common experience; our sameness reinforces that we belong together. In contrast, the ritual of leading and following characterizes the way we come to know one another; through this process, we gain an appreciation for difference and individuality. When presented with a request to know more about an aspect of our private, withheld selves, persons of colour respond candidly and fully if we are comfortable with the implications that accompany answering the question. By answering the question, we acknowledge that we are keepers of the knowledge, that we have come to know the answer through experience and association. Furthermore, the answerer trusts that the information will be used to strengthen friendships, by adding a layer of understanding or perceived coveted uniqueness to the existing understanding that the other holds of us. Too, there is the unspoken understanding between both partners that either dancer may initiate yet another move once this initial step is complete and that either partner can chose to respond or to leave questions unaddressed. Choosing not to respond may cause the dance to come to an awkward halt, momentarily. But in either case, the dance between friends continues if both dancers choose to remain in the partnership.

While many friendships will survive day-to-day wonders and clarifications, only

sound friendships will survive difficult, awkward instances of misunderstanding or uncertainty. It takes courage to ask questions when we are uncertain about how these queries will be received. On the part of the askers, it takes patience to wait for these answers and tact to receive them with grace. And finally, it takes generosity on the part of the respondents to risk the sharing of answers that may have been previously unknown to ourselves.

Associating with Our Own People

Whether young Canadians of colour are brought together with children from our own ethnic communities by choice, by convenience, by chance or as a result of forced expulsion by the dominant other, time spent with our own people is an experience that is common to many of us. In some instances, extended family gatherings, ethnic enclaves within urban settings or organized events sponsored by ethnocultural communities draw children of like ethnicity. In other instances, it is religious or linguistic institutions that bring children of the same ethnoculture together. Terrence recounts his reasons for getting involved in a Japanese youth group in Edmonton:

> Towards the end of high school and early university, I organized all of the youth activities in Edmonton. I guess I was trying to feel the passion that a lot of people had. So I thought a lot of different centres in Canada had organized youth groups and they did all these social activities and dances. I never subscribed to any of that. I mean, if one was organized, I would go and I would have fun but I don't think that is something I need to organize. So for myself, being the Edmonton represen-

tative, my vision was to get people out to neutral activities because a lot of Japanese kids I find hadn't really identified their ethnicity. They're so uncomfortable with the fact that they are different. That was the feeling I got from them. So my vision was to get them out and get them socialized so that they would begin to understand that they had this commonality, that it's not strange or different, it's just part of who they are. I didn't feel I needed it. But my long term vision was that eventually these kids would get comfortable with being together and coming out to a function like this and then I would begin slanting it towards the cultural side, which I think is the value in getting together a group of these kinds of kids. I think the value is not getting together to play volleyball, but to get them together to listen to someone — the Isseis — talk about internment and then to have them talk about it. Because they know what it is and they have feelings about it, but I'm fairly certain that most of them never discuss that with anybody.

Compare Terrence's perspective with Muhammad's feelings in regards to the bringing together of youth from his faith, a congregation of Canadians of colour who, by contrast, share the same religion rather than the same ethnicity.

Sports are a big emphasis in our community because we want to be well rounded. We have running leagues of badminton, ball hockey — men's and junior's — volleyball, basketball. Basketball isn't in a league actually but we have tournaments, usually Alberta game tournaments between Edmonton and Calgary, sometimes tri-cities, Vancouver. We have big tournaments, big, big! Two years ago we had an international tournament. Everyone's got these leagues going for

> people from Australia, Holland, all of Europe, the United States. It got held in Toronto actually. I was the youngest member of our ball hockey team there. It was just an excellent experience because we had to meet people from all over the world — different Ismailis. You'd hear Ismailis with western accents, which is something you don't regularly hear or notice. Wow! We were just in one or two hotels. You'd walk out the door and there'd be a bunch of kids ready to have fun. It was excellent. Just a wonderful experience. I just loved that!

While Terrence views the congregating of Japanese individuals as a means to accomplish a purposeful, directed end, Muhammad values the coming together for reason of fellowship. Terrence does not feel an ongoing need to associate with his Japanese peers, while Muhammad sees it as a necessary aspect for fortifying the religious community. So what can explain the discrepancy illustrated by these two contrasting points of view? Perhaps it has to do with the sense of belongingness that each of us strives to achieve.

Terrence's primary interest is to be a part of the Canadian cultural status quo which is influenced predominately by the world view of the dominant other. His actions, his appearance and many of his accomplishments reflect his longing or earnest wish to be Canadian, which for him means downplaying an allegiance to a homeland. Spending informal, casual time with other Japanese youth translates as purposely selecting ethnic seclusion for the purpose of maintaining difference, actions which he believes run counter to his desire to be viewed as a part of, rather than separated from, Canadian society.

For Muhammad, a significant part of his belongingness is met through his association with his people — a tie that is based on shared faith. This community extends beyond

national boundaries. Muhammad separates nationality from religious affiliation, sensing that it is possible to claim membership in both groups. Since the Ismaili faith significantly shapes Muhammad's sense of self, he deliberately and purposefully seeks out opportunities to be amongst those who confirm these same beliefs, allowing him to develop an even deeper understanding of who he is: a devout practitioner of the Ismaili faith. Allahar's (1994) definition of soft primordialism seems to align with the feelings of attachment that Muhammad displays for his own people. Of soft primordial attachment, Allahar says:

> . . . the soft meaning of the term stresses the social, non-biological bases of attachment and draws attention to the importance of interpretation and symbolic meaning in the individual's social organization of his or her life. In other words, feelings of intense intimacy and belonging do not have to be mediated by blood. They can be socially constructed as in the case of fictive kinship. (p. 21)

Regardless of the reason that brings like people of colour together, the act of congregating with others who claim the same ethnicity may lead to friendships. Strikingly, in Levi's recollected experience, extended family is the basis for all of his friendships. Even after attending the same urban elementary school for two years, Levi's remembrances of happy adventures, play, camaraderie, laughter and secrets all revolve around his cousins and children from the reserve on which he was born. Each morning in the corridors of the elementary school, Levi pauses to make plans with his older brother and his long-established family friends before heading off, alone, into his classroom. Levi does not sense that his classmates dislike him, it is just that he makes no mention of friends beyond those who are related to him by blood or home. Simply, Levi is content with the friends

that are of his own choosing and senses no animosity directed at him by his classmates, whom he views ambivalently as acquaintances. "We don't get bugged from other people because they like to see Natives." While Levi's assessment of the perceptions of others may seem naive to some, he is secure in his identity and finds comfort being amongst those who are ethnoculturally similar to himself. Nor does he feel a sense of loss, being on the social periphery in the classroom. Within this small collective of Native youngsters in this urban neighbourhood, he is Levi: good-natured, thoughtful, mischievous cousin, tag along little brother. That is an identity he is content with, even though it is an identity that does not address his place in the larger community.

Similarly, Terrence disregards his apprehension to associate exclusively with Japanese Canadians, when he stops to consider the importance he places upon a subgroup of his people: his extended family. Of extended family, Terrence says:

> I have tons of Japanese relatives that I used to get together with on a very frequent basis as a kid. You talk to them and get their feelings. You could discuss things. Even more than a social group, they're your blood, so you can trust them. That helped me define who I am.

Terrence does not expect personal allegiance from all who share his ethnic background, any more than he would expect unconditional respect from anyone else whom he did not know well. But he does hold this expectation for those who are related to him by blood. Allahar (1994) contrasts the previous term, soft primordialism with the social tie that Terrence and Levi prefer:

> The hard version of the term [hard primordialism] holds that human beings are

> attached to one another (and their communities of origin) virtually by mutual ties of blood that somehow condition reciprocal feelings of trust and acceptance. It is the type of attachment that siblings or parents and their offspring are said to experience, and implies an unquestioned loyalty or devotion purely on the basis of the intimacy of the tie. (p. 19)

Of his many cousins, Terrence expects that his divulged thoughts will remain private. Together, through dialogue, this extended family of youth speak frankly and confidentially, working out what it is they have come to value and to believe. The unspoken promise of unconditional support is reciprocal amongst this group of extended family members.

In contrast to Levi's contentment with being left unto his own with the other Native children in his community, Rana — a fictitious Sikh boy growing up in a Canadian town — is wearily aware of his ethnocultural group's standing in the social hierarchy upheld by the children in his community. In Walsh's (1994) novel *Shabash!*, Rana describes how his social circle at school is dictated by unspoken barriers determined by the dominant group yet upheld by both the White and the East Indian students:

> There are three East Indian kids in my class this year and we get on all right with the other kids. No one calls us names or refuses to play on the same team as us in gym. The other guys, the Whites, leave us pretty much alone at lunch and recess, but we stick together in our own group and don't bother about them, either. (p. 9)

In this instance both social groups — the dominant group and the small subgroup of South Asian students — are ambivalent about the other. Members from either group do

not balk at working together in formal, teacher-directed activities, yet individuals from neither group actively seek out the company of the other during unstructured times allocated for socialization. While on the surface there appears to be mutual agreement between the two groups to uphold the social boundaries defined by ethnocultural difference, it is not an agreement entered into by parties deemed equitable. Rana and his friends are fewer in number and occasionally subjected to name-calling and other discriminatory acts while the remainder of the class forms a numerical majority unscathed by retaliation on the part of the subgroup. Rana's rebuttal would have us believe that he and his two East Indian compatriots choose to separate themselves from the dominant other for reasons of racial homophily (Shrum, Cheek, & Hunter, 1988) or as a natural extension of separation (Berry, 1987), as it is initiated by the adults in an ethnocultural group, wishing to remain distinctly separate from the larger society.

However in an honest account of what it is like to be a member of a nondominant group, Jamal (1995) describes her reaction to being dispelled:

> Quickly the first lessons of survival:
> stick with your own kind
> and run like hell.
> In dimly lit grey apartments
> we gather
> shadows of our former selves
> sharing humiliation, dislocation, alienation, pain
> and loneliness

the only time we can speak freely

in our language,

in our own voices

and be understood

beyond the words

in the sanctuary of our homes

we are closer to what we were before

but not quite. . . there is something missing

we can relax a little

but not totally

will we ever feel at home here? (p. 127)

Jamal claims that being with our own people offers protection to otherwise vulnerable, isolated and lonely social outcasts. It is amongst other recent emigrants claiming the same homeland that alienated individuals of colour like Jamal can find acceptance, empathy, companionship and advice. As both of these examples portray, some Canadians of colour are left by the dominant other to associate amongst themselves and invitations to enter into the social circles dominated by the other are seldom offered to those cast aside. Regardless of their socio-economic status in their homelands, most immigrant children of colour find themselves in the figurative caste of the pariah.

One such Canadian recalls what it was like to immigrate to Canada from India at six years of age. For Brahmacharie (1995), going to school was a lonely time because she was treated as an outcast by the other children:

> In my new school I was a social outcast, a "nerd". I learned quickly that Canadians expressed their identity in material ways. A "cool" image was very important to fit in. . . . No one would speak to me at recess. I was alone on the playground. If people did pay any attention to my presence, it was to give me disapproving glances at my funny hair, face, skin and clothes. There was no place to hide, because wherever I went I stood out as a dark blot in a sea of white, with the smells of spices and incense following me everywhere. (p. 105)

This notion of entry status is not limited to playgrounds. Indeed Porter (1989), claims that immigrants from particular ethnic groups experience this phenomenon when they enter the Canadian workforce:

> A given ethnic group appropriates particular roles and designates other ethnic groups for the less preferred ones. Often the low status group accepts its inferior position. . . . In the general scheme of class and status that evolves with economic growth and immigration there exists an "entrance status" to be assumed by the less preferred ethnic groups. Entrance status implies lower level occupational roles and subjection to processes of assimilation laid down and judged by the charter group. Over time the position of entrance status may be improved or it may be a permanent caste-like status as it has been, for example, with the Chinese in Canada. Thus most of Canada's minority groups have at some time had this entrance status. Some, but not all, have moved out of it. (p. 64)

In Canadian schools, the pariahs are those who initially speak another language, and then later speak English in heavily-accented, tell-tale ways. They are those who smell of foreign

spices that infiltrate the pores of their skin and the folds of their clothing. They are also those who are forbidden to participate in everyday school events due to beliefs or world views that are incomprehensible to classmates and teachers. They become, at best, those children that others avoid or ignore. They are, at worst, those children that are ridiculed and reminded harshly that they do not belong due to the difference that is apparent to others.

Like members of the Tamil caste, paraiyar, students in such subgroups accept their status as given, seldom challenging these boundaries. Instead they accept that they are powerless in their newness and difference. Both newcomers and those who enjoy the prestige of belonging to the dominant other sense that this is how it must be. For Rana and his associates, there is the humble acceptance of that place in the unspoken but evident social hierarchy at school, yet there is also a limited comfort that comes from knowing that when individuals in the diaspora unite, they too become a collective. Ethnocultural outcasts may choose to congregate rather than exist in isolation, for the company of a forced acquaintance seems better than no company at all. As a collective, criteria for membership can be established, activities can be initiated, friendships can be built, and individuals can be sheltered from discriminatory words or actions that ordinarily befall lone individuals deemed vulnerable. The creation of a collective takes away the need to interact with the dominant other for social needs like acceptance and companionship — needs that were previously withheld by the dominant other. The impermeability of the intergroup boundary between the dominant group and the subgroup forces needs to be met within the minority group and lead individuals to view own-group members positively,

explaining Rana's calm acceptance of the social hierarchy in place. By keeping to themselves and showing no desire or effort to be accepted socially, Rana and his friends find comfort in being able to ignore those who initially spurned them — an attempt to reclaim the power to select who they will associate with: "The other guys, the Whites, leave us pretty much alone at lunch and recess, but we stick together in our own group and don't bother about them, either." How ironic that the scorned would claim to shun those who have already shunned them.

According to Berry's (1987) definition of segregation, it cannot be said that non-English speaking immigrants of colour are segregated since segregation is characterized by no positive relations between the host society and the subgroup, maintenance of ethnic identity and traditions by both groups, and most importantly, imposed separation by the dominant group. While it could be argued that newly-arrived citizens of colour are not intentionally segregated from mainstream Canadian life, linguistic and cultural barriers may leave us feeling alienated from the larger society. However, regardless of the intent of the dominant other, those of us who feel ostracised may cling to our own people, just as those who are truly segregated do — the outcome of alienation is shared by both parties even though the intent of the dominant other differs. Goffman (1986) suggests that much is to be gained from surrounding our beleaguered selves with those who share our standpoint:

> The first set of sympathetic others is of course those who share his stigma. Knowing from their own experience what it is like to have this particular stigma, some of them can provide the individual with instruction in the tricks of the trade and with a circle of lament to which he can withdraw for moral support and for the

> comfort of feeling at home, at ease, accepted as a person who really is like any other normal person. (p. 20)

Allahar (1994) goes on to suggest that this coming together of individual outcasts is a likely outcome given "the gregariousness of human beings and their decided preference for group membership as opposed to social rejection or isolation" (p. 20).

While it may be the case that these unions are initially in reaction to the feelings of alienation, perhaps these gatherings of those who feel victimized ascend from pitiable social survival into healthier relationships where people come out of their own choosing to be with those they consider to be their friends, rather than associating with our own kind out of the psychological necessity to stave off isolation. Ultimately, it is the choice of the Canadian youth of colour. Are these friendships valued less by us because we sense others feel sorry for us assuming that we *must* rather than *choose to* associate with our own people? Perhaps that is why some of us are reticent to befriend our own publicly or to associate with them frequently. We want what we perceive the dominant other possesses — we want the power to purposely choose to be separate, on occasion or without exception.

The experiences of Canadian children of colour seems to indicate that Canadian children do congregate and expel peers partially on the basis of ethnicity, coupled frequently with degree of naturalization. Social circles which for the above mentioned children seem impermeable are less rigid for most children of colour who speak, act and dress like the status quo. But newly-arrived Canadians of colour, foreign in their appearance and their linguistic preference, find themselves invisible, unacknowledged and

ignored. I am reminded of the seemingly mismatched friendship between Hussein and Syed, the former three years older than the newly-arrived Grade 1 boy. Both children were fluent in Farsi, the language of home. The younger boy relied heavily upon the older more fluent speaker of English to make his wishes and concerns known. The two students were inseparable on the playground and in the classroom, but they seemed strikingly different in their personae: Hussein was serious-minded mature and forthright; Syed was impish, impulsive and active. As the younger child began to gain confidence in his ability to speak English, he began to initiate friendships with other boys in the class. Soon he preferred spending his recesses playing soccer with the other Grade One students, and Hussein was left on the sidelines, sullen and alone. Syed had overcome the barriers of language to gain access to the social circles of the dominant other, while the older child, viewed by his classmates as stubbornly and forlornly culturally different, remained ostracized. This instance, and several before it, illustrate how personality along with the degree of naturalization determine the figurative caste that Canadian children of colour are placed in. Ironically, members of Canada's indigenous people often find themselves given the lowly status of outsider. Tyman (1995) recalls a time when he sought the company of those who were alienated even more than himself.

> In the meantime I have a couple of new friends — both of them dropouts, both of them darker than me. They share something in common with me: rage. I meet them at the pool hall every Friday night. After a few games of pool we head for the local drive-in, where we jump the fence and begin planning. (p. 34)

Tyman, a Native foster child who grew up in a host of Caucasian families, felt lonely and

isolated as he approached his teens. Tyman found these friends on the margin and was attracted to them because they mirrored him: they were Natives experiencing difficulty in school, hostile about not belonging in the White man's world. In response to these feelings of anger, the boys worked collaboratively to strike back against the dominant group, defacing property of prominent Caucasian citizens and stealing money from local businesses. Similarly, Keeshig-Tobias (1995) remembers back to an incident from her childhood:

> I remember one of those beautiful autumn days with apples strewn under the trees. We were out at recess, all of us, running around and making a great commotion. One of the nuns came out and yelled at us, scolded us for acting like "wild Indians." And we stopped and started talking. I remember the older kids, they went over and broke into the nuns' pigeon house — they had those pigeons with the great big breasts, fantails I think they're called. The kids grabbed some feathers out of them, gave feathers to all of us. Then we all found sticks about a foot long and stuck them into the apples, and we started running around the school, whooping like wild Indians. They called us wild Indians and we were going to be wild Indians! (p. 227)

In the Catholic school yard, the teachers condemned these Native children for their playfulness, their gleefulness, their abandon. While at play, the children were unaware that they were being observed. Nor did they pause to consider that their play would be viewed as another example of the raucous and uncouth behaviour of the scorned. Only when the naming words of the other were heard by the children did they become aware that they

were anything other than friends playing on an autumn day and that they were distinguishable by their shared ethnicity. They became Indians: uncontrollable, wild and distasteful in their abandon. Children, once playful and carefree, united together to show their contempt for their namers by mocking their teachers in angry rebellion after collectively being chastised for savage behaviour associated with the stereotype of the Indian perpetuated in Western movies. While Canadian children of colour may initially come together because they have been excluded from the mainstream, it can be within this subgroup that they unite to rebel against those who scornfully cast them aside. And sadly, as a result of coming into contact with repeated instances of racist scorn, they may take on the very personae they previously defied:

> When a given human attribute (or cluster) becomes perceived by the minority member as most basic or central to his or her personal and social identity, then the attribute can be said to have assumed a master status for the individual bearer. For stigmatized minorities, the process of stigmatization (unless and until reversed) may be conceptualized as a process whereby the comprehensive, discrediting effects of stigmata become internalized by minority members and come to provide the overriding basis for minority members' self and group identity. (Kallen, 1989, p. 52)

Clannish behaviours may invite stereotypical responses from onlookers, an outcome that is actively, knowingly avoided by several of the participants in this study. Terrence, for instance, is adamant that friendships should not be limited to members of one's ethnocultural community. Later in conversation he says:

> We don't need Japanese friends to play basketball with so we're all the same height. That's not necessary. It won't fly either. I don't think there's very many people who are socially maladjusted that would see the need for what he's [the latest organizer of the Japanese youth group] envisioning.

Terrence's discomfort with ethnic group separation is again evident in this excerpt. Choosing to associate solely with members of his ethnocultural group seems "socially maladjusted" to him — somehow pathetic behaviour for those unworthy of gaining social acceptance from the dominant other.

Similarly, Nina's discomfort stems from public displays of ethnicity, first by hanging out in an ethnocultural group and then by using an audible marker of difference, like a heritage language.

> So the ones from Hong Kong and Singapore think they would like to stick to Chinese women because they spoke Chinese quite openly. When we went to sit at Mac Hall, they would stick in groups and you could hear them speaking Chinese all the time. I was walking by and I'd hear them.

While this heritage language allows group members to articulate and be understood with greater depth, Nina feels that it sabotages these Chinese students' opportunities to fit in with the English-speaking majority — an opportunity that, like Terrence, Nina values. Nina befriends other Asian students on an individual basis, but she is uncomfortable being part of a larger Asian social circle. Given her upbringing in a first-generation Chinese home, Nina is capable of conversing with this group of foreign students but she chooses instead to walk on by, ensuring that she is not miscast as alien by onlookers. Similarly, in

the public domain of school, Muhammad dissociates himself from others who share his ethnocultural origins:

> It is not very important that I go and hang out with them but we know each other, obviously from church and different functions. But I guess just being there if they need my help or something. I guess I have a bit of allegiance to them in a way. But if they need help with school or anything like that, then I'd be there for them. We're sort of close knit in that way but I don't think just hanging out with them is really important.

Muhammad prefers to maintain his Ismaili friendships in a private, separate realm outside of school. Such guarded affiliation seems at odds with his earlier response to Ismaili sporting events where a noticable contigent of his people gather in hotels, gymnasiums and arenas. He values and promotes the fellowship encouraged by his church, taking pride in the huge numbers of Ismaili youth who come together for these tournaments. It is not coincidental that his pride in belonging under these circumstances relates to the purpose of the gathering: young men and women engaged in competitive play. In these instances, the values of the subgroup align with those of the greater community; they share an admiration for vitality and strength, physical prowess, and competition. However, in a school setting, he chooses not to be with his people. Muhammad acknowledges the obligation that ethnocultural community brings — he would readily assist another Ismaili who needed his support — but in a setting such as school, where he perceives that such an affiliation would be to his personal detriment rather than to his advantage, Muhammad is cautious about associating with the other Ismaili students.

Sometimes it is the locale or the purpose of gathering that brings children from a specific ethnoculture together. Jennifer talks about her friends at Chinese Language School, where she attended every Sunday:

> All of them were Chinese kids. They were alright. They speak English. They're normal Chinese kids; they're like me. Many of them, I know already. So we get recess. It's pretty normal. It's sort of like normal school. It doesn't matter. It's just me and my friends. They're really not that much different.

Jennifer is content to be amongst other Chinese children for the pragmatic purpose of learning a heritage language but she is quick to denounce that this affiliation makes her alien. Jennifer reassures her listener, and in so doing reassures herself, that these children mirror her in important, "normal" ways: they speak English as their primary language, they attend public schools, they hold the same interests as their peers. But in addition, they privately maintain aspects of their ethnoculture.

Friendships Amongst Children of Colour

Throughout our discussion, Hasina consistently disregards race and ethnicity as important factors when selecting her friends:

> It doesn't matter to me. I wouldn't care if they [my friends] were White or Black. They're nice people, so I'll talk with them. That's all that matters to me, really. I know a brown guy right now. He's really nice and he treats me with a lot of respect and I don't care that he's brown.

Even when race is not the determiner used by individuals of colour in the selection of their

friends, we may find ourselves in the company of other Canadians of colour. Terrence, who continually makes a conscious effort not to associate with same-race friends exclusively, remarks on the composition of his sister's peer group:

> I think what made it somewhat funny was the fact that they were fairly homogeneous, that they were similar as people. I personally don't think they interacted any more maturely or stupidly than anybody else their age. The only thing perhaps that would have identified them from a crowd of any other group of people would be the fact that they were all Asian.

Like several of the participants in this study, Terrence's younger sister associates with individuals of colour from a variety of ethnic heritages. Perhaps that is not surprising when we consider Balakrishnan and Slevanathan's (1990) finding that while the numbers of Canadians of colour increase, visible ethnic minority groups are scattered throughout Canadian urban areas, rather that concentrated in one community. Given the ethnic heterogeneity of the American community used in their study, it seems reasonable to generalize the findings of DuBois and Hirsch (1990) to a Canadian context:

> The present study found that children who reported living in an integrated neighborhood were more likely to indicate having a close, nonschool tie with an other-race school friend. (p. 533)

Similar findings are reported by Howes and Wu (1990) who conclude:

> We found that within an extremely ethnically diverse school, children were interacting and forming friendships with cross-ethnic as well as same-ethnic peers, and that social status was independent of both ethnicity and of propensity to

> engage with same- and cross-ethnic peers. (p. 540)

And so it would seem reasonable that friendships develop amongst Canadians of colour especially if these students share common beliefs, as Terrence suggests when he describes his sister's circle of friends:

> She had a lot of Chinese, Vietnamese and East Indian kids in her class who were second- or third-generation, fluent in English, very outgoing, similar to her. So in addition to having similar attributes, when you looked at their family background, there tended to be a certain amount of commonality in parental respect and that facilitates a friendship when you have common understandings.

In further exploration of these heterogeneous groupings, it becomes apparent that associations based on peoplehood are not unlike those friendships we establish amongst other Canadian children of colour. Logan's circle of friends is composed entirely of other youth of colour. He gives insight as to why he chooses to surround himself with boys who are also considered minorities.

> There's Amad, Partai [and] Parith, another East Indian. I have lots of Chinese friends like Tim, Barry, Arnold and Luke. I hang around with them a lot. I met [the Chinese boys] in high school. But in junior high I met my East Indian friends. They're okay. These [friends] are more multicultural. You feel safe with them. You know how Whites are racist to other people [who] are different kinds of colours. They call you Chink. They call my friends Nip or taxi driver. That's what they do, [those] White kids. They pick on us. We have a big group now so they can't really pick on us.

Together, this ethnically heterogenous group engage in the activities common to all Canadian youth: going to the mall, playing basketball, working out at Lindsay Park. But there are significant differences. Membership in such a group guarantees empathy and offers protection. Unlike the passive, cringing response of newcomers, this group of boys is more confident and assertive about claiming their right to do as the dominant other and to be in the places of the dominant other — a right that is inherent in their belief that Canadians of colour have achieved structural assimilation whereby "nondominant groups participate in the social and economic systems of the larger society"(Berry, 1987, p. 226). But, as Logan admits, individually each of these boys remains vulnerable to the occasional racist barb. Collectively, however, they feel invincible. It is the power of belonging that allows them to deflect the derogatory words or indifference of the other. This coming together of teens is not unlike ways in which factions within subordinate ethnic groups mobilize in response to a perceived threat. Kallen (1982) cites several historical examples where this has been the case for ethnic minority groups in Canada.

While the universal response to those considered to be at the entry level in the established social hierarchies of schools is one of ignoring, Logan and his friends of colour recognize that they are disliked on the basis of their ethnicity by a small contingent of the high school population.

CHERYL: How can you tell who is going to hassle you and your friends?

LOGAN: [You can tell] by the way they dress. Mostly they are the people who hang around with the girls and wear big jeans that are so wide that three people could fit in them! And there's the way they put their coats. They put them down

> like this. (Logan lets his coat fall from his shoulders.) That means they're kind of rude and they're not that very bright. [Then there's the] average [achievers]. If the bad group does it, they do it. They might join in. [Then there's the] no hassle group. They're easy to talk to. They understand because they get hassled by the jerks. They're smart.

Logan and his friends have achieved a degree of acceptance by the other, and total acceptance amongst themselves, thereby allowing each boy to journey happily through his high school years. While they have found security and happiness amongst themselves, and go about day-to-day, thinking of themselves as friends, as boys, as teens, interactions with the dominant other will occasionally remind them that they are youth of colour, and as a collective pose a threat to strangers, because of the stereotypes that exist about these boys. Logan recounts both his personal experience and the shared experiences of his friends, as they live their lives as a group of ethnically diverse, yet visible youth:

> When he [the police officer] sees my friends near a car, he watches them. [Like] they're going to rob the car or something. We were just walking near a car because we're going back to school from Westbrook Mall. A lady was in her car. She stares at us until we just left it and then she started the car. We were just walking by! [It was] my East Indian friend, [my] Cambodian [friend], [my] Korean [friend] and all these multicultural friends. Some people think they're going to beat you up. My friend told me one story, right. They were walking down the street. A lady had just locked her keys in her car. She needed some help. She saw my friends and went, "Oh, wow!" She was looking at them weird. She was

> like this. [Logan goes wide eyed and starts to tremble.] She kept staring at them. [She] thought my friends were going to beat her up and steal her car. Not even a possibility!

What remains apparent to the observing other is that we are all persons of colour. Even though our ethnocultural heritages may vary, we commonly experience the response of the dominant other to our presence: individually or as members of ethnically mixed peer group. But while we are conscious of the race or ethnicity of our peers of colour at the acquaintance stage or intermittently throughout the friendship during specific incidents which trigger this realization, we do not dwell on the collective composition of the group. Indeed, group members are sometimes jarred by the reaction of others to their presence. From the perspective of the Caucasian women in their cars, Logan and his friends may have posed a threat based on their age, gender and race. Kallen (1989) coins the term, multiple-minority status — a notion which may explain the seemingly defensive reaction they received from both women. Of multiple-minority status, Kallen says:

> Insofar as several different human attributes may become stigmatized, and thus may come to provide socially recognized bases for differential treatment, a given individual can belong to several minorities at the same time. Such individuals may be said to have acquired multiple-minority status. The social implications of multiple-minority status tend to vary with the particular social context and situation, depending, for example, on the relevant issues at hand and on the nature of the majority discriminator involved. (p. 53)

As a group of adolescent males who are all individuals of colour, they contend with two

widely-upheld stigmas. While Logan views the adults' fears as preposterous, Ungerleider (1991) claims that the pervasive fear amongst Canadians in general is due in part to the way in which specific ethnic groups of colour are portrayed in the media as villains. Ungerleider cites an example not far different from the incidents recounted by Logan:

> As another example, in 1988 and 1989, the media in Vancouver gave attention to criminal activity among members of youth gangs. The coverage left readers and viewers with several erroneous impressions. The coverage implied that only Asians belonged to the youth gangs; that a large proportion of immigrant youth were involved in the gangs; and that the safety of the entire community was at stake. A more accurate picture was that, as a proportion of the youthful population — even the population of immigrant youth — gang members were a very tiny segment; that Asians were only one of several groups involved in gang activity; and that the victims of crime were most likely to have the same backgrounds as the perpetrators. (p. 160)

While Logan is unable to see how it is that he and his friends pose a threat to passersby, Ungerleider goes on to suggest that the fear of the other, displayed in daily encounters is symptomatic of the greater threat that ethnic minorities pose to the dominant other. Ungerleider charges:

> Though neither fair nor accurate, the portrayal of minorities by the media is a faithful representation of the way the opinion leaders think about minorities and the way the opinion leaders would like us — including the minorities themselves — to think about minorities. The existence of minorities in Canadian society has always

> threatened and continues to threaten the "traditional" distribution of power, economic resources, and prestige. In other words, the presence of minorities with potentially competing needs and interests is threatening to established interests and the usual ways of doing things. (p.161)

Ungerleider's explanation accounts for fearful, resentful or exclusionary behaviours displayed by the dominant other, yet it does not address the discomfort that Hasina experienced amongst her friend's people. Hasina describes the events that led up to a failed friendship between herself and a peer of Asian descent.

> I have an Oriental friend and she lives here. She has a whole bunch of Oriental friends and I'm her only Black friend. Lately, this racial difference has caused a problem though, so now we don't talk. I would tell her, "Yeah, I feel uncomfortable when I'm with all your Asian friends because I feel a bad energy around them." She's like, "Oh, yeah. Whatever." Sometimes it's the way they'll just sit there and I'll talk to my friend and they're staring at me or they're trying to look around and avoid me like I'm not there. So that caused a little difference in the way she thought. So now we're not friends at all any more. She goes her own way, I go mine. But I'm culturally mixed [in my choice of friends] and she's still just Asian.

In this particular instance, she seems candidly uncomfortable being the solitary Black youth amongst all Asians. Whether perceived or actual, Hasina senses that the Asian group members exclude her, not allowing her to be a part of this friendship circle because she is of a different race. Hasina, perhaps as a result of feeling alienated by this group,

concludes that associating with just Asian people by choice is somehow a sign of weakness or cowardice on the part of her Chinese school mate, especially given her own belief that race or ethnicity should be disregarded in the selection of friends, as stated earlier by this participant. Hasina's notion is characteristic of the profile described by Corenblum and Annis (1993) in their theoretical overview of dynamic field theory:

> . . . those who seek to achieve higher status, may come to believe that membership in their racial or ethnic group not only restricts their movement, but is an impediment to their fulfilling their expectations and achieving their goals. (p.11)

Ethnicity as Capital: "On a Mission to Rub Back in the Brown" (Mootoo, 1993, p. 117)

Several of the participants made mention of how it is that specific ethnic groups experience a period of popularity wherein Canadian society embraces a specific ethnic minority group. Nina recalls how her linguistic prowess brought her admiration from her friends. In a time when learning second languages and maintaining heritage languages were encouraged through government proclamations and the burgeoning belief in the value of a global economy, Nina's predominately Caucasian friends encouraged her to share her unique linguistic abilities with them:

> When I was in junior high, my friends thought it was kind of fascinating that I could speak a second language and they'd always ask me, "How do you say this? How do you say that?" It made me quite proud to do that.

Hasina also comments on the fleeting popularity that specific ethnic or racial groups enjoy

amongst Canadian youth. Specifically, she cites her brother's ever-changing attraction to girls of different ethnic backgrounds as an example:

> Anthony's going through this Oriental phase. He went through a Black phase where all he did was hang out with those people that I don't hang out with. Now he's going through this phase where he hates those people. [He says,] "Those people are a waste of time. They don't care about anything. They're just punks. The Oriental people are the people of the people." We have a neighbour across the street. He never used to really talk to her. Now my brother goes over there every single day. [Now he's saying], "I love Oriental people. They're so cool! They're pretty." I just laugh. I don't know where he's going or what he's talking about but he loves them. It was strange but he was in love. Anthony — he's Mister Designer. He's into his fashion thing. I guess he sees the Oriental models [and thinks], "She's pretty."

Later in the conversation, Hasina shares a term that she heard from a friend, that for her encapsulates the phenomenon of Caucasian women being attracted to the ideals embodied by Black men.

> My friend introduced a new term to me after I brought up the subject [inter-racial dating] with her. Those White girls are called nigger diggers.

While Terrence had not stopped to consider that visible ethnic difference could be deemed as desirable or advantageous by some, his Caucasian room mate presented the following point of view:

> Somehow we got into discussing whether being physically different or being

> physically the same but having intrinsic cultural differences like Mike does. [Mike immigrated from Poland.] Mike [and other] Polish people are White so they blend into North American society. He has a slight accent and he has a set of beliefs that wouldn't be evident just to look at him. So we were discussing whether that affects the way we date or act. He thought that in this day and age, it was an advantage to be physically different. I don't know as it's true. I think that is his opinion and it just startled me.

Such a perspective is startling indeed for a Canadian of colour, for many of us assume that the dominant other pairs phenotypical difference with a whole string of perceived differences like world view, national allegiance, and linguistic preference. While this may or may not be the case, based on our degree of assimilation, many of us have come to view our physical difference as something we must compensate for rather than an attribute that works to our advantage in the world of the dominant other. However, to simply discredit this notion as overly generous or case-specific is to ignore those times in which ethnic identity is valued by Canadians. As explored earlier in this chapter, the private realm of friendship may be the setting in which requests from friends prompt us to share aspects of ethnicity. But as Foggo (1990) suggests, the impetus of interest may be nested in a infatuation held by the broader, general public:

> Fashions in hair and clothing will reflect the influence of the season's foreign culture of choice. Suddenly, even people who despise cooked fish will know everything there is to know about sushi. Japanese models will sprinkle the pages of Vogue.

> In the early seventies, North American Blacks experienced our episode of modishness, or what we referred to then as being "in." Comics like George Carlin and groups like the Rolling Stones were bragging about their Black connections. White bands wore afros, White students at Bowness High School followed suit and played blues on their harmonicas in the courtyard. (p. 51)

Foggo goes on to articulate how thankful she was that Black was "in" during her adolescence, a time that is characterized by stormy uncertainty for all youth; visible markers of ethnicity or race simply compound the anxiety that youth experience, adding to the significant number of self-doubts we share with all teens. If, for a fleeting period of time, youth of colour can find ourselves in vogue, then we experience what it is like to have our cultural distinctiveness sought out by others, featured in the media and mimicked by admirers. The unfortunate reality of being in trend's limelight is that fashion by its very nature is characterized by arbitrariness and fleetingness. Of fashion, Gadamer (trans. 1991) writes:

> The very word "fashion" implies that the concept involves a changeable law within a constant whole of sociable demeanor. What is merely a matter of mode has no other norm than that given by what everybody does. Fashion regulates as it likes only those things that can equally well be one way as another. (p. 37)

While we enjoy the brief time span of popularity where we are featured in popular culture as desirable and aesthetically pleasing, we accept but dread the inevitable loss of status. For once fickle fashion has turned its attention elsewhere, we lose this value and are unable to willfully retrieve the status that was once bestowed upon us. But even more

unsettling is the realization that the specific attributes of our cultures which gain acclaim and value are determined by the dominant other since "the majority. . . have the power to define the normative order in society" (Kallen, 1989, p. 50). From this position of power, specific ethnocultural attributes are appropriated and higlighted and we, as members of the group in vogue, are assumed to possess them because of our ethnocultural affiliations.

In the short story, "The upside-downness of the world as it unfolds," Mootoo's (1993) main character struggles to meet the expectations of her culturally astute friends:

> And White friends, unlike my White childhood tutor, no longer want to whiten me but rather they want to be brown and sugary like me, so much so that two of them in particular have embarked on a mission to rub back in the brown that Mrs. Ramsey tried so hard to bleach out. . . . The only Indian words I know are those on the menus in Indian restaurants and in my very own *Indian Cookery* by Mrs. Balbir Singh. From the first day when I arrived in Canada people would say, "Oh, great! You can teach me to cook Indian food, and that tea, what is it called? Masala Tea?. . ." But I didn't know, hadn't heard of such a tea until I came up here. Instead of disappointing people before I even got a chance to make any friends, I went out and bought that cookbook, which has just about saved my face more than a few times. Mrs. Singh taught me words like vindaloo, mulligatawny, bhuna, matar, pullao and gosht, and of course, roti in some of its varieties: chapati, puri, naan, and so on. (p. 117)

Some of us, like this fictional character, find ourselves being valued for the cultural attributes we are assumed or generalized to possess because of our visible ethnic heritage.

In an attempt to capitalize on these fleeting and valuable entreaties, she works feverishly to acquire knowledge others presume she naturally possesses. Ironically, in this courtship of fledgling friendship, she experiences many Indian foods for the first time — furtively learning from these White women who order confidently from the familiar menu, never suspecting that this dining experience was as foreign to her experience as it had been initially for them. There is a disparity between what others expect South Asian identity to encompass and what this Canadian of colour embraces as significant aspects of her South Asian self. Her Indianness was apparent in a world view shaped by childhood memories of India and her experiences as a person of colour in Canada.

Often times, while some aspects of our ethnicity are not valued by ourselves but rather begrudgingly accepted as a curse of unavoidable heredity, it becomes a commodity for those who choose to befriend us. Under such conditions, we engage in tangible cultural activities, dress, and food, not for ourselves, but for the sake of those we care about, since we sense that is what they appreciate about us. However, given the choice when we are alone, we choose not to show signs indicating tangible cultural difference. In the story, "Homecoming," a young woman, Shelly, is finally lured into donning traditional dress in public:

> She had stopped wearing shalwar kameez since high school. It was the only way she could stop the other kids from teasing her. She would never have worn that suit for her wedding. It was many years later that Shelly had started wearing shalwar kameez and saris again. Charles liked her in them. She looked different, he said, made him proud of her. She made him feel special, different from his other

> colleagues at their annual dinners. (Thobani, 1995, p. 23)

Earlier on she refused to wear the hand embroidered silk garments that her mother made for her since such a garment emphasized her Indianness, an attribute she wanted to downplay in her effort to be accepted by her peers. But it is not her mother's loving, exact hand-work that entices and convinces Shelly to don the traditional dress again. It is her Caucasian husband — whose opinion and desires take on greater value for her because of his Whiteness and his unquestionable membership in the community of the dominant other — who convinces her that such a visible cultural marker could be claimed as an advantage rather than disadvantage. But it is only in his presence that this is so. In his presence, visible difference takes this couple beyond ordinariness. While ordinariness would be considered a boon for this woman of colour, it is the dreary bane of the dominant other.

Vying for the acceptance of the dominant other, Canadians of colour ask ourselves, "What part of myself can I put forward to entice the other into friendship? Is the other interested in exotic, intriguing difference or in comforting similarity?" The sad result of remaking ourselves to fit the expectations of the other is captured in Orlando Bagwell's reminiscence of his sister's struggle.

> It hurt me to see her in New Hampshire. I loved to see her glowing and joyous. But there she was, lonely and sad. . . It made her lose a sense of herself. . . made her forget how wonderful she was, how beautiful she was. . . Her measurement of things changed. The standard was white and rejecting. When you spend so much time trying to become a part of something that has rejected you, you lose yourself. . . You begin to create yourself in their image. . . You've changed. (In

conversation with Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p. 533)

Moving from a community where there was strong Black representation to a community that was predominately Caucasian, this young woman of colour sought to regain the privilege enjoyed by those who are beautiful, but failed because she did not possess the attributes valued by the dominant other. Her older brother, Orlando, describes her as self-conflicted: rejected by those with whom she aspired to align, and consequently, thrown back upon the ethnocultural collectivity she was rejecting (Kallen, 1982).

Similarly, the fictional character, Mr. Bhowmick, also comes to the sad realization that his daughter does not fit comfortably in either world. In his view, Babli no longer represents the Hindu ideal, and he observes that she tries too hard to be a part of the dominant culture in her anxious attempts to gain membership there. Her upbringing has made that passage difficult for her, and the father senses that.

> Girls like Babli were caught between rules, that's the point he wished to make. They were too smart, too impulsive for a backward place like Ranchi, but not tough nor smart enough for sex-crazy places like Detroit. (Mukherjee, 1985, p. 72)

As the previous examples illustrate, in eagerly and feverishly working to redo ourselves in an attempt to make ourselves do for others, we are no longer for ourselves. Bagwell's sister found herself in a state of marginalization, not unlike the outcome of marginalized ethnic groups in plural societies. Marginalization, according to Berry (1987), is characterized by feelings of alienation, loss of identity and the anxiety of not belonging to the traditional culture or the culture at large.

Fortunately, not all individuals lose themselves completely in the bid for friendship

and other rewarding social relationships. Some maintain a balance between these many ways of being. We take on select behaviours which successfully counteract visible difference, hoping that likeness will combat the trepidation that potential friends may harbour. For if we act as they do, surely in the eyes of the other, our familiar actions compensate for initial, hastily made impressions that significant, insurmountable difference exists. Later in his discussion with Lawrence-Lightfoot (1994), Orlando Bagwell goes on to talk about his own struggle to be liked in a predominantly Caucasian community. He implies that it was a one-sided effort; he was approachable, non-threatening and therefore easy to befriend, despite his obvious phenotypical differences. In effect, they knew little of who he was, partially because he made no demands on them to know him or his people. Lawrence-Lightfoot reconstructs Orlando's story:

> Being an integrationist required that he do all the work of assimilation; that he not be strikingly different from his peers (except in the visibly unavoidable distinction of colour); and that he not make waves. "During this period I am not threatening to white people. It is only me, not a crowd of us." His white friends could sense his willingness to be one of them. Since there was only one of him, since he was a "nice guy," and since he was making every effort to fit in, Orlando grew to be accepted by, even popular with, his peers. (p. 530)

Orlando is not alone in this masquerade of sameness. Yi (1993) describes her split existence as a Korean child and a Canadian child:

> When I was younger, toying with the idea of entertaining two separate identities was a real treat, like a secret game for which no one knew the rules but me. I was

> known as Angela to the outside world, and as Sun-Kyung at home. I ate bologna sandwiches in the school lunch room and rice and kimchee for dinner. I chatted about teen idols and giggled with my girlfriends during my classes, and ambitiously practised piano and studied in the evenings, planning to become a doctor when I grew up. (p.407)

Trying to be as Canadian as other children means adjusting how we act, how we speak, what we wear and eat, as well as what we do in the presence of our friends. It becomes second nature until this new way of being violates a longer held belief, a belief from home that we choose not to compromise. Then the challenge becomes upholding significant beliefs without sacrificing our valued accepted status. Jennifer talks about how she views her work ethic as being different from the other girls at her table grouping in the class-room, and what she must do to keep their friendship while still maintaining her academic standing. Jennifer is sometimes confident, sometimes weary of playing the game and keeping up appearances that she is just like all the rest:

> JENNIFER: But like, when I look at myself in class, I'm sort of doing what I think is good for me which is staying on my feet and trying to do work and then some other kids don't; they start talking to each other, it sort of makes me feel okay, well, I know I'm supposed to be doing this but I'd like to talk with them too. Well, it's funny because when we were doing the one child policy plan, our table was talking, really talking and so I started discussing some of my ideas with them and instead of wasting my time, I got more ideas. But that was for me. The other kids, even though they were talking about the same subject as me, I got my whole page

done and they only got a few words. So I think it helps.

CHERYL: Do you ever wish people acted more Chinese?

JENNIFER: Sometimes I wish it. Well, in Science when I want to get going quickly and be able to do well, it sort of makes me meanie because I'm sort of bossing everyone around. I don't know if I really am but it just seems like it because I want to get going and Chyla and Abbie are dragging along.

CHERYL: How does that make you feel?

JENNIFER: Like a big hag.

Muhammad, a Grade 12 student, also walks that tight-rope, trying to keep his friendships without being perceived as uncool, too up tight, yet wanting to uphold his values and show concern for friends who he fears are jeopardizing their personal safety. On drinking alcohol, Muhammad says:

I don't like to see my friends doing it because I know what it does. I've done research on it personally. I go and look it up and I want to know what this is all about. [Alcohol] kills your brain cells, it does this and this and this to you. So, it hurts when I see my friends doing that. They respect me for that and they won't do it [smoke cigarettes] around me, because they know I breathe the smoke, as well. They'll do drinking and stuff. Obviously, they've tried to influence me sometimes, "Come on, have a drink. It's only a drink," but I'm very stern on my foundation so I wouldn't ever do something like that. But, yeah, I'll go and have a coke with them, that's not a problem. . . . I can go out to parties. I've got a lot of real party animal friends who just get stoned or whatever. I don't like to see it, but I can

definitely have fun without drinking. It's not a problem anymore.

The problem Muhammad refers to is the pressure he felt from his friends to do as they did. However, between Grades 11 and 12, he made the "transition" as he calls it, where he decided to stand firm on his beliefs and not worry about how others might view him. At the time of this interview he had begun to leave the party scene and other dangerous aspects of youth culture behind, participating in authentic rather than chemically induced fun. For Muhammad, an unspoken compromise with his friends has been reached: they will not pressure him to engage in activities that violate his values and he will not look down upon his friends who continue to participate fully in all aspects of Canadian youth culture.

Wrapped in wax paper, nestled in the original cardboard frame, was my Grade 4 class picture. The photographer aligned us according to height, so my best friend Christine is up one row and to the left of me. Strands of her uncontrollable brown hair sneak out of her severe ponytail and dangle in front of her freckled face. I'm seated on one of the green wooden chairs, forcing a smile, concentrating on keeping my white knee-socked legs together. Christine was the one I took to our annual church picnics at Edworthy Park. The first time I invited her, I snuck a peek at her during the meditation ritual that Reverend Kobayashi led us through as part of the outdoor church service that marked the beginning of each of these picnics. All the black heads around her were bowed in silent, sightless meditation. Christine sat quietly on the blanket, eyes open but averted, calmly waiting. That's when I decided that it would be okay to bring Christine

along to other church events. Everything would be fine, she didn't think I was weird.

CHAPTER SIX

ETHNIC SELF

During the last day of the trade show, I wandered through the smallest exhibition hall where the lesser known independent presses were housed, conscious that the collectives for writers of colour and the ethnic publications would be found amongst the hundreds of booths. It was at the Polychrome Publishing Corporation display that I met Janet Mitsui Brown — an American Sansei — promoting her latest picture book, entitled Thanksgiving at Obaachan's. *As I turned the pages, I was drawn to the sameness of her story — the text and water colour illustrations, both peppered with Japanese phrases and objects, struck chords of familiarity within me. She had captured what it was like celebrating North American holidays in a culturally distinctive way. For me, holidays were spent with my extended family in the clapboard two-story home of my grandparents in Raymond, Alberta. In retrospect, the co-mingling of Japanese culture and Canadian ways are apparent to me now, but as a child, I accepted the mixtures of foods, languages and rituals as common-place and natural. Early on in the day, the grandchildren would accompany Grandpa to the store to pick up Japanese ingredients. Through gestures and broken English, my Ojiichan encouraged us to pick out our favourite confections at the grocery store housed on the main floor of the Buddhist church. Then later, at the dinner table, my sister and I recited a Japanese grace solely by rote, concentrating on the syllables, yet unaware of the meaning of the words of thanks we uttered. The dinner was a noisy joyous time, as conversations in Japanese and English collided with each other and platters of turkey, stuffing and Kazunoko made their way around the crowded table.*

I was delighted to discover that, like me, many of the participants in this study returned home in their recollections to talk about what it was like to be with their parents and extended family and how they have come to make meaning of the co-mingling of cultures. This chapter explores the aspirations our parents have for us, their efforts to ensure that our ethnocultures remain intact, and the struggles Canadian children of colour face in attempting to balance the values of home with those we encounter in the public sector.

The Food of Home: "Shoots of Bamboo and Chrysanthemum Leaves" (Mura, 1995, p. 90)

Those of us who downplay the significant impact ethnicity has had upon our world views frequently re-evaluate the importance of our heritage when we ourselves become adults and become aware of the ways in which we are shaped by ethnicity. For Mura (1995), the emerging need to align his behaviours with his Japanese heritage occurred when he became a parent. As his daughter grew, Mura reclaimed unacknowledged aspects of himself which remained unexplored by him during his youth. With the arrival of his daughter came the dawning desire to pass down his cultural heritage — a heritage that had only recently taken on conscious significance for him. Mura's off-spring ignites within him a strong desire to keep the Japanese culture alive from this generation to the next. During our childhoods, many children of colour resist enculturation while embracing other beliefs and behaviours indicative of the dominant other and other alluring sub-cultures. Encultur-ation, for many children of colour, seems to reinforce how we are different, thus under-

mining our efforts to be accepted by the dominant other. To dress, eat, smell, speak and act differently from our peers is perceived to reinforce that ethnicity and race are indeed markers of difference. During this time when we are seeking the acceptance of the other by downplaying our heritage, we are unable to see the value in maintaining aspects of a culture that are significantly different from those of the dominant culture. So, too, cultural maintenance from one generation to the next seems inappropriate and unhelpful in our focused pursuit of acceptance. For Mura, and other Canadians of colour, a significant event provides a jolt of recognition. We come to realize that ethnicity, while not apparent in the way we behave or speak or dress, is a significant factor in the way we view the world. Ethnocultural influences are primordial, influencing how we interact with others, how we make sense of the world, and what we understand ourselves to be. This emerging recognition of the significance of our ethnicity leads us to seek ways of being with our children that will in turn influence their world views — distinctive, important markers of ethnicity. And we acknowledge that just as we failed to see the residue of beliefs and values that stay with us, in the act of eating traditional meals, participating in traditional rituals, or wearing traditional dress, it is likely that our children early on in their lives will be unaware of the residual impact of these seemingly alien ways reminiscent of a people who seem distant and unrelated:

> As Sam fingers lumps of tofu on her tray,
> I sizzle onion in oil, *shoyu*, rice wine,
> toss noodles, ginger, sugar, *shiitake*;
> shoots of bamboo and chrysanthemum leaves.

Before the beef, veined with fat, thin as gauze,

I stir what for years I could not love.

(As a child, I shunned *mochi*, *futomaki*,

loved hot dogs, baseball, the GI John Wayne.

Now my *hashi* hauls up steaming *sukiyaki*.) (Mura, 1995, p .90)

Food provides the child with sustenance to maintain the physical well-being of the body but it also connects each one of us with memories of home and hearth. In his recollections of significant events on the reserve, Levi, a Plains Cree child, who has been living in an urban environment for two years, focuses on family gatherings and the foods that have come to represent familial tradition for him.

> When we got back [from the memorial centre] we had a little Christmas party. We got five boxes of pizza and pop from Edmonton Costco. We eat Indian and Canadian food. It can happen on Valentine's, Christmas, St. Patrick's Day, Victoria Day and Easter. She cooked turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy and bannock — [you] put jam [on it]. [For the cake,] we put marshmallows — the coloured ones — and then you stir it and it tasted like marshmallow cake. My mom makes that. [For the meal], the kids sit on the floor all around the house against the big hallway. They sit against the walls. The big kids sit in the living room but the little kids have to sit on the ground. [The adults] sit at the tables.

Memories of the selection, preparation and eating of food are intertwined in Levi's recollections of family gatherings and organized ethnocommunity events. Through food, Levi remembers life on the reserve, where influences of the dominant other co-mingle

unremarkably with the ways of the Plains people. The significance of food as an aspect of Levi's remembrances of reserve life is apparent in the next recollection of his father's girl friend:

> His girl friend is in Sampson. She makes banana cakes. I bought this toy gun when I was eight. We made this can castle, then I shot them all down. She said, "Whoever shot all of these down gets a free banana cake. My cousin and her son, Jamie shot at it and he only nicked it and one can shook." I said, "Gimme that," and I shot and got all of them down. I got five. Because you know what? She wants to make money so she makes banana cakes. She makes sale for twenty-five cents. Then she gave me a free cake. I shot again and got another free cake.

In this instance, Levi associates a specific food with a recollection of a certain time, place and relationship. Just as food is a means for sustaining the body, allowing him to continue on, so too are the pleasant memories associated with the circumstances of partaking in the cake. This episode is one of many that Levi has collected as part of his past — as proof of his belongingness to a family and a community. Levi has come to associate the food that significant others make for him as an indication of their caring for him — as a member of his family and this tribe.

Culture is present in the preparation and consumption of the food; in eating the food of our people we consume an aspect of our culture. Food nourishes us and is absorbed into our body as fuel, allowing us to continue and as such, becomes a part of us.

> JENNIFER: We just eat rice, vegetables and a bit of meat — anything that my mom thinks is good for us. You see, all my mom's friends say each day you need

two cups of vegetables and you can't have warm milk because it's not good for you and all these kinds of things that many other people don't know about and so my mom believes that it's true and so she gives us vegetables and fruit. Well, I sometimes wish I would have Italian food every single night but come to think of it, it's not too good for you.

CHERYL: Where does your mom shop for groceries?

JENNIFER: Oh, she goes all over the place. Many of the vegetables like lettuce . . . I don't even know the English names. Um, bok choy and then there's that vegetable that Popeye eats. I don't like Chinese broccoli. Yuck! Chinatown and all these food markets. I don't know. Most of the food markets she goes to are Chinese people food markets.

In the nonchalant daily routines of our childhoods, we come to know through experience about this aspect of our ethnicity. We accompany our parents on shopping expeditions to markets that cater to our ethnocultural community where we experience a sensory onslaught that we accept as familiar, but that the dominant other would perceive as unfamiliar: imported produce, pungent smells, the cadence of another language. Nina describes the distinctive smells of Chinese ingredients:

The smell. It smells a bit different. It depends on what they're cooking. Sometimes it'll smell like Chinese mushrooms. They have sort of a strong, distinctive smell. Or shrimp paste. You could probably smell it from outside! Smoked fish, stuff like that.

By being present continuously in the preparation and presentation of traditional foods, we

internalize the rituals, traditions, ingredients and circumstances surrounding the foods of our people. Perhaps it is the hope of the parent of colour that when we eat as they do, there is the chance that we will continue to do so, even after our parents relinquish the responsibility of feeding us. Nina, a second generation Chinese Canadian, talks about her newly acquired interest in the preparation of traditional dishes.

> Even when I cook at home, I don't cook Chinese. It's very rare that I do. Rice is the most Chinese that I ever cook. But I'm trying to change that now. I went to Chinatown and I bought some Chinese stuff. I've watched my stepdad do a lot of the cooking so I think I would be able to just go on my own and experiment and do that except for the more complicated stuff that my mom makes sometimes. There's some recipes that she uses that I don't think I could do it right off. You need a lot of practice. She sometimes doesn't even follow a recipe. She just kind of guesses and it works out fine. I've just kind of learned how by watching her do it. She never said, "Well, it's important for you to learn how to do this because that's what's expected." I felt that I'd watch her and she'd show how.

Like Jennifer, Nina was initially unappreciative of the traditional dishes, seeing them as ordinary aspects of day-to-day life that marked her family as different from the dominant other in yet another way. But as an adult, Nina's thinking has begun to change. She actively sets out to make her home like the one established by her parents. By continuing to eat in this way our actions become a very simple acknowledgement of our allegiance to our ethnic collective. Our culture continues to be a part of our daily lives, just as we turn to nourishment to sustain us from day-to-day.

Finding Our Way: Ethnic Selves and the Dominant Other

The value of education

In Yoon's (1995) short story "Stoplight," a Korean high school student listens absent-mindedly to the all too familiar conversation between his mother and a family friend:

> The women sit and smile affectionately at each other and start their usual talk. They talk about other people and other people's children, and about how so-and-so just got into Harvard, while so-and-so just got out of jail. In this community so long as you get good grades, you can murder someone and still be considered an angel. The stupid children are the bad ones, and the smart children are the saints. (p. 17)

After years in the care of our parents, Canadian children of colour can articulate the hopes and dreams they hold for us. They become apparent to us in the many conversations over time our parents have with us and, about us, with others. Parents' visions of preferred futures for their children can vary markedly from one culture to the next. Levi, in his description of "good kids" on the reserve, leads us to consider that some parents may value other attributes which they sense will hold their children in good stead for the future:

> LEVI: Those are the only five good kids at the junior high school. They're good because we went to the Christmas concert and they made a funny play. . . . Bad kids are bad. Some kids force fires and stuff. . . . They ride around at midnight and security would tell them to go to bed. The big kids skip school and the little kids don't because they're good at school.

CHERYL: Who do you know that's bad?

LEVI: Not my sister or my brother or even my cousins. We stay good. To stay good is a good thing to do. That's what the elders say.

Levi's testimonial illustrates what is valued in his community: individuals who are respectful and abiding of the bonds of community. The findings of Brendtro and Brokenleg (1993) elaborate on yet another vision of what makes a respected citizen. The Native American empowerment values of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are at odds with the values of Western societies which reward individualism, winning, dominance and affluence. A multitude of studies have focused on the expectations of Asian parents; however, it would not be accurate to assume that this generalization holds true for all nationalities from that region. For instance, the Hmong are an exception, due according to Ima and Rumbaut (1995), to parental values that contradict such success:

> . . . despite the problems that may seriously undermine or diminish their potential for success, including their relative failure at present to make the transition to postsecondary schooling. This failure is due in part to early marriages (often coerced by parents) and early family formation. (p. 195)

However, one aspiration shared by many parents of colour is the desire to see their children excel in school and make socio-economic advancements in Canadian society. This aspiration is not limited to the parents of the participants in this study, but is instead substantiated by a generous body of literature that mostly addresses the success of Asians and South Asians. For most of us, the attainment of this goal is believed to hinge upon our success in school — both in the early stages of our school careers (Fejgin, 1995; Kelley &

Tseng, 1992; Lee, 1995; Whang & Hancock, 1994) and in a post secondary institution — since education is seen as the key to securing optimal life-chances for Canadian children of colour (Ghuman, 1994; Lin & Fu, 1990; Rick & Forward, 1992).

Many Canadians of colour endorse the notion that education is the great, fair equalizer: a valuable education is accessible to all who take the initiative to do well (Steelman & Powell, 1993). Others of us view education as a pragmatic, best-bet tool for overcoming perceived systemic barriers (Barringer, Takeuchi, & Xenos, 1990; Ghuman, 1994; Kao, 1995; Littlejohn-Blake & Daring, 1993). Researchers have begun to explore this phenomenon exhibited by students of colour to determine why it is that some students of colour excel in a school in comparison to the students from the dominant culture. For example, Whang and Hancock (1994) concluded that part of the success exhibited by their subjects of colour was due to the modesty these students possessed regarding their achievements. Subjects consistently rated themselves lower on measures of achievement than their actual scores indicated and they generally perceived that their parents had high expectations for them. Recently, researchers have also begun to document the outcomes of achievement-oriented students of colour. Barringer et al. (1990) discovered a trend in which graduates of colour have begun to secure occupational prestige in the community after successfully completing degrees in specific disciplines — professional status that until recently had been dominated by the dominant other. These studies illustrate the degree to which youth of colour adhere to the predetermined vision for our futures and the singular, all important means for achieving these ends, both upheld by our parents.

While there are youth of colour excelling in their academic endeavours, there are

also those who fail in the existing school system. When recognizing that children of colour fail to thrive in some educational institutions as they exist now, it is the way in which these students are educated that is criticized by parents and various ethnocultural community representatives, rather than a doubt in the ability of these particular children. The belief is that if systemic changes could be made to the existing school system, then children of colour who are presently at risk of failure would be more likely to thrive and then be better prepared to achieve socio-economic success in Canadian society (Christensen & Weinfeld, 1993; Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Hesch, 1992; Little Soldier, 1992; Ryan, 1992; Sefa Dei, 1993). Julie, a participant in Sefa Dei's (1993) study on the perceptions of African Canadian parents regarding the public school system, voices concern about the stereotyping of Black youth that she senses is prevalent amongst teachers and administrators:

> I can't cope with . . . all the interventions, and the support, and the constant assumptions that's being made and the whole portrayal of black youth in the school system. I'm not saying that there aren't any that are successful, but it takes a lot of courage to become successful because the general assumption is that you are more likely to fail and you're a potential dropout. (p. 53)

Regardless of whether the education system in Canada is perceived as one of many equal opportunities, a means for combatting systemic discrimination, or an example of existing institutional inequalities in Canadian society, parents of colour seldom waver in the faith they have in their children or in the commitment they make to support their children in academic endeavours. Parents trust that formal education will lead their children to a

promising future. Throughout our careers in school, parents of colour demonstrate their support in numerous ways: saving for post-secondary education (Lee, 1995; Steelman & Powell, 1993), trusting that teachers are capable professionals (Ghuman, 1994), and encouraging academic studies in the home (Lee, 1995). Formal education becomes the vehicle for directing or preparing the child for a desired end.

However, the composition of the promising future is the parent's own, and it is seldom based on the potential of the child, but rather on the combined expectations and desires of the parent. Sometimes a child's success is narrowly defined by the aspirations of the parent of colour, rather than the child's strengths and interests. Canadian children of colour sense that our career choices and consequent educational paths are confined to the predetermined long range goals set by our parents. In many cases, it means that youth of colour make career plans always mindful of the criteria established by our expectant parents: excel in academic subjects, acquire a post-secondary education from a reputable institution (Nguyen, 1995), gain professional status and establish impressive earning power.

Many of the participants in this study were consciously working towards the preferred future defined by their parents and could not fathom a future different from the one their parents created for them. There is a vague uneasiness amongst participants about parental reaction if the child's reality turns out to be contrary to the parent's hope. It is a situation that these participants both gratefully and confidently declare will not be their experience, for all of them have been able to live up to expectations of their parents in regards to excelling in school. Still, the uneasiness of possibly failing to live up to parental

expectations does not go away until professional status and a respectable job have been secured. What we and our parents fail to recognize is that parental expectations for our futures, while intended and interpreted to be prescriptive, are, as Schutz and Luckmann (1995) suggest, impossible for our parents to control:

> I can assume that this child . . . will live on past my death, that the properties of his conscious life which I presently immediately experience will be unfolded in the future. Beyond that, I can only assume that as long as there is a posterity my successors will unite a subjective meaning to their lived experiences, that they will live in a world. But in which? Surely there are differences in historical life worlds: this future-directed question is unanswerable by us today, for even in the natural attitude of a man from a static society, the applicability to this succeeding world, of *typifications* pertinent to this contemporary world, is at least in principle out of the question. (p. 92)

Regardless of their personal experiences or their knowledge of historical events in an ambivalent or discriminatory Canada, parents of colour envision that our future will be an easier, more successful one with fewer instances of discrimination, cultural misunderstandings, and racial hostility with which to contend. It is this optimism in Canada's future and their resounding confidence in our abilities that allows parents of colour to give so much credence to the aspirations they hold for us of social and financial success. Having our parents' unwavering confidence helps those of us who experience success in expected ways: we are able to achieve in school and we select a profession that is deemed worthwhile by our parents, our ethnocultural community and the larger community of the

dominant other. However, for the child who is unsuccessful or who does not share the parent's goal of attaining a useful, prestigious education, the possibility of disappointing a parent is not taken lightly. Parental love for a child manifests itself in the parent's dogged desire to present a possible future as a probable outcome — in upholding such optimistic visions, parents of colour demonstrate the total confidence they have in their children. The child meets the expectation and so the parental vision for the child's future remains unchallenged — an act of love, in a relationship where respect for a parent is demonstrated through obedience. Failure for their children to view education as a vehicle for advancement in life chances is not even entertained as a possibility by these parents. They begin early on to make their view of our future reality known to us, and we do not let them down. When we do, it is not without feelings of shame, inadequacy and anger for being pressured to continue with an education and a life-plan that we view is not of our choosing. However, for the most part, as the participants in this study illustrate, the wishes of our parents become internalized by us and become our own goals.

One of the ways in which the importance of an education is transmitted from parent to child is through the transmission of a legacy of struggle for our people in this country and then by looking to the future at possibilities that are attractive but beyond our reach at the present time. Early on, children of colour hear parables about the merits of hard work, the importance of an education, and then the certainty of career advancement, financial gain and prestige through achievement and effort (Lin & Fu, 1990). In her study on the academic performance of Asian-Americans, Kao's (1995) participants disclosed the parental pressure they felt to work towards prestigious professions by attaining the "right"

education.

> Another respondent wanted to take an acting class but had to plead with his mother for permission to do so. The fear from his mother came from the respondent's cousin who was attending Yale (which is a source of satisfaction for the parents) but had changed his major to drama (which signals a "major disaster"). So, not only is there a greater ambivalence toward success in nonacademic realms, there is the fear that adolescents may be distracted from their schoolwork or later choose a career deemed "unsafe." As one person from the focus group stated, "There's a real fear that life is really unstable, and that's why there's such an emphasis on getting in the safe professions, being a doctor, lawyer [someone else: 'fixed income']. Yeah, fixed income, finding a good home in the suburbs with a good school." (p. 151)

Partly through listening, partly through watching, Nina came to understand that an education was the most efficient, fail-safe way to achieve her ambitions, but that success was feasible for any individual of colour who chose to work hard. While Nina seems proud of the accomplishments of her ancestors, she perceives that it is possible for her to achieve her aspirations in a way that was not possible for the first generation of immigrants in her ethnocommunity. She was raised in Canada, and thus has the advantage of cultural currency and linguistic fluency that her relatives did not have. For Nina, an education will afford her the luxury of being with her family instead of sacrificing this time in order to make financial gains.

I think a lot of the traditional Chinese people — the ones who came from China —

did a lot of hard work. Because they didn't have an education, they had to work extra hard. Usually it was like a restaurant or stores. I learned a lot from them. Like, I learned that you didn't need an education really to get far ahead. If you (sic) worked really hard and saved their money then they could do it. But it was to my advantage because — they explained to me — if I go onto college or university and get advanced education, I can get by in the world without having to do the hard labour, because it took a lot of time away from family. They worked twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

For Logan, the importance of an education was stressed to him from a young age by his mother. In the playful, loving talk of "let's suppose," Logan's mother continually invited him to imagine himself as a self-sufficient, well-respected professional. When asked about his career aspirations, Logan replies without hesitation:

LOGAN: You get a career. You do something. Get a degree. Money is important, too. She wants me to become a doctor, but I don't want to be a doctor.

CHERYL: Why?

LOGAN: I'd be rich plus she wants me to figure out a new way of stopping high blood pressure or AIDS or cancer. She wants me to be famous. I want to be famous, but I don't want to be famous in a doctor way. I want to be a geologist.

CHERYL: How would you become famous?

LOGAN: Oh, discover a new way to block an earthquake. My mom kept telling me to become a doctor. "What do you want to be?" I go, "Become a doctor." So in Elementary, when all my teachers ask me, "What do you want to be when you

> grow up?" I'd want to be a doctor because my mom said that. But then when I got to Jr. High, in Science, we studied rocks. My dad's a gem cutter. I kind of liked rocks because they were interesting and they have natural colours. That's beautiful!

As Logan developed his own interests, he abandoned the specifics of the goal imposed upon him by his mother, but did not venture far from her expectation that he become highly-educated and achieve professional stature in a position that was held in high esteem by his parents and the community at large. While Logan's personal interests have begun to challenge his mother's vision of a preferred future, he does not entertain a drastically different future, shaping his dreams for the future around the constraints of obtaining a post secondary degree and then gaining professional status in a discipline that is considered worthwhile because of its social status and its monetary potential. Logan maintains that a post-secondary education is his only means for achieving well-respected professional status. Professional status brings with it financial security, respect within the broader community, and respect for the ethnocommunity — outcomes his parents hope will make their son impervious to or better able to cope with the sometimes unjust situations to which Canadians of colour are subjected.

As suggested earlier, the value of an education for many Canadians of colour is in its ability to lead to subsequent opportunities. Levi, a Native youngster living temporarily in the university housing complex with his mother, sees the pragmatic benefits of completing a post-secondary education in a marketable profession. Levi's mother recently completed a B.Ed. and she intends to take her son back to Hobbema so that she can begin

teaching at the reserve school. When asked about how he felt about his mother's accomplishment, Levi articulated two practical, positive outcomes: his mother will have increased earning power and she will be able to help him with his own learning:

> And then after her summer job, she's going to be a teacher to make money to get more furniture. To be a teacher, she can tell us lots of questions about school: Math, about writing some stuff.

Similarly, Muhammad has come to value education and being professional as a result of the messages of his parents, his ethnocultural community and his church. Seeking professional status is an ingrained expectation for Muhammad — a second generation Canadian — so much so, that he has never imagined doing anything but going to university:

> There is a lot of pressure for education actually because our priest, Aga Khan, put a lot of emphasis on school and he's always emphasizing how it's a meritocracy so the emphasis on education in the whole community, that's really the foundation. . . . It's very, very strong and important in our family for sure and most families in our community because of that reason. So of course, I think it was always assumed that I was going to university and I don't know if I told them I wasn't, what they'd do.

Education, then, is viewed as a means to an important end, rather than intrinsically valuable. It becomes the way in which individuals and then collectively, an ethnocultural community, gain the acceptance and respect of the dominant other. The pressure to meet these expectations is tremendous, since there is the knowledge that each of us must excel and succeed on a personal level in order to proudly represent our people, and the collec-

tive social status of an ethnocultural group is created by the cumulated success of individual group members. Muhammad is relieved that he is able to meet the expectations of his parents and his church elders, for the shame of not being able to comply is unimaginable for him. Failing to complete a postsecondary education or achieve professional status is not even entertained by Muhammad as a choice. But it is only unimaginable for him because the aspirations cast upon him are congruous with his ability, his drive and his commitment to his people and the values they espouse.

Education becomes an achievable commodity to those who work seriously at it, demonstrating their desire to succeed through hard work and academic achievement. Many Canadian children of colour view post-secondary education as their responsibility, given the expectations of their parents, rather than a life choice. Muhammad has mapped out his future, visualizing that he will successfully complete medical school and then go "home" to help his people. A strong tie to his homeland and to the greater good of his people are both ethnocultural values that he has appropriated as his personal mission. The constant and consistent bombardment of these values by his parents, community members and his church elders influenced the shaping of his vision. However, once Muhammad discovered that such a noble future was indeed achievable, given his abilities, he is now driven by what he views as a personal dream:

> I'm hoping to take probably chemistry undergrad and go into medicine. . . . It's actually pretty important to me because I'd like to establish my practice here first of all — Calgary, I'm not sure — Canada. I'd love to practice a few years down in the Middle East and volunteer there for the Aga Khan Foundation perhaps. You

> know, the Aga Khan hospital. That's a dream I've always had. I'd love to do that. Just the fact, first of all that you go back and help some of your own people, number two, that I love to volunteer and I love to help people who are less fortunate than me. I've always had that goal that, "Look these people are there." I've heard all the stories from my parents how difficult it was, how people were sick and that sort of thing. It's almost my responsibility here in Canada to go back and help these people.

For most Canadian youth of colour, our parents' aspirations for our futures become our aspirations without rebellion (Kao, 1995); the vision of a highly-educated, respectable, financially secure professional is one we too have come to value. First they and then we affirm that this envisioned future is both possible and desirable. Some of us have come to believe that Canada is a place where socioeconomic equity is possible for certain ethnic groups of colour, thus almost any aspiration is possible given desire, expertise or hard work (Barringer, Takeuchi and Xenos, 1990). This belief has not been challenged by personal experience which would cause us to think otherwise. Prior successes in meeting our personal goals in a system catering to the dominant other lead us to believe that future goals will also be attainable. Schutz and Luckmann (1995) explore the connection between past lived experience, the world at present and future possibilities. Of the future, they write:

> My expectations originate from my stock of knowledge, which contains sedimented past lived experiences. With this basis I can consider the prospects for planned acts, estimate my ability to attain this or that goal. It is clear that this

> second zone of potentiality is in no way homogeneous but is arranged into sublevels that have various prospects of attainability. The chances typically decrease in relation to the increasing spatial, temporal, and social distance of the respective sublevel from the center of my actually present world. (p. 40)

Perhaps, as Schutz suggests, the life goals of Canadian children of colour are most attainable when the goals reflect our innate abilities and the degree and nature of the support we receive from our parents.

Ethnic selves in the schools of the dominant other

Beyond adopting our parents' notion that education is the vehicle for achieving financial success and respectable professional status, we are cognizant of the work ethic that our parents immediately encourage in us as young learners (Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995): respect our teachers (Ghuman, 1994), achieve academic success through conscientiousness, and place education above all other endeavours (Fejgin, 1995; Kao, 1995). Parental drive initially governs our behaviour, but for many students of colour these maxims become our own as we progress through our school careers.

Some discomfort arises when these beliefs are at odds with the beliefs and behaviours of our peer group. While as a youth it is important to act in a way that retains our acceptance with our friends, sometimes the accepted behaviours are incompatible with our silently but firmly held view of what it is to be a student, of how it is that teachers should be treated, of what learning looks like, and of what excelling in school means. Logan talks candidly about how his view of the role of the student is noticeably different from the way his friends participate in class. For him, remaining engaged in lessons is an

important and fruitful way to indicate to his teacher that he is interested in learning. While Logan is willing to adjust his behaviour somewhat to remain part of his peer group, some of their behaviours compromise his beliefs and so he chooses to act in a way that is discernibly different from his peers. The personal cost is evident, since Logan must deal with the good-natured, boisterous ribbing of his classmates. Yet despite these occasional ribbings, Logan continues to exhibit these serious-minded behaviours, choosing instead to chide his friends for their behaviour and to laugh along with them at himself. In both instances, Logan uses up-beat reactions and humour to extinguish the negative behaviour of his friends because he suspects that he will be associated with the misbehaviour due to his physical proximity. Secondly this approach allows Logan to save face with his peers — he gently eases himself out of disruptive situations, without appearing aloof. His behaviour, however, speaks strongly and truly of his dedication to his beliefs:

> I smile a lot, that's for sure. I speak out. Some White guys, they go, "Ah yeah, right." I just go, "Okay," softly. I respect my teachers. You don't talk back to them. You don't give them looks. You try and understand why she's yelling at you and you look back at what you did. Some Canadian kids roll their eyes, shake their heads. They don't sometimes listen to them. I listen to them right away. Even if it's boring, I'll listen. I do because my mom told me to. It's better. Teachers will respect you and then they'll give you extra marks. I always try to do that. If I have an almost failing mark, they might pass me. . . . The teacher's like a second parent to me. It doesn't matter, I stay with a normal face. I sit in the back but I'm still paying attention because I'm always looking at them. Yeah, and then I just give

> them (my friends) a little tap and say, "Just be quiet," and the teacher looks back and says their name and they go, "Okay." "Yeah, teacher's pet!" And I go, "Yeah, sure, okay, really man. Yeah, you say that." I just smile at them. They smile back. We start smiling, that's the end of it.

For some Canadian children of colour, there is the challenge of grappling with the pressures of home and the perceived ways of the dominant other. Sometimes it is a difference in fundamental beliefs; sometimes it is a difference in world view regarding such issues as degree of independence granted to children, the importance placed on individuality, or gender expectations. Plank (1994) describes the potentially unfortunate conclusions teachers draw about their Native students when they are unfamiliar with the cultural significance of silence. Plank suggests that the silence of some Native students can be attributed to two cultural causes:

> First, it is inappropriate to set oneself above or apart from one's peers. Second, the cultural role for the pupil requires listening and watching the teachers — not *questioning* or *answering* queries. (p. 5)

Contrast this belief about what it is to be a learner with a teacher's response to the silence. Plank transcribes the recollections of one educator:

> Like back home you assume that if you ask a question and it is silent, your first reaction is that no one knows it and that's what I did. I'm sure a lot of people do the same thing. So you think, "they are not getting any of this at all." Well in reality they knew it. They just didn't say it. That's going to create some confusion right off the bat. So as far as your first week you are going to think, "What am I

going to do with these kids?" (p. 9)

In the cultural context of home, the response of silence is respectful and proper, but in the context of school where appropriate behaviours are framed by the culture of the dominant other, this silence can be misconstrued as reticence or an indication of not understanding. Where it is possible, Canadian children of colour will find ways to circumvent drawing attention to these tensions we experience by striking a compromise that allows us to stay true to our beliefs, but in more extreme cases, we are unable to successfully negotiate the tensions we sense, and respond in one of two ways: denouncing the belief systems imparted upon us by our parents, often causing tension within the family, or giving up on school due to the personal despair we experience, feeling alien in the schools of the dominant other.

The Struggle to Maintain Ethnoculture: "I Know how Little Can Pass Down to a Child" (Mura, 1995, p. 99)

For many children of colour there is the additional pressure from our parents to maintain cultural or linguistic markers of our ethnicity. So, while much emphasis is spent on doing well in school, many of us are involved in activities which increase our ethnocultural capital. In attempts to ensure that our ethnocultural heritage remains intact, our parents often enroll us in organizations and activities that will expose us to the ways of our people: dance lessons, heritage language school, youth groups (Ghuman, 1994; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995). Cultural knowledge of this sort ensures that the child of colour remains acceptable as a member within a specific ethnocultural community

— since membership, acceptance and a pride in belonging are all gifts that a parent wishes to pass down to the child, believing that the future will be easier with these associations intact. But insistence and encouragement are not always enough to ensure that children of colour will embrace the value or merit in such activities, and, often times, given the choice, many of us will choose to discontinue our involvement in such activities. It is not without uncomfortable nagging feelings of guilt, but still the opportunity to quit obligatory endeavours that mark us as different is an opportunity that we take up with relief. For our parents, there is the disappointment because they recognize that there is little hope that visible aspects of their culture will be maintained by us. Mukherjee's (1985) fictional character, Mr. Bhowmick, recognizes the cultural imbalance within his grown daughter. His daughter, Babli — having been raised to excel scholastically while attending to her cultural studies — eventually chooses to leave the cultural influences behind, much to her father's disappointment. Looking at his only child, Bhowmick is melancholy and disenchanted with the way his daughter has turned out. Shamefully, he admits that he does not value what she has become and he regrets orchestrating many of the opportunities which led to her life choices. Too late, he regrets having raised his child to succeed in North America. He is sadly aware that he does not value the woman she has become:

> Babli was not the child he would have chosen as his only heir. She was certainly brighter than the sons and daughters of the other Bengalis he knew in Detroit, and she had been the only female student in most of her classes at Georgia Tech, but as she sat there in her beige linen business suit, her thick chin dropping into a polka-dotted cravat, he regretted again that she was not the child of his dreams. Babli

> would be able to help him out moneywise if something happened to him, something so bad that even his pension plans and his insurance policies and his money market schemes wouldn't be enough. But Babli could never comfort him. She wasn't womanly or tender the way that unmarried girls had been in the wistful days of his adolescence. She could sing Hindi film songs, mimicking exactly the high, artificial voice of Lata Mungeshkar, and she had taken two years of dance lessons at Sona Devi's Dance academy in Southfield, but these accomplishments didn't add up to real femininity. Not the kind that had given him palpitations in Ranchi. (p. 63)

Mr. Bhowmick recognizes that the personal cost for raising a daughter who is bright, assertive and likely to achieve financial security has been the loss of her cultural identity. Attempting to maintain cultures of origin while adapting successfully to the culture of the dominant other (Ghuman, 1994; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Rick & Forward, 1992; Spickard & Fong, 1995; Stalikas & Gavaki, 1995; Tran, 1991) is a reality for many Canadians of colour. For the parent, there is the sense that a personally upheld world view is the most familiar and therefore the most desirable; it is difficult to accept that their children will embrace values that do not reflect the parents' own beliefs. Parents of Canadian children of colour may consider themselves to be transitionalists who recognize the importance of penetrating dominant institutions while maintaining aspects of their ethnic identity (Kallen, 1982). However, by encouraging their children to prepare for success in Canadian society, they run the risk of permitting our generation to shift our attention even further away from the world view upheld by our ethnocultural community:

> For ethnic minorities, acculturation exposes the younger generation to cultural alternatives and to new societal reference and membership groups which may compete with their ethnic counterparts as foci for primary identification and allegiance. Most importantly, it is through the process of acculturation that the younger generation acquires the specialized skills and life ways necessary for effective participation in modern, post-industrial society. By exposing the younger generation to compelling new options, and by equipping them with new, transnational skills, the acculturation process generates the crucial centrifugal or push forces attracting members geographically and/or ideologically away from their ethnocultural collectivity. (Kallen, 1982, p. 82)

Due to the acculturation process, Jennifer — a second generation Chinese Canadian child — senses that her traditional aunt does not appreciate some of the traits of the dominant other that she has adopted as her own. Jennifer's parents have raised their daughter to walk the tightrope between their established beliefs and those attitudes which they believe will help her to succeed in Canada. Jennifer discovered that her aunt does not appreciate this donning of the dominant ways, and sees Jennifer's self-sufficiency and frankness as unattractive qualities. Likewise, Jennifer has a difficult time not asserting herself to the fullest, and practices condescending, haughty patience with her more traditional elder:

> She always thinks I'm trying to make her feel bad. Once I went to the airport, I was on my way coming to Calgary. Because I was travelling alone, this auntie of mine, she was really nervous and she was afraid I might get lost but she didn't really know that I knew what to do and she kept on saying, "Oh, no, you don't

> know what to do, you don't know what to do." So that sort of put me down. Then when attendant ladies at the front desk gave me this little sticker to put on my clothes and it kept falling off, I put it on my face and she thought that was supposed to make her mad, but instead I wanted to because it sticks better. Skin makes it stick.

A self-assured girl who is ordinarily encouraged to be a problem-solver and to be independent is seen as quarrelsome, disrespectful and naughty because of the differing view of childhood held by Jennifer's aunt. When we take on the world view of the dominant other, we lose the respect of the more traditional members of our ethnocommunities.

Some children continue to engage in these activities primarily to please our parents and as time goes by, we continue to participate out of comfortable habit: the people are familiar, the ritual is familiar, there is a sense of belonging. Levi describes one of the celebrations he attended on the reserve:

> There's this place called Memorial Centre and feasts is like all they eat Indian food. There's some called Bannock, it's called raisin soup and buffalo meat. They have all kind of sorts of food — everything. Like they have this pink stuff. It's made with cherries and you gotta eat it before you eat and you have to pass it around all over the place because that's what you're supposed to do to the elders. The last one have to pass it to the elders.

This cultural event is one that Levi knows through food and socialization; he has yet to uncover the spiritual nature of the pow wow. For him, the gathering represents a coming together of the community — a social event, but nothing more. Mukherjee's (1985)

character, Babli Bhowmick, like the very real Levi, participates in variety of ethnocultural activities during her upbringing, but it became sadly evident to her South Asian father that much of the enculturation was for naught:

> She played New Wave music in her tapedeck. If asked about Hinduism, all she'd ever said to her American friends was that "it's neat." Mr. Bhowmick had heard her on the phone years before. The cosmos balanced on the head of a snake was like a beachball balanced on the snout of a circus seal. "This Hindu myth stuff," he'd heard her say, "is like a series of super graphics."
>
> He'd forgiven her. He could probably forgive her anything. It was her way of surviving high school in a city that was both native to her, and alien.(p. 65)

As a young woman, she had made the choice to subordinate these aspects of her ethnic self, giving them less credence than other attributes which define who she is. Parental dissatisfaction results from their inability to pass down aspects of culture despite their best efforts. In another place and another time, the transmission of ethnoculture from one generation to the next was the likely outcome of repeated cultural exposure. However, amongst some Canadian children of colour, there is seldom the future-oriented commitment to solidify the cultural ties to a people — a commitment that illustrates how genealogical connections can organize our lives (Spickard & Fong, 1995) — and without this commitment, the formally upheld world view of traditionalists is abandoned by the upcoming generation (Kallen, 1982).

The Struggle to Maintain a Heritage Language: "I Used to Go to Chinese School on

Sundays" (Jennifer)

Language is one of the primary aspects of culture upheld as important in the maintenance of a collective world view. A participant from Ghuman's (1994) study speaks regretfully about his failure to teach his children to read and write in Punjabi:

> On this score I have been a loser; the religious books are in Gurumukhi, my children would not come to fully understand the spirit of Sikhism. (p. 26)

If cultural transmission does not occur informally in the home, concerned parents of colour may seek out ethnocultural institutions that will fortify their child's ethnic allegiance (Kelley & Tseng, 1992). According to Rosenberg and Jedwab (1992), "special needs such as religious, cultural or linguistic needs" result in "significant community organizations directed towards specific community needs" (p. 284), thus satisfying a unique niche otherwise ignored in Canadian society. Heritage language schools are formally organized attempts to fortify culture through language. But formal language instruction seldom keeps students of colour motivated. For the most part, they progress slowly and ordinarily drop out:

> It was about cats, and Rosie pretended to understand it thoroughly and appreciate it no end, partly because she hesitated to disillusion her mother about the quantity and quality of Japanese she had learned in all the years now that she had been going to Japanese school every Saturday (and Wednesday, too, in the summer). (Yamamoto, 1988, p.8)

Yet learning a language for the sake of parents is not enough motivation to continue with formal language instruction. Some children of colour view formal heritage language

instruction as ineffectual: methods of instruction are often traditional and seemingly dry, grades and summative evaluations are not granted, and time taken for language lessons is often begrudgingly taken from other activities that we view as a critical aspect of belonging to a peer group influenced heavily by the dominant other. Not surprisingly, almost any alternative to attending language school seems a better choice. As a young girl, Jennifer asserts herself and refuses to attend Chinese school any more. She sees it as accomplishing little and foresees few pay-offs:

> I used to go to Chinese School on Sundays but I'm like, "No way!" I know it's important but I don't like it. The teachers aren't necessarily very nice and they don't teach you a lot. They just give you homework to do. I just don't like it very much and I say to myself if I really need it then I say I don't really need it. Mamma knows that one day if I want to do it, I can pick it back up. She says she'd rather have me like it than not like it.

Learning a heritage language for the sake of prolonging the lineage of a people in Canada does not appeal to the self-gratifying, present-situated view held by youth. There must be an important purpose for learning a heritage language, one that has to do with communicating with others or with gaining cultural capital. Terrence recollects what it was like being able to speak with his Japanese-speaking grandparents in a meaningful, authentic way, for the first time after returning from his trip to Japan. Terrence contrasts this experience with the way it used to be and the way it was once again, when he forgot the newly-acquired hesitant proficiency in his heritage language:

> For most of my life, conversations with my grandparents were limited to "Thanks

> for dinner," "How are you?" "It's cold out." Coming back from Japan, being semi-fluent opened up a very interesting window for me because suddenly I was able to converse with my grandparents on a level deeper than, "How are you?" or "I am fine." So when I was a little more fluent, suddenly I could talk to my grandparents more as people so they began to tell me more stories about when they were young or about things that they like. I can remember my Grandpa telling me about fishing and how he had certain beliefs about worms that were better than others and times to fish and about how to fish. Even things like that so not really philosophical but just the fact that it was novel for me to communicate to my grandpa about things that were a little bit more meaningful to me.

Terrence talks about the futility of trying to maintain the newly acquired heritage language, for the sake of maintaining it, without being able to use it practically in his day-to-day life in Edmonton. The price of maintaining the language through formal instruction was higher than Terrence was willing to pay. To maintain this language in an artificial, instructional setting meant that Terrence would have to give up being with his friends on a Friday night.

> All of our swim meets were on Friday nights and that's the night Japanese school was on, so you sort of picked which was more important to you. And at that time, swimming was more important to me.

Unless the value in maintaining the culture is immediate always, the desire to maintain that aspect of self is abandoned. While, in retrospect, Terrence values the opportunity to converse meaningfully with his grandparents, the opportunity to use the language for

monthly visits did not, in his mind, merit the sacrifice of attending language school instead of being with his friends.

For some Canadian children of colour, learning and maintaining a heritage language is important because it allows them to communicate with family and people within their ethnocultural community (Wharry, 1993). The heritage language allows the child to speak in ways that are authentically helpful or caring. Conversations which build upon relationships are possible when the heritage language instead of English is spoken to heritage language speakers. While Jennifer refuses to attend Chinese language school, she acknowledges that she is most successful maintaining her language when she is surrounded by her extended family:

> Every single time I go, I can talk with my grandma because she's the only person that talks like me. She can jibber jabber like me and I can jibber jabber like her in Chinese. I'm not good at Chinese! You see, what I do is I go to my relatives once in a while and because my mom says I learn pretty fast, I can just learn Chinese and get better. You can actually see me every day getting better because I have to speak Chinese to my relatives. So if I go once in a while, my Chinese won't get too rusty.

Muhammad talks about the necessity of speaking his heritage language outside of the home. There are ideas and phrases that don't exist in English but which are necessary to communicate meaning — a way of thinking, a way of viewing the world. For him, it is practical to skip back to his heritage language to ensure that meaning is understood. There is no discomfort with speaking his heritage language in public, rather it is a natural

transition in the process of creating meaning with members of his family; they move from one language to the next in order to best fit the situation or topic at hand:

> Mostly it's English [amongst family members] outside. Inside we speak Gudjerati. It really depends on the situation because mostly we talk English but there's many times we'll go and talk Gudjerati. It's not a big deal. It's not like, "Oh, oh, we're speaking outside of our home." We don't refer to it that way. We can just talk back and forth. It's not a big deal. . . . So sometimes you'll hear us speak almost in a different dialect. We'll speak Gudjerati with a bit of English in it because there's no substitutes for those words. So, you know, that's real common.

Muhammad and his family flip back and forth between English and Gudjerati, as the topic of discussion necessitates. He does not voice any discomfort with appearing linguistically different than the dominant other. Logan, like Muhammad, acknowledges that it is sometimes more efficient for him to speak his heritage language. Logan's parents, unlike Muhammad's, are recent immigrants from Vietnam and so, not surprisingly, English is used primarily to function within Canadian society. Logan recognizes that depending on the topic and social context of the conversation, one language is more suitable than the other.

> LOGAN: We sometimes go to Chinatown. We go to a Vietnamese doctor in the North East. My mom [likes to go there] because there's more Vietnamese [patients] that go to that place, plus you can speak your own language.
>
> CHERYL: Does he practice Eastern medicine?
>
> LOGAN: No. He prescribes the same thing as a Western [doctor].

CHERYL: Why do you go to him?

LOGAN: Because I can speak to him and say what I'm feeling.

CHERYL: What languages do you speak?

LOGAN: Both [English and Vietnamese]. Not equally fluent, but yes. Sometimes I speak philosophy and politics to my mom in Vietnamese. Religion, I speak that with my mom in Vietnamese because it feels like you've got a flow. You want to say it in Vietnamese. Then when I'm speaking in English it still sounds oriental-like.

For immigrant children of colour or for children who grew up in a segregated ethnocultural community, English is recognized as the language of the dominant other with practical use in society at large, but the heritage language remains the language of home. Levi differentiates between two situations when he hears the Cree language spoken:

> My grandma, my mom and my uncles [speak Cree. It's important to learn] so the kids can talk to the elders. I talk English and Cree there. My mom taught me some words like to say, "Hello, how are you?" and just stuff. Because her mom used to talk to her and my uncles and my aunties in Cree. So that's why they know lots. When we don't listen to her to go to bed, my mom's talking Cree. We run up the stairs and go to bed. It's like, "Go to bed right now!"

For Levi's mother, the language of reprimand that comes with a flash point of anger is the language she is most comfortable with — the language of home.

Nina however, discriminates between two different scenarios. In the first instance, like Muhammad, she sees it as a way of communicating meaningfully with her kin and her

people:

> You can help people. A lot of times I'd be walking from the LRT station to the bus stop when I was in university. I'd see someone, elderly Chinese people, who didn't know how to speak English very well and they would ask me, "Which is the next bus to Edgemont?" and I'd be able to tell them. It's good in that way.

In this instance, Nina chooses to respond to an entreaty initiated by an elderly Chinese person. She recognizes that the elder is vulnerable, in need of assistance, and so she reaches out by responding in her heritage language. However, at her place of employment, where she senses her employer or colleagues may judge her as being an outsider, Nina is deeply embarrassed to use her heritage language to interact with Chinese customers. She senses that others will view her as she views these people — stereotypically clannish, looking out for the best deal based on association — a notion that she finds distasteful and markedly different from the Canadian way of shopping.

> There were times when I felt kind of embarrassed being Chinese, too. You know, I was in the store and I used to work at this animal store in Market Mall? Sometimes you get a big family of Chinese people coming in and there's just some things that they do that really bug me. . . . I'd approach them and say hi and so then they ask me if I'm Chinese and I'd say yes. . . . They'd ask me some things in Chinese. They'd ask me, "Do you know how to speak Chinese?" and I would say, "Yes.". . .They'd almost expect because they're Chinese and I was Chinese that they would get a discount. They were sort of hinting that. That really bugged me. At that point, I was almost embarrassed. What do other people think? If I came

> into a store, would they think that I was sort of the same way or something? I just don't think that that trait or aspect of the personality is very good.

For Nina, the reluctance to interact openly in her heritage language stems from her desire to disassociate herself from a subgroup of her people, for it is her belief that the dominant other stereotypes her people based on their observations of this easily distinguishable subgroup in Canadian society — a group of Chinese Canadians who have maintained many aspects of their heritage culture even though such allegiances draw attention to ways that they are markedly and purposely different from the dominant other. For a Canadian of colour who wishes to be accepted into the dominant group, such a misnomer is seen as a costly step backwards.

Incorporating Ethnoculture into Our Own Clay

> Then there's a Chinese term which can be taken as a serious insult, "juk-sing", which refers to Canadian-born Chinese as being bamboo which is empty at both ends, meaning neither Chinese nor Western. . . .
>
> *Is it worse to be empty*
>
> *and not know it*
>
> *not know what you are empty of?* (Yee, 1993, p. 31)

For those Canadians of colour who are deeply entrenched in respective ethnocultures due to age (Tran, 1991), recency of arrival to Canada (Rick & Forward, 1992), or sheer determination, Canadian children of colour are the subject of their sympathy since we appear to abandon our birthright in what they perceive as a vain attempt to become the

dominant other. They perceive, through personal experience, that the boundaries separating ethnic minorities from the dominant other are impenetrable and that those Canadians of colour who reject ethnocultural collectivities in pursuit of acceptance by the other find themselves in a state of marginality — juk-sing. In the previous chapter focusing on social relationships, marginality was defined and discussed; however, our understanding of this phenomenon is further enlightened by considering the dynamics between the traditionalists and those who no longer fully accept the ethnocultural world view.

Yee (1993) also elaborates on additional slang created within ethnocultural communities to describe the struggle to define oneself amidst compelling but contradictory worlds:

> There are all sorts of terms, humorous and technical for that "identity crisis" almost all nonwhite children grow up with here. There's "banana" — yellow on the outside, white on the inside . . . Some say Chinese kids here are like popcorn — "little yellow things that turn white under pressure". These are things that can make you laugh and wince at the same time. (p. 30)

Slang of this nature is not limited to the Chinese. In their comprehensive literature review of identity process among children of colour, Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) list different terms used in various ethnocultures to define the same identity crisis:

> "apple Indian syndrome" for American Indians who show a cultural preference for the larger Anglo society; it is suggested that such individuals are red on the outside and white on the inside. . . .parallel confusion of identity for Hispanics as a "coconut syndrome," for Asians the "banana syndrome" and for African Americans

> the "Oreo syndrome." (p. 303)

The creation of such terminology reflects the cynicism and disapproval of ethnocultural purists. Such a reaction may initially seem warranted, since some youth of colour reject that which is valued by the traditionalist. But the dilemma such terms describe is worthy of concern rather than derision, since individuals who have left behind an ethnoculture only to experience lack of acceptance by the dominant other will perceive that both boundaries are impermeable: the former because of personal choice; the latter because of personal experience. Several of the participants in this study sensed that aspects of their parents' world views were non-negotiable, and that as their children they felt the pressure to comply. Muhammad speculates on his parents' reaction to his marrying outside of his faith:

> My parents are definitely biased. They would love to get a Muslim [daughter-in-law]. I guess I am allowed to date non-Muslims. Basically they say, "Marry someone you love." They're saying that now and I don't know what's going to happen if I actually say, "Look, I want to marry her and she's [of a different religion]." They might be a little choked. I don't know. I guess it's always been assumed that we're going to marry some Muslim or Ismaili. I don't know what would happen if we did marry someone Caucasian or actually Christian. Yeah, I think it might be a problem.

Terrence also recalls an incident where he was uncertain of the outcome of his behaviour:

> My friends believe that I take my parents' word as gospel and I accept whatever my parents lay down. . . . The group of friends, we were meeting in Fairmont and

> staying out there for a week to go golfing, fool around and have some fun. Mom and Dad weren't sure that was the right thing to do. So I told them I thought there was no harm in it and I thought it would be a lot of fun and it was my choice whether I would go on this trip. It is reasonably seldom that I go against what they believe is right for me to do. So I did feel a little bit of guilt going on this trip knowing they didn't really approve of it. But internally, I had given it a lot of thought and I decided that really there was nothing wrong with going on this trip at that point. So the guilt was reasonably short lived but there was a sense of uncertainty, as I recall getting home. I wasn't really sure whether it was done with or whether it would have to be something that needed to be resolved.

In both of these instances, these participants were leery about rejecting values that were significant aspects of their parents' ethnocultural world view. For Muhammad, there was the risk of denouncing the importance of in-group marriage. For Terrence, there was the anxiety of ignoring the sanctity of filial piety. Unlike Muhammad, Terrence has dared to confront a perceived ultimatum, to discover that he has not been cast into marginality — that despite disregarding some beliefs, values or behaviours associated with his ethnocultural collective, he remains Japanese Canadian — the definition of which is personally determined by the decisions he makes along the way. As Winland (1993) confirms in her exploration of Mennonite peoplehood, definitions of peoplehood and ethnic self are naturally in flux:

> Efforts to pigeonhole a complex phenomenon like Mennonite identity ignore the dynamic processes which provide the conditions for identity continuity and change.

> For example, contexts dictate the forms in which people express their identities in such a way that particular identities, at certain times, take a back seat to others. For certain purposes then, it may be expedient or necessary for individuals or groups to stress particular identity variables at the expense of others. (p. 116)

So, for many of us like Terrence who continually refine our sense of ethnic self, the sympathies of our people are unwarranted and unwanted. We are like the young potter in Galeano's (1993) parable:

> On the shores of another sea, an old potter retires.
>
> His eyes cloud over, his hands tremble, the hour to say goodbye has arrived. Then the ceremony of initiation begins: the old potter offers the young potter his best piece. As tradition dictates among the Indians of northwest America, the outgoing artist gives his master work to the incoming one.
>
> And the young potter doesn't keep that perfect vase to contemplate or admire: he smashes it on the ground, breaks it into a thousand pieces, picks up the pieces, and incorporates them into his own clay. (p. 104)

As our elders hand us the legacy of an ethnoculture, they, as the givers, relinquish how it is that aspects of the culture will influence the ways in which we live our lives. In coming to understand who we are as individuals, Canadian youth of colour take from our ethnocultures, the culture of the dominant other, as well as the influences of other subordinate cultures to create eclectic personal cultures which reflect the rich, culturally diverse composition of contemporary Canadian society (Kindler, 1994, p.60). Regardless of whether our emerging selves appear to sufficiently reflect our ethnocultural heritages,

Schutz and Luckmann (1995) suggest that it can be no other way, since the life-choices our elders made are significantly different from the choices we will make, because of the ever-changing social climate.

Aboud (1981) proposes a schematic representation of self and ethnicity which supports these participants' perceptions of how they develop a sense of ethnic self. Each of us, according to Aboud, has a sense of self and an understanding of what it is to be a Canadian of colour. Our sense of self may include external and internal attributes such as appearance, physical attributes, social roles, beliefs and values, while our understanding of ethnicity includes some of the following attributes as determined by Isajiw (1980): ancestry, culture, religion, phenotypical features, language, sense of peoplehood, common values, separate institutions, minority status. Within each of these structures are attributes, some of which are essential and some of which are less important. While an attribute may be common to both the self and our understanding of ethnicity, the degree of importance placed upon the attribute may vary. Furthermore, some of the attributes are distinctive to the self while others are shared amongst all members of the ethnic collectivity. Attributes which are shared by self and our understanding of ethnicity comprise each of our ethnic selves. And so it is that Terrence's sense of ethnic self could be different from either parent's sense of ethnic self, but that all parties of colour have this aspect of self intact. However, even if the social climate were to remain static and members of ethnocultural communities were to develop identical senses of ethnic self, we would continue to be deaf to the wise parables of our elders, for outcomes that are completed and known to them are for us yet to unfold, and therefore incomprehensible:

> It is again precisely through my experience of elders that a biographical-historical difference within the contemporary world is forced upon me. Many of the horizons that for me, in my biographical situation, still are open, are for the elder, the fellow-man in our common situation, already closed (marriage, choice of profession, the first-born); what in my current experience is related to anticipations or expectations is already fulfilled for him, sedimented in his memory. He already was "in my position," namely, in a typical situation of a typical young man. He also went into this situation with expectations which were analogous to mine now, but he now already knows "how it turned out." He appeals to his "personal experience" and cannot comprehend that he cannot convey it to me. (Schutz & Luckmann, 1995, p. 91)

Platters of turkey, stuffing and kazunoko make their way around the crowded table, for we have begun this big meal without the perfunctory grace — a grace that faded from daily ritual as we began to introduce hakujin friends to our dinner table. "They wouldn't know what we mean or what to do, so we won't say, 'Itadakimasu' or 'Gochisosama' when they're around." My father, the patriarch, sits at the head of the table, and my mother is at the end of the table perched on the stool taken from the telephone stand — her husband, children and grandchildren garner the chairs that accompany the oak table, leaving her to sit on the backless, hard stool more suited to short conversations on the phone than lingering Sunday night meals. Sometimes she barely sits, instead reaching to offer seconds, running back to the kitchen to replenish

near-empty bowls. Only recently has she begun to recognize that "No" means "No more, thank you. I've had enough," not, "Perhaps, through your adamant, repeated offerings, you can convince me that I am most deserving of the portion that remains." This pervasive Japanese trait of enryo was initially confusing to her Caucasian son-in-laws and then later became bothersome or comical. My mother's deeply ingrained sense of hospitality comes across as frantic rather than gracious — or perhaps that is only my perception.

CHAPTER SEVEN

L'ESPRIT DE L'ESCALIER

The French have a term for that insight that always comes too late in a conversation. It is after we have left the party, as we descend our host's staircase, that inspiration strikes. Perhaps the conversation would have gone differently, had I only known to say what I will say now.

The candlelight captured
dancing eyes, expressive gestures
Some of us with arms draped on backs of chairs,
Others leaning forward, chins propped on tripods of hands, forearms and elbows
Relaxed intimacy.

DIANNE: I'm sick of hearing the media attribute youth violence and police confrontations to racism. They try to make it sound like the United States. I've spent time there and I know. It's nothing like the U.S.. There's no race problem in Canada.

CHERYL: Just as you say, racism manifests itself differently in Canada. We haven't the long history of racialism between Blacks and Whites as they do in the United States. But that is not to negate the significance of race in this country. For Canadians of colour, race, like visible ethnicity, influences how the other interacts with us initially. We are frustrated by those who will not acknowledge us as individuals — those who choose to see

us only as part of our people — or by those who choose not to see us at all. And, if intimacy is established, such difference as it appears in our daily interactions is either ignored by the other or pursued out of genuine curiosity. Our reactions to their suppositions or inquiries vary, depending upon the degree of comfort and familiarity we have with those aspects of self we attribute to ethnicity.

LINDA: So what is attributable to ethnicity? The heritage language I maintain from my childhood? The religious holidays I observe? The recipes passed down from my mother's generation to me?

CHERYL: Food, clothing and rituals are all part of the artifacts of ethnicity. In engaging in the preparation of ethnic foods, in the collecting of traditional dress, in the mastery of certain crafts and activities, we are drawing from aspects of our ethnic selves. But it is not the act of preparing, collecting or mastering that deems these activities meaningful, rather it is the lived meaning that is attached to them — our sense of kinship, spirituality, belongingness and home.

I'm glad that you mentioned the importance of heritage languages, Linda. For the person of colour, a heritage language offers another way of thinking or being in the world. There are times when there are no words in the English language to represent my social tendencies amongst my people — enryo — or my reaction to specific situations — shikataganai. But I recognize the personal importance I place upon doing well in the larger community that is Canada, where the world view is significantly swayed by the

dominant other. So I make conscious decisions about which aspects of ethnic self I will publicly display, which aspects are best kept private, and which aspects I will abandon because I fail to see their personal significance.

JOY: It seems to me you've done pretty well for yourself, Cheryl. You and I share the same sort of ambitions and we've both done all right; you've got your education and career, not to mention a husband and family.

CHERYL: I attribute much of my success to the temporal landscape that surrounds me — how it is that past, present and future affect each other. The history of my parents and grandparents, in a Canada that was different then than it is now, influenced how they raised their children. The future envisioned by our parents for us was constantly related to us in our pasts. It seems that part of being fully present for us, in our day-to-day interactions, was giving us the gift of possibilities, so that we would go forth with confidence to meet the challenges of the future feeling valued, strong and capable. That vision is reflected in the good people we have become.

SANDY: I wonder what the future holds for our children, if their Canada will be a one different from ours?

CHERYL: I wonder too, for social and political contexts are bound to change. But it is also likely that for many, the notion of visible ethnic difference will become less appar-

ent. For instance, when I ordinarily look at my daughter, I don't see her as Japanese. Rather she's a hybrid: an indecipherable mix of Caucasian and Asian. During those times I think that she is protected from the instantaneous otherness that I experienced in my initial interactions with the dominant other. Selwynne will not have to endure questions of origin and national allegiance or taunting comments of ridicule like "Nip" or "Honger." But when I go into her room to kiss her goodnight, I see how her closed eyes are slightly drawn up in a slant resembling my own reflection, and I am glad that some phenotypical evidence of her Japanese heritage remains intact. For as much as we, as Canadians of colour, work to make ourselves cosmetically, behaviourally and linguistically like the other, there are aspects of our ethnic selves that cannot be compromised if we are to be authentically ourselves. I wonder though, if the lived experiences of mixed race children are significantly different from our experiences as evident Canadians of colour. With increasing numbers of children who are the result of interracial marriages, this other phenomenon would be worth pursuing.

I wonder too, whether the lived experience of Canada's aboriginal people best fits within the broad stroke painted with a term like Canadian of colour. In some ways, it is the same lived experience: they possess phenotypical features defining them as markedly different from the dominant other. Still . . .

HELEN: It strikes me too, as I read the literature on Canada's people of colour that the experience of Canada's Native people is worth pursuing on its own, for their lived experience is fundamentally different from all of our stories. We, regardless of our race,

were all once immigrants to this place called Canada. But they are this country's indigenous people. Their story is different because this is their home, yet home has lost its sanctity.

DIANNE: It seems to me that we all take our professional obligation to the children in our classrooms very seriously. So I am careful to be culturally sensitive in my interactions with students of colour and their families, to be aware of cultural bias in the curricula and testing materials I use, and to be immediately responsive to racist comments made by children. What our conversation tonight has reinforced for me is the importance of being pedagogically present for these children on a day-to-day basis — to do so is not a professional obligation, but rather a commitment of caring.

CHERYL: (pushing her chair away from the table, and rising) Well, thank you for dinner, Dianne. (glancing around the table) The food was delicious, the company remarkable.

SHARON: I've got to be going too. Cheryl, can I come with you? I'm not sure I know the way.

CHERYL: Not a problem, my friend. Not a problem at all.

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