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INTERMARRIAGE, ASSIMILATION, AND TRANSNATIONALISM: NEW DIRECTIONS

by

Rebecca Leah Fitt-Ajewole, BA, University of Guelph, 2005

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

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INTERMARRIAGE, ASSIMILATION, AND TRANSNATIONALISM: NEW DIRECTIONS

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Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

Statistics Canada has reported that intermarriage, which is defined as marriages that take place outside the boundaries of tradition, religion, caste, and geographical origins, is on the rise in Canada. While the economic integration of immigrants in Canada has been thoroughly researched, couple and family formation are less researched but fundamental aspects of the settlement and accommodation of immigrants in receiving countries. Using both assimilation theory and transnationalism, I will critically review the way in which intermarriage is interpreted in the literature and demonstrate a gap in regards to contemporary studies of intermarriage. In-depth interviews were conducted with three white, Canadian-born women and their racialized/immigrant husbands in Southern Ontario to gain insight into their everyday, lived experiences. Through the exploration of themes such as identity, culture, gender, and family relationships, the findings suggest that intermarried couples are continually negotiating transnational ideas, values, and practices.

Keywords: intermarriage; assimilation; transnationalism; immigrants; lived experiences

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Introduction

A recent Statistics Canada report shows that exogamy, or intermarriage, which is defined as marriages that take place outside the boundaries of tradition, religion, caste, and geographical origins (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2007), is on the rise in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). The 2006 Census counted 289,400 mixed unions (marriages or common-law unions) involving a visible-minority person with a non-visible minority person or a person from a different visible minority group. In 2006, intermarriages represented 3.9% of all unions in Canada; this was a 33.1% increase from 2001 when the rate was 3.1% and an even larger increase from 1991 when the rate was 2.6%. This increase is not surprising considering that in 2006, over 250,000 immigrants (from various countries) were granted permanent residency in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007), indicating the fact that Canada is a multicultural, heterogeneous, immigrant receiving nation.

While the economic integration of immigrants in Canada has been thoroughly researched, the literature very seldom discusses the experience of immigrants on an individual or family level. Spanish scholar Rodriguez Garcia (2006) asserts that one of the less researched but fundamental aspects of the settlement and accommodation of immigrants in receiving countries is the relationship between migration and the life-cycle, particularly with respect to the formation of the couple and the family, and including the processes of endogamy and exogamy.

By engaging in a critical review of two main theories in the literature that address intermarriage, namely assimilation theory and transnationalism, and the ways in which intermarriage, as well as themes such as identity, culture, gender and family relationships have been understood through these theories, I argue that there is a gap in the literature in regards to contemporary studies of intermarriage. As a result of this gap, I have conducted in-depth interviews with three couples in Southern Ontario who are intermarried to gain insight into their everyday, lived experiences, and will share the findings

through the exploration of the key themes mentioned above, namely culture, identity, gender, and family relationships.

Literature Review

Intermarriage

While there are various terms used for similar concepts, for the purpose of this paper, the term intermarriage will be used to refer to "the smaller proportion of marriages that take place outside the strict boundaries of tradition, religion, caste, and geographical origins" (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2007). The term intermarriage is often interchanged with the anthropological term exogamy, which is defined as marriage outside of one's group (Baker and Dryden, 1993). This is the opposite of endogamy, which is defined as marriage within one's own group (Baker and Dryden, 1993). Intermarriage has consequences for socio-economic status, social and relational networks, religious practices, and lifestyle (Gopalkrishnan & Babacan, 2007), which is what I would like to further explore in this research. For the purpose of this paper, the term "intermarriage", as opposed to "interracial marriage" (Qian, 1999) will be used because operationally, the term 'intermarriage' allows for cultural, as well as racial, and other socially constructed differences whereas interracial marriage is specifically addressing racial differences, but not necessarily cultural, or other differences. In this context, couples may identify as being intermarried based on their interpretation of the term and the differences specific to their situation.

Assimilation: Theoretical Perspectives

To begin, three general theories of assimilation have been evident in the literature and are referred to as Anglo-conformity, melting-pot, and cultural pluralism/multiculturalism (Richard, 1991).

Anglo-conformity, which originated in the United States, requires the abandonment of the immigrant's cultural heritage in favour of the dominant Anglo-Saxon group's behaviour and values (Richard, 1991). Park and Burgess (1921) suggest that assimilation entails the fusion of persons or groups where they acquire the attitudes of the host society, resulting in a common lifestyle for all. Park (1930) argues that the foreign born could be considered assimilated when they fit into the mainstream of the host society, without encountering prejudice as a result of their ethnic or cultural ancestry.

The melting pot view, also from the United States, envisions the formation of a new ethnically blended America and the blurring of ethnic differences (Richard, 1991). The concept of the melting pot, which refers to the way in which homogenous societies develop whereby different nationalities, cultures and races blend into one community (largely through intermarriage) was introduced by Zangwill in 1909. Early research by Kennedy (1944) and Herberg (1955) indicated that ethnic assimilation was occurring within three broad religious groupings: Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish and therefore, differences and divisions within society were made by religious category rather than by ethnic origin. Glazer and Moynihan (1963) disputed the occurrence of the melting pot and argued that ethnicity persisted in American life. Their study of ethnic groups in New York City (1963) revealed that in spite of generational change, distinct ethnic identities were maintained.

Cultural pluralism is the most recent of the three general theories of assimilation and tends to reflect the significance of twentieth-century immigration experience to North America as well as the renewed international interest in ethnic group persistence (Reitz, 1980). The main assumption of pluralism is that immigrants will take on the behaviour and values of the host society, while at the same time retaining certain aspects of their own cultural heritage (Richard, 1991).

Historically, Anglo-conformity has been the primary model of assimilation for Canada. Immigration policy before the Second World War was assimilationist in that it provided for the

selection of groups that would most likely fit into Canadian society (Reitz, 1980). Large-scale immigration to Canada during the postwar years provided the movement towards the eventual recognition of ethnic diversity in Canada (Richard, 1991). In 1971, the Canadian government officially announced a policy of multiculturalism, which is Canada's version of cultural pluralism in that it reflects that idea that the continued existence of ethnic groups as separate groups is socially useful and desirable (Richard, 1991). While it is similar to the melting pot in the sense that there is a blending of groups, it is different in that each group maintains its distinct own identity (Reitz, 1980).

While the three theories outlined above are general theories of assimilation, in his book entitled Assimilation in American Life (1964), Milton Gordon devised a "systemic dissection of the concept" of assimilation (Alba and Nee, 1997: 829) through a seven-stage model of assimilation variables (see Table 1.), which incorporates, but is distinct from the theories outlined above and will be the main focus of this paper as it remains the dominant theory in the field. While this seven-stage model is very elaborate and detailed, the main focus is placed on Gordon's concept of 'structural assimilation' which is defined as "large scale entrance of immigrants into cliques, clubs and institutions of the host society" (Gordon, 1964:61). While Gordon acknowledges other forms of assimilation, namely cultural assimilation or 'acculturation', which is defined as "change of [immigrant] cultural patterns to those of the host society" (Gordon, 1964:71), he argues that it is structural assimilation that leads to marital assimilation and therefore should considered to be the 'keystone of the arch of assimilation' (Gordon, 1964:81). This is due to the fact that while acculturation (or cultural assimilation) does not necessarily lead to structural assimilation, structural assimilation inevitably produces acculturation (Gordon, 1964).

Gordon (1964) explains the process as follows: once marital assimilation, which is an inevitable result of structural assimilation, takes place fully, the minority group loses its ethnic identity in the

larger host society, and identificational assimilation takes place. Since the descendants of the original minority group would become indistinguishable from the receiving society due to primary group membership, there would be an absence of prejudice and discrimination. If assimilation has been complete in "all intrinsic as well as extrinsic cultural traits" (Gordon, 1964:81), then conflicts on civic issues are unlikely to arise between the descendants of the ethnic minority and members of the core society. Ultimately, once structural assimilation has occurred, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow. This is then why structural assimilation, rather than acculturation, is seen to be "the keystone of the arch of assimilation" (Gordon, 1964:81). Gordon (1964:81) does, however, note that the price of such assimilation is the "disappearance of the ethnic group as a separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values".

Table 1. The Assimilation Variables (Gordon, 1964:71)

Sub-process or Condition	Type or Stage of Assimilation	Special Term
Change of cultural patterns to those of the host society	Cultural or behavioural assimilation	Acculturation
Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level	Structural assimilation	None
Large-scale intermarriage	Marital assimilation	Amalgamation
Development of sense of people-hood based exclusively on host society	Identificational assimilation	None
Absence of prejudice	Attitude receptional assimilation	None
Absence of discrimination	Behaviour receptional assimilation	None
Absence of value and power conflict	Civic assimilation	None

Transnationalism: Theoretical Perspectives

Traditionally, researchers have viewed immigrants as persons who uproot themselves, leave behind their home country and face the challenging process of being incorporated into a different society and culture (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). Glick Schiller et al. (1995) argue that a new concept of "transnational migration" has emerged that questions the traditional conceptualization of immigrants, suggesting that in both the United States and Europe, increasing numbers of immigrants are best understood as "transmigrants". Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are constructed in relationship to more than one nation state. While they are not sojourners because they settle and become incorporated in the economy, political institutions, and daily activities in the host country, at the same time, they are engaged elsewhere in the sense that they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrate (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). These authors claim that transnational migration is the process by which immigrants build and maintain simultaneous 'multi-stranded' social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.

In identifying this new process of migration, Glick Schiller et al. (1995) as well as other scholars of transnational migration, emphasize the ongoing and continuing ways in which immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous involvement in more than one society. This framework provided by Glick Schiller et al. (1992) allows for an examination of how transmigrants use their social relationships and their multiple identities to adjust to and resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in the new country of residence. They further claim that "by maintaining many different racial, national, and ethnic identities", transmigrants are able to express

their resistance to the global political and economic situations even as they adjust to living conditions in their new country of residence which are often sites of vulnerability and insecurity.

Satzewich and Wong (2006) also conceptualize the idea of transnationalism and the transnational perspective by looking at it as a mode of adaptation. These authors discuss transnationalism as a form of immigrant adaptation that differs from assimilation in that it is one outcome that is grounded in the personal and family decisions made in a complicated process of adaptation to a new country of residence (Satzewich & Wong, 2006: 4). They argue that transnational practices actually aid in the process of integration into the new society, as individuals are able to maintain the ties and practices associated with their country of origin, while at the same time, adjusting to and actively participating in everyday practices and activities in the host country (Satzewich & Wong, 2006).

According to Portes (2001), immigrant transnationalism is a significant area of study because it can alter the ways in which the process of integration to the host society of both first-generation immigrants and their offspring has been interpreted through the assimilation perspective. Portes (2001) explains that the process of assimilation has been conventionally described as the gradual learning and adoption of the language, culture, and behavioural patterns of the receiving society and corresponding abandonment of those of the countries of origin. Portes (2001) explains that this process of assimilation has been traditionally regarded as a precondition for the socio-economic advancement of immigrants. However, more recently, there is reason to doubt that this progression occurs so commonly or so easily due to the fact that most immigrants to the United States or Canada are phenotypically different from the dominant society, making the concept of assimilation and the 'melting pot', which are described above, problematic. Portes (2001:188) observes that immigrants relegated to the bottom of the host labour market and subjected to discrimination because of their phenotypical or cultural characteristics face serious barriers to successful integration. Under these

conditions, the participation in transnational practices offers an outlet for immigrants to better deal with various barriers encountered in the labour market and from prejudice in society in general as they are able to maintain social networks in their country of origin.

Making Connections

The following section will address the ways in which the two main theories of focus for this paper, namely assimilation theory and transnationalism, address the concept of intermarriage, as well as the key areas of focus: identity, culture, gender, and family relationships.

Assimilation and Intermarriage

There is an inclination in the literature to attribute a relatively higher degree of assimilation to an immigrant who marries a spouse of a different ethnic or cultural origin than to one who remains ethnically connected to his own group through marriage (Richard, 1991). Sociological research on intermarriage has had three main areas of focus: causal factors, patterns of incidence and mate selection, and consequences of intermarriage for couples and their children (Richard, 1988).

Historically, intermarriage has been considered an indicator of assimilation since Drachsler's study (1921) on intermarriage in New York City. Since then, Carpenter (1927) has argued that intermarriage provides the most direct outlet by which the present and future generations may be joined together. For Bossard (1939), the intimate nature of marriage made intermarriage a realistic index of social distance between distinct groups and, therefore, an index of the process of assimilation. According to Hurd (1929), intermarriage is both an index and a method of assimilation while Nelson (1943: 585) called intermarriage the "final test of assimilation". Jiobu (1988:149) states that it was the "litmus test of assimilation", and Hirschman (1983:408) has called it "the final outcome of

assimilation". Gordon (1964) argues (as mentioned above) that if large scale intermarriage takes place the minority group melts, as it were, into the host society. 'Identificational assimilation', which is when the immigrant identifies themselves as a member of the host society, takes place, and the remaining stages, the absence of prejudice, discrimination, value and power conflict, will naturally follow. This being the case, it is assumed that those who intermarry will have greater social, political and economic mobility because they portray characteristics that are similar to those of the host society (Richard, 1991).

Lieberman and Waters (1988: 162) state that intermarriage has been a long standing topic of interest for sociologists because it can be understood as an indicator of the degree of assimilation of ethnic and racial groups as well as an agent itself of further assimilation for the couples who intermarry and for the next generation. They assert that high rates of intermarriage are a necessary condition for assimilation. They further argue that intermarriage can have consequences for the individuals involved, as well as for the future viability of the ethnic groups, as it creates more ethnic heterogeneity and may possibly lead to a dilution of ethnic identity. Given the fact that the family is such a central force in the socialization process, Lieberman and Waters (1988: 165) also claim that through intermarriage, the maintenance of an ethnic group is more difficult because a "homogeneous nuclear family, is more able and likely to pass on to offspring the ethnic feelings, identification, cultural and values that will help perpetuate the group". Ultimately, they conclude that after a few generations, the offspring of those who have intermarried become indistinguishable from the host society or in other words, assimilated (Lieberman and Waters, 1988).

Despite the general connection between intermarriage and assimilation, not all scholars agree that intermarriage is the ultimate index of assimilation. Marcson (1950), for example, argues that groups may become assimilated without showing a high rate of intermarriage. Price and Zubrzycki

(1962) point out that Marcson's theory confuses the notion of integration, which is defined as the process whereby two or more ethnic groups adapt themselves so well that they accept and value each other's contribution to their common political and social life, with assimilation, which they define as "not only integration, but economic absorption, social acculturation, and physical amalgamation", where the immigrant becomes completely impossible to differentiate from the dominant society (1962: 59).

More recently, Qian and Lichter (2001:291) have argued that "intermarriage is sometimes regarded as the final stage of assimilation among immigrant racial and ethnic minorities". These scholars suggest that intermarriage provides a measure of social distance in groups and of the strength of ethnic boundaries and solidarity as well as creating "an erosion of ethnic distinctiveness" but that it is often a neglected aspect of contemporary patterns of assimilation (Qian and Lichter, 2001:291). Qian and Lichter (2001) also explain that since most of the recent immigrants to both the United States and Canada are not Caucasian, structural assimilation and all that follows, as defined by Gordon (1964), will not likely be achieved due to the pheontypical differences between the dominant white society and 'visible minority' immigrants.

Transnationalism and Intermarriage

Traditionally, as outlined above, intermarriage has been treated as a direct indicator of the integration or assimilation of the immigrant population, assuming that it implies the absence of ethnic and racial prejudices and that it is the last step in a series of cultural and structural assimilations (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006). This conceptualization of intermarriage and assimilation, which has been widely adopted by social scientists since the 1950s (Park, 1921; Bossard, 1939; Gordon, 1964), has interpreted endogamy as a 'traditional behaviour', or an 'anti-integratory' element that limits pluri-

ethnic integration and maintains differences, as opposed to exogamy, which causes differences to disappear (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006:405). This means that assimilation theorists welcome intermarriage between immigrants and members of the host society as it encourages the disappearance of cultural differences and causes society to blend together as 'one'.

In his discussion of intermarriage and transnationalism among Senegambians in Catalonia, Spain, Rodriguez Garcia (2006:426) argues that "the context of the formation and the dynamics of mixed unions constitute a particularly active and complex socio-cultural hybrid space". By incorporating the concept of transnationalism in his examination of the lives of intermarried couples in Spain, Rodriguez Garcia (2006) challenges the notion that intermarriage is a step in the assimilation process of immigrants and rather argues that intermarriage constitutes as hybrid space in which there are negotiations and accommodations to accompany multiple socio-cultural contexts. In his particular case study of Senegambians in Spain, Rodriguez Garcia (2006:417) found that "there is a clash between the initial intention of temporary migration and the unforeseen reality of 'permanent' settlement" and that the consequence of this unplanned permanence is intermarriage. Rodriguez Garcia (2006:419) explains that the context and dynamics of mixed unions present:

> an 'in-between space' or 'disaporic space' which encompasses both the local and the global and in which the differences of ethnic origin, class and gender intersect and are contested.

Therefore, while it may be assumed by assimilation theorists that intermarriage is part of the process of assimilation for immigrants and an area in which immigrants can become incorporated into the host society, Rodriguez Garcia (2006) argues that this assumption needs to be re-evaluated. This is due to the fact that based on transnationalism, immigrants do not arrive in the host country and give up their cultural practices and identity, but rather continue to participate in both, simultaneously. The same then can be assumed for immigrants who marry members of the host society, in that there is

continuous negotiation of identity and cultural practices, based not only on culture but also on gender and family relationships.

As well, Rodriguez Garcia (2006) found that among the intermarried couples that he interviewed, conflict often originated as a result of different socio-cultural customs, such as the potential conflict between the independence of the Western way of life and African family solidarity. One example of conflict among the couples interviewed was around the sending of remittances to family living in the country of origin. This example illustrates a key way in which transnational practices, and ultimately issues of culture, identity, gender and family relationships and expectations must be negotiated and redefined within the context of intermarriage. Despite this conflict, Rodriguez Garcia (2006:421) states that:

> differences do not always make for insurmountable obstacles, rather, where negotiation and mutual accommodation of differences occur, cultural practices are transformed and re-elaborated by the social actors themselves, giving rise to very diverse responses.

This article provided valuable insight, not only into the lives of couples who are intermarried, but also as a response to the commonly held view of intermarriage, as being a step in the process of immigrant assimilation.

Themes

In order to gain a more in-depth knowledge of the concept of intermarriage through the lens of the two theories presented above, key themes, namely identity, culture, gender and family relationships will be presented in order for these theories to be expanded upon and more clearly understood (see Table 2). Before addressing the way in which these themes present themselves within the theories, it is necessary to define them. When referring to the term ‘identity’, I will be referring to the way in which individuals label themselves as members of particular groups (Karp et al., 2004).

Culture is defined, according to Orbe and Harris (2001:6), as learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviours common to a particular group of people; culture forges a group's identity and assists in its survival". Gender can be understood as the socially constructed meanings ascribed to the physical, biological, psychological and social traits that differentiate males and females in society (Mascia-Lees & Johnson Black, 2000). Family relationships refer to the internal family dynamics and the way in which members spontaneously interact with and relate to one another (Riedmann et al., 2003).

I have developed the following table (see Table 2) which illustrates the way in which these key themes are addressed by assimilation theory and transnationalism.

Table 2. Themes: Theoretical Orientations

Themes	***Assimilation Theory***	***Transnationalism***
Identity	• Large scale intermarriage (marital assimilation) will take place once the immigrant has entered into primary groups relations with the host society (Gordon, 1964) • Once marital assimilation has taken place, identificational assimilation, which is defined as "the development of sense of peoplehood based exclusively on the host society" (Gordon, 1964: 71), immigrants identity will be based solely on that of the host society.	• Immigrants should be referred to as 'transmigrants' because their daily lives and identity depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). • Living in a Diaspora results in a 'double consciousness' (Gilroy, 1993) where individuals' identities are produced out of breaking boundaries and challenging fixed identities. • The identity of intermarried couples should be interpreted as fluid as it is being constantly negotiated within a 'hybrid' space (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006)
Culture	• Acculturation, or cultural assimilation, is the process by which the immigrant changes their cultural patterns and practices to those of the host society (Gordon, 1964) • This process, according to Gordon (1964) may occur independently of all the other assimilation variables and does not necessarily lead to intermarriage	• Transnationalism sees culture as a flexible, not a "whole hardened fixed entity" (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006) • Transnational migrants build their sense of identity and culture, not out of loss or mere replication, but as something that is both new and familiar—a mixed construction of cultural elements from both the homeland and receiving nation (Vertovec, 1999)

	• Anglo-conformity requires the immigrant to abandon their cultural heritage in favour of the dominant Anglo-Saxon group's behaviour and values (Richard, 1991). • Melting pot theory explains the process of assimilation as cultures and races blending into one community (Zangwill, 1909).	• Intermarried couples deal with "multiple localisations and cultural backgrounds rather than experiencing a 'clash between two cultures' (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006).
Gender	• Gordon's assimilation Theory does not provide a gendered analysis. In general, gender has been largely left out of the historical literature on assimilation. • More recently, in their discussion of the economic assimilation of immigrant, Reitz and Sklar (1997) found that patterns of ethnic retention seem to vary by gender and put women at a disadvantage. • Reitz and Sklar (1997) found that "ethno specific cultural attitudes towards women affect labour force participation, job attachment and the allocation of family resources in support of female employment and career advancement" (239).	• Mainstream theorizing on migration still tends to overlook gender factors despite the fact that both migration and transnationalism are gendered processes (Salih, 2003; Pedraza, 1991). • Gender "identities, relations and ideologies are fluid, not fixed" (Mahler and Pessar, 2001: 443). • "Transnationalism is not a neutral space. Gender intervenes in differentiating and shaping projects, desires and practices". However, the transnational migration has, for the most part, been analyzed without reference to gender and, particularly, to women's experiences of transnationalism (Salih, 2003: 62).
Family Relationships	• Gordon's (1964) seven stage model of assimilation variables does not specifically address family relationships. There is an underlying assumption that assimilation is an 'individual' process. • With intermarriage, maintenance of an ethnic group will be difficult with intermarriage because a "homogeneous nuclear family, is more able and likely to pass on to offspring the ethnic feelings, identification, cultural and values that will help perpetuate the group". Lieberman and Waters (1988: 165)	• The relationship between migration and lifecycle, particularly regarding the formation of the couple and the family has been one of the least researched aspects of the migration and settlement of immigrants (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006) • Transnational migrants maintain multi-dimensional (political, economic, family, cultural) that link their places of origin and places of immigration. (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006).

It is clear that these two theories present contrasting views in terms of the process of identity formation, cultural adaptation and for understanding gender and family relationships. These themes will be further elaborated upon in the data analysis section.

Methodology

Having presented an extensive review of the literature which addresses intermarriage in relation to assimilation theory and transnationalism, as well as the ways in which they four main themes of identity, culture, gender and family relationships are addressed by these theories, it is clear that there is very little contemporary literature that addresses the everyday, lived experiences of couples who are intermarried. As a result of this gap, I conducted in-depth interviews with three intermarried couples in Southern Ontario to gain further insight into the dynamics of such relationships. The following section outlines the methodology utilized for this study.

Qualitative Research Strategy

Role of Theory

While it is most commonly used with quantitative studies (Bryman 2001), a deductive approach, as opposed to inductive approach, was used in this study. Deductive theory is an approach in which the researcher uses knowledge and theories that have been previously developed on a particular topic to test using a hypothesis and ultimately subject to empirical testing (Bryman, 2001). While this study will be qualitative in every other aspect, a deductive approach, in which assimilation theory and transnationalism will be tested, will be used because these are the two prominent theories in the scholarly literature which discuss intermarriage. In testing these theories, the intention is that further, more current knowledge will be gained about the dynamics of intermarriage relationships and the everyday lives of couples in such relationships. In the process of conducting this research, an inductive approach was also used, where the observations and findings of the study may lead to new discoveries and a "weaving back and forth between data and theory" (Bryman, 2001:10). Ultimately, the goal of this study is to test the connection put forth in the literature between intermarriage and assimilation, as

well as intermarriage and transnationalism, through the use of key themes such as identity, culture, gender and family relationships.

Ontological Orientation

As opposed to objectivism, which is an ontological position that claims that social phenomena and their meanings confront individuals as external facts that are beyond reach or influence (Bryman, 2001), constructionism challenges the suggestion that social categories are external and suggests that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being created by social actors and therefore, there is a continuous state of construction and reconstruction (Bryman, 2001). For the purpose of this research project, a constructionist approach was used in analyzing the data collected from the participants. This approach is suitable to the topic of intermarriage in the particular way in which culture has been explained. For example, Becker (1982:521) has suggested that "people create culture continuously" and therefore, there is no set formula for understanding problems that need solving in the everyday lives of individuals. Individuals are constantly negotiating and adapting to new situations and while their culture (or other social constructs, such as gender) acts as a point of reference, it is always in the process of being formed and re-formed (Bryman, 2001). Constructionism also suggests that the categories that people employ in order to understand the natural and social world are social constructs (Bryman, 2001). The categories do not have "built-in essences; instead, their meaning is constructed in and through interaction" (Bryman, 2001:18). Therefore, in researching the topic of intermarriage and discussing the dynamics of these relationships with the participants, the constructionist approach lends itself to understanding and analyzing the data with fluidity and flexibility.

Epistemological Orientation

The epistemological orientation of this research project is interpretivist (Bryman, 2001). This approach has most commonly been adopted by those who have been critical of the application of a positivist (or scientific) model to the study of the social world and is most common among qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2001). Taking an interpretivist, as opposed to a positivist, approach allowed for the subject matter, in this case, intermarried couples and the dynamics their relationships, to be analyzed and understood through the eyes of the participants (Bryman, 2001). This approach differs from a positivist approach, which is an organized method "for combining deductive logic with precise empirical observations" in an objective way to confirm a set of laws based on probability and is most commonly used in the natural sciences (Neuman, 2006: 82). Another aspect of the interpretivist approach is considering the concept of phenomenology, which is a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them (Bryman, 2001). The main reason for considering both interpretivism and phenomenology in this study is that they acknowledge that social reality has a meaning for human beings (Bryman, 2001). Therefore, it is the role of the researcher to gain access to people's "common sense thinking" and to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view (Bryman, 2001:14). This approach facilitated the collection and analysis of data in which the participants were provided an opportunity the express their social reality which will hopefully lead to a better, more contemporary, understanding of the everyday lives of couples who are intermarried and the dynamics of such relationships.

Research Design and Methods

Since a deductive approach will be used in this study, I will begin by providing a brief explanation of the theories that I will be testing; I will then introduce some general research question as well as explain the specific methods to be used for data collection.

Theory in Relation to Research Design

The theories which are to be tested with this research are assimilation theory and transnationalism. The seven stage assimilation variable model which was developed by Milton Gordon in 1964 remains the dominant theory in assimilation literature and provides stages by which immigrants become assimilated into the host society (Richard, 1991). Using the key assumptions of his assimilation theory, Gordon (1964) as well as other scholars (Carpenter, 1927; Hurd, 1929; Jiobu, 1988, Lieberman and Waters, 1988; Qian and Lichter, 2001) have argued that intermarriage is one of the key steps in the process of assimilation of immigrants in the North America. In contrast, the theory of transnationalism argues that immigrants should be viewed as "transmigrants" as their daily lives depends on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are constructed in relationship to more than one nation state (Glick Schiller et al, 1995). In relation to intermarriage specifically, Rodriguez Garcia (2006) has argued that the dynamics of mixed unions constitute a socio-cultural hybrid space which involves negotiating and accommodating multiple socio-cultural contexts. Since, according to Statistics Canada, intermarriage is on the rise (Statistics Canada, 2008), I would like to explore to what extent these theories holds true in contemporary Canadian society and to what extent there may be other factors affecting the dynamics of intermarriage relationships.

Research Questions

The following research questions, which emerged out of the literature on assimilation and transnationalism, have oriented and informed the data collection and analysis for this study.

1. Why has intermarriage traditionally been linked to assimilation?
2. What role does transnationalism play in the context of intermarriage?
3. Do couples who are intermarried negotiate transnational processes and practices?
4. Do gender and race play a role in transnational practices? If so, how?
5. How does one negotiate issues of identity within a context of intermarriage?
6. What are the main areas of conflict and or agreement within intermarriage relationships?

Eligibility

The purpose of this research project is to gain understanding of the everyday lives of couples who are intermarried. Therefore, I recruited three married (or common-law) heterosexual couples, where the woman identifies herself as Canadian and white and the man identifies himself as a racialized immigrant.

Sampling

In order to locate participants for this research project, I used the non-probability technique of snowball sampling (Neuman, 2006; Thomas and Smith, 2003). Snowball sampling is a method for sampling the cases in a network, and the main feature is that each person is connected with another through a direct or indirect linkage (Neuman, 2006). Snowball sampling is a multistage technique which begins with one or a few people, and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases (Neuman, 2006). In order to find intermarried couples to participate in this research project, I contacted members of my own social and professional networks, and by word of mouth, I was be able

to gain contact information for potential participants, who I then contacted directly, via email, to explain the dimensions of the research project and request their participation.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The data to be used for analysis in this research project was gathered through a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 1) and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2) (Bryman, 2001), with each participant, on an individual basis. Semi-structured interviews make for a flexible interview process where the emphasis is on the way the participant frames and understands issues and events. When conducting the interviews, I used a list of questions as a guide which facilitated flexibility for the participants to choose how they wanted to respond. Because the questions were used simply as a guide, they were not necessarily asked in the exact order outlined on the guide, however, all of the questions were asked in a similar wording for each participant (Bryman, 2001).

Analysis of Data

After transcribing the data from the interviews, I read through all of the transcripts, multiple times in order for themes to emerge from the data. While I used a deductive approach in which I was testing two theories, in the analysis of the data, the approach was inductive as I allowed for new themes to emerge from the data. For the analysis, I used thematic coding, which refers to using labels to classify and assign meaning to pieces of information (Bryman, 2001), based on the four key themes identified above. Once the transcripts had been coded, I compared them based on gender, whereby I separated the transcripts of the male participants from the transcripts of the female participants. Once the coding was complete, the data, from both the male and female participants, was broken up into categories, based on the four key themes (identity, culture, gender and family relationships) and comparisons were made.

Findings

Description of Participants

As noted above, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on an individual basis with three couples who identified as being intermarried, based on the eligibility criteria listed above. The participants ranged in age from 22 to 60 years old and they all reside in Southern Ontario. Two of the couples were married, one for just over a year and the other for 32 years. One couple were in a common-law relationship for 5 years. All three of the female participants were Canadian-born and white. One of the male participants was also Canadian-born but identified as a racialized immigrant from Iran, one of the male participants was from Barbados and one was from the Dominican Republic. In terms of household income, one of the couples indicated that their income was under $30,000 because they are students, two of the three couples declined to answer the question, however, based on my observations of their living conditions, they were both middle-class.

Interview Results

After conducting in-depth interviews with three couples who are intermarried, I have come to the realization that everyone has their own story, circumstances, and situations that do not necessarily fit into a neat package as theories might assume. In analyzing the data from the interviews, I have broken it down into the four key themes identified above, namely, identity, culture, gender, and family relationships. It will be through these themes that I will provide an analysis of the data as a means of comparison with the key assumptions of the two theories outlined above, assimilation theory and transnationalism. In my discussion, I will refer to the participants as follows: Male and Female A, Male and Female B, and Male and Female C.

Identity

Identity, which refers to the way in which individuals label themselves as members of particular groups (Karp et al., 2004) is one of the key themes that was addressed in my initial research questions as it is extensively addressed in both of the theories. The main reason that I wanted to explore the theme of identity in this research was due to the contrasting nature by which assimilation theory and transnationalism address this concept. As outlined above in Table 2, assimilation theory, for the most part, examines the identity of an immigrant as something that will ultimately be replaced by a shared identity with that of the host society (Gordon, 1964). Gordon's (1964) model of assimilation variables argues that once the immigrant has become a member of the host society's institutions on a primary group level, which he refers to as the process of structural assimilation, the immigrant will no longer identity with their country of origin, but rather identify as a member of the host country. This is very different from transnationalism, which interprets identity as fluid and flexible, where immigrants in the host country have the opportunity to maintain their identity (largely through the maintenance of social, economic and familial connections with their country of origin), but also identify with the host society (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). This, as Gilroy (1993) refers to it, can be considered a 'double consciousness' where individuals' identities are produced out of breaking boundaries and challenging fixed identities by maintaining multiple identities that are flexible.

Based on the fact that there are very clear distinctions between the assimilationist and transnational view of immigrant's identity, I directly asked each participant in this study if they felt as though intermarriage had had an effect on their identity. When asking the question, I informed the participants that when I referred to identity, I was referring to the way in which they think and feel about themselves. In general, the male participants (who in order to be eligible for the study had to consider themselves racialized immigrants) did not feel that being married to someone of a different

culture (namely a white Canadian woman) greatly affected the way in which they thought about or identified themselves. All of the male participants identified themselves based on their cultural background and one of the participants indicated that he thinks being married to someone of another culture has made him reflect on his own culture more. Some of the responses were as follows:

> I care about her [his spouse] but nothing changes how I like to live my life. (Male A)
>
> Usually when people ask me that question [referring to the question of "how do you identify yourself?"], I ask them "what do you mean?" so if they say "what is your nationality?" I would say Persian, if they say, "Where are you from?" I'd say, I was born in Canada but I have a Persian background. (Male B)

While all of the male participants indicated that intermarriage did not have an effect on their identity, it also became clear in further discussing this question that there is perhaps a difference between the way in which an individual identifies themselves, and the way in which this is expressed in practice. I found this to be the case with two of the male participants who contradicted themselves by stating, in one instance, that intermarriage had not had an effect on their identity, and then in another instance providing examples as to how their identity had in fact been affected by intermarriage, or more generally, living in Canadian society. For example, Male A indicated that "nothing changes" however, he also indicated that he has "completely changed [his] eating habits for her [his spouse]". As well, in response to how he is able to maintain his identity, he stated that "It never changes", however, in the next sentence he explained how he has changed the way that he speaks (he speaks slower) to accommodate the people that he interacts with in his workplace who are not Bajan. Contradictions were also evident with Male B who stated that while he identifies as being Persian, by being married to a Canadian:

> I sometimes feel like I fit in a little bit more, especially when we're hanging out with her friends, who she's grown up with, most of them are white. Before, if I was hanging out with a whole bunch of white people, it was always like I am the one brown guy, the Persian guy, but now, it's a little different…I think it goes to show that I'm not a typical inward looking Persian.

These responses, as mentioned above, tend to indicate that identity is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional concept, which may be expressed differently internally and externally, in various social settings. The response of Male B is particularly interesting in that while he continues to identity as Persian, being married to a Canadian woman and living in Canada has somewhat legitimized and validated his social connections with other white Canadians. Also, in regards to the above responses, it seems that perhaps one's internal identity does not change, despite accommodations they may make externally. While Male A has changed his eating habits and the way he speaks to people who are not part of his culture, does not mean that his identity has been affected. Therefore, these findings seem to indicate that one's internal identity, at least for these participants, is not necessarily affected by external circumstances. While these individuals are living in Canada and have made changes to their lifestyle as a result of living in a society that is different from their own, none of them identity themselves as Canadian, despite being in marriage/common-law relationships with white Canadians.

As for the female participants, all of the responses were generally similar as they all indicated that intermarriage had affected their identity in that:

> [I]t has made me a little more open. (Female C)

> I think it has given me the ability to be very flexible and to grow. I think that if I didn't have these opportunities, then I wouldn't really be able to have the chance to embrace something more that what I already know. And to know deeper levels of it too, I think it does affect me though now, I identify myself in a way, as Persian. (Female B)

> I think I'm more open to things that if I had of stayed back home in [name of small town in Southern Ontario] and grew up in a very Caucasian town where there's not, very few different cultures, other than white. (Female A)

Based on these responses, it is interesting to note that these women did not discuss their identity in terms of nationality, but rather their identity in terms of personal characteristics. All of the responses have a common thread in that all of the female participants felt as though being married to someone from another culture had made them more open to difference and to experiences that they may not have had, should they have married someone from their own culture. It is also interesting to note the contrast between the male and female participants' responses. The results suggest that all of the male participants indicated that their identity had not changed while the female participants indicated that their identity had in fact changed, but not necessarily in terms of identifying with a particular culture or country. This further illustrates that not only is identity multi-faceted and fluid, it is also gendered. For each individual, not only is identity made of many different parts; it is also constantly changing and being re-interpreted, based on life experiences.

In relating the results from the data back to the literature, the responses of all of the participants in relation to identity tend to lean more towards the theoretical perspectives of transnationalism, as opposed to assimilation. Looking specifically at the way in which assimilation, namely Gordon's (1964) assimilation variables, addresses the concept of identity, the results of this study are contrasting. As outlined above, Gordon's (1964) concept of structural assimilation, which refers to the entrance of the immigrant into primary group relations with that of the host country, assumes that the immigrant will no longer identity with their country of origin, but rather identify as a member of the host country. This interpretation of the concept of identity seems assumes that it operates on a fixed, binary, where an individual can be one or the other, not multiple identities. It is clear from the responses of the male participants in this study that despite having entered primary group relations (i.e. being married to a member of the host country), they continue to identify as a member of their country or nationality of origin. It is also clear from the responses of both the male and female participants that

identity is not a clear cut concept, but rather something that can be flexible, fluid and constantly changing.

Culture

Culture, which according to Orbe and Harris (2001:6), is defined as "learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviours common to a particular group of people and forges a group's identity and assists in its survival" is another theme that emerged both in the literature and the data. The concept of culture is addressed in both the literature on assimilation and transnationalism in relation to intermarriage; therefore, I felt it would be important to incorporate into this study. There is a relatively simple distinction between the way in which assimilation and transnationalism address the concept of culture, in regards to immigrants in a host country. Assimilation theory (variable model developed by Gordon (1964), as well as Anglo-conformity and melting pot) tends to view culture as something that the immigrant gives up or sheds upon arriving in the host country. The common assumption in the literature on the assimilation of immigrants is that the immigrant will change their cultural patterns and practices to that of the host society (Park and Burgess, 1921; Kenndy, 1944; Gordon, 1964). Transnationalism, on the other hand, interprets culture as flexible and sees immigrants as individuals who build their sense of culture in the host society with elements of both their country of origin and the host country (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Portes, 2001; Satzewich and Wong, 2006). Being that there is such a contrast exists in the in the literature on the conceptualization of culture, I wanted to explore it further with the participants of this study to gain further insight into the everyday lives of couples who are intermarried.

While the theme of culture was evident in various parts of the interviews, I began by asking the participants if their spouse's cultural background was different from their own. All six of the participants indicated that there were definite differences. However, every participant had a different

response in terms of how these differences actually played out in practice. While these differences were acknowledged, there was also an interesting response from one of the participants in terms of becoming familiar with a new culture. Female B stated that:

> You get to learn things that you wouldn't have otherwise, and not just witness them but experience them and you, yourself, have to learn to manoeuver within a culture that is totally different…He [my husband] tells me what the cultural expectations are, I ask his family or I ask my Persian friends or I spend a lot of time just observing.

I find this quote to be particularly interesting because while the couples acknowledge cultural differences, there also seems to be a genuine interest to become familiar and have to ability to 'manoeuver' within each other's culture without any discomfort. As well, being that these couples are intermarried, it comes as no surprise at all that every participant indicated that there were cultural differences. However, in relating the data to the literature, I also specifically wanted to explore the extent to which they participated in one another's culture. Most of the participants indicated that they participate both in their own, as well as their spouse's culture, and that participation, for the most part, was in family gatherings and cultural events in the community. There was one exception to this mutual participation, as Male A indicated that he participates a lot in his spouse's culture and indicated that since he is in Canada on his own, he has adopted many of his spouse's traditions and cultures. When asked if he participates in any of his own cultural traditions, his response was that he is always working and therefore does not have time. However, when discussing cultural participation with his spouse, she indicated that, for the most part, they participate in her culture because:

> [H]e didn't bring a lot of culture with him…I don't know much about the Bajan culture and what kinds of things they do. (Female A)

I found this response to be particularly interesting as it further illustrates the fact that the very concept of culture cannot fit into a fixed category and is different for every individual. Both Male A and Female A stated that compromises had been made in their relationship in terms of Male A's

participation in his spouse's cultural traditions and functions. There may also be another dimension to this as well, such as the degree of different between cultures. Further on in the interview with Male A, he indicated that:

> We're [meaning: in Barbados] so Westernized. It's so much like here; everything that's done here is done there. It's just warmer, all year round.

Perhaps because his country of origin, Barbados, based on his observations, is culturally similar to Canada, there were not a lot of changes that had to be made in terms of him adjusting to Canadian life and being in a relationship with a white Canadian woman.

Another aspect of cultural participation that arose from two of the couples was the importance of language. One of the women indicated that she does not speak Spanish (her husband's native language) and this is especially difficult for her when they travel to the Dominican Republic to visit her husband's family. She stated that:

> [T]he language thing has been a bit of a friction, because it's frustrating for him when he has to translate everything to me. I suppose I could have put a little bit more effort into learning. I don't find languages a facility that comes naturally." (Female C)

Her spouse stated in his interview that neither he nor his family would expect his wife to know Spanish since they are living in Canada, however, should they spend extended periods of time with his family, it would be ideal the she speaks and understands the language. Another of the female participants stated that:

> I'm also learning Persian….I'm just learning how to speak and I'm doing that predominantly for our kids because it's something that is important to both of us, that our children speak Persian. (Female B)

Her spouse also spoke about the importance of her learning his language:

> [S]he's (his wife) starting to learn the language and I think that's a benefit for her. I think that our children will have a benefit because they'll also be able to learn Persian from me and my parents when they're around. (Male B)

From these responses, it is clear that language is an important aspect of culture, especially in communicating with family members and to teach future generations. Both of the female participants who discussed language seemed relatively open to learning their spouse's language, especially in order to participate fully in his culture, however, they both acknowledged that this would be very time consuming and with a high degree of difficulty.

Therefore, while two of the couples who participated in this study are actively participating in one another's culture, one couple participates more in the woman's culture. In terms of how these findings link to the literature, it could be argued that Male A is culturally assimilated, based on Gordon's (1964) concept of acculturation, in which the immigrant changes their cultural patterns and practices to those of the host society. However, this is debateable since Male A's spouse indicated that 'he did not bring a lot of culture with him' and Male A indicated that his culture is similar to that of his spouse. This brings into question the concept of measuring culture in the sense that it is difficult to say if someone is "assimilated" or not into the host society by a characteristic that is arguably different for each individual. For Male A, just because he participates in his spouse's culture more than his own, does not mean that he identifies as a member of the host society because he indicated that his identity remains Bajan. This indicates that there is some difficulty in operationalizing the process of assimilation because individuals, and their cultures and identities, do not operate in a clean-cut manner as the theory would suggest. This then, indicates the need for a different theoretical perspective, namely transnationalism, which sees culture as flexible and where intermarried couples deal with "multiple localisations and cultural backgrounds rather than experiencing a clash between two cultures" (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006:1). Transnationalism can also be applied to the two couples who are actively participating in one another's culture because unlike assimilation theory suggests, the male

participants, who are immigrants, have given up their cultural practices or identity, but rather have negotiated this with their spouse, within their marital relationships.

Gender

It is clear that in both the literature on assimilation and transnationalism, gender has largely been left out of the analysis. In the assimilation literature, there is virtually no mention of gender at all, namely in Gordon's model of assimilation variables. More recently, Reitz and Sklar (1997) have brought gender into the analysis when discussing economic assimilation (or immigrant's incorporation into the economy and labour force); however, their analysis focuses on the retention of ethnicity and its effect on the labour force participation of immigrant women and is not relevant in this context. While for the most part, gender has also been left out of the literature on transnationalism, more recently, literature in the transnationalist perspective has begun to acknowledge that migration is a gendered process and therefore, a gendered analysis is necessary (Salih, 2003).

From the outset of this research project, my intention was to provide a gendered analysis of the findings, which is why the eligibility stipulations were gender specific, in that I wanted to interview intermarried couples in which the woman identified herself as white and Canadian and the man identified himself as a racialized immigrant[1]. Due to this lack of literature, providing a gendered analysis of the findings of this study proves to be quite challenging but necessary, therefore, I will make use of feminist literature in the analysis. It was stated above that when I refer to gender, I am referring to the socially constructed meanings ascribed to the physical, biological, psychological and social traits that differentiate males and females in society (Mascia-Lees & Johnson Black, 2000). Therefore, since gender is a social construct that is constantly changing and being reinterpreted

[1] There is a large body of literature on 'whiteness' which I could have engaged with but it falls outside the main focus of this paper.

depending on the setting, it does provide an interesting point of discussion in the topic of intermarriage, assimilation and transnationalism.

Before presenting my analysis of the data, I wanted to address the way in which gender came into play in the recruitment of participants for this study. When I was contacting participants for this study, initial contact and the scheduling of interviews was done solely with the female participant. As well, I found that the female participants were much more open to discussing the interview questions and overall more comfortable during the interview. For the most part, the men seemed rather uncomfortable, especially at the beginning of the interview. After a short time, they became more open and more comfortable to discussing the interview questions. One of the male participants declined to have his interview audio recorded due to his discomfort and seemed particularly sceptical about participating in the project. The female participants were most likely more comfortable during the interview due to the interviewer effect (Bryman, 2001). The interviewer effect claims that individuals who are more similar to the researcher (in terms of race and gender and other characteristics), would be more open to providing information during the interview (Bryman, 2001). While it is certainly not my intention to make any generalizations about the differences between men and women having only interviewed six people, I do think that this observation is important to note as it may play a role in the findings that are discussed.

Gendered Cultural Stereotypes

After reading over the data extensively, one of the observations I made was the use, by two of the female participants, of gendered cultural stereotypes in discussing their spouse's, rather than their own, culture. For example, in discussing the cultural expectations of being married to a Persian,

Female B, who is of the Baha'i faith, discussed the cultural differences between Baha'i Persians and Persians. She stated that:

> Equality of men and women is one of the principles of the [Baha'i] faith, however, within the Persian culture, it's men that are dominant in the family and the women are suppressed…I don't think I could ever marry [Male B] if he, if they were actually still holding on to their traditional ideas.

This is a very interesting observation that this woman points out because she has made a distinction between her husband's traditional culture, and their religious culture, that they share, which has principles which are distinctly different from the general Persian culture. That being said, she also makes reference to the fact that in general Persian culture, women are subordinate to men and that this is not something she would be able to accept. In their situation, and based on Female B's interpretation of the Persian culture, their religious principles and beliefs are of greater importance than culture. As well, when asked about her relationship with her mother in law, Female B stated that they have a very good relationship and this is largely due to the fact that:

> It's also kind of like the archetype Persian mother to look after her children…his mother will cook us food, and I mean, we can cook, but she really loves us so she wants to serve us in anyway she can.

Again, this is a reflection of Female B's interpretation of her husband's culture, and the way in which gender plays a role, in the sense that the role of women, especially mothers, is to look after their family, even when their children have become adults.

Gendered cultural stereotypes were also evident when Female C was discussing her husband's experience as a new immigrant in Canada. She indicated that "he isn't like a typical Latin male". When I asked for further expansion on this, she stated that:

> Well, he helped look after the children, and his attitudes towards women. He helped around the house; he babysat at times when I was at work. That made it easier for me because there would have been more friction otherwise. It's just the way he is as a person because it's completely opposite to the Latin culture. Most Latin American men, women wait on them hand and food.

This again illustrates a cultural stereotype related to gender that Female C has interpreted based on her experience and contact with the Latin American culture. However, this seems to be quite the generalization since her husband is from a particular country in Latin America and she is discussing an entire region of the world, comprised of many diverse countries. Regardless of the fact that Female C is making a generalization, this also shows that her conceptualization of what it is to be Latin American in general is a lot different than the way she views her husband, on an individual level.

Despite the fact that the participants made reference to gendered cultural stereotypes, it is clear, especially from a feminist perspective, that "the secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact" (Ortner, 1996). This view that women are second class citizens universally, socialist feminist scholars would argue, is due to the historical combination of the capitalist economy and patriarchy ideology that leads to the oppression of women is various ways (Reidmann et al., 2003). Therefore, while stereotypes pertaining to gender and culture continue to exist, the main issue is not culture, but rather patriarchy, which is expressed in different ways around the world. It is interesting that the participants discussed the subordination of women and the idea that women are relegated to the domestic sphere as a cultural trait, as opposed to acknowledging the fact that this is a universal phenomenon that may manifest itself differently in different cultures. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the female participants had difficulty examining their experience from an objective point of view due to the fact that they were personally connected to the situation.

Women as "Carriers of Culture"

The conceptualization of women as "carriers" or "transmitters" of culture has been largely analyzed and criticized in feminist literature. While it is not the intention of this paper to provide an in-depth explanation of feminist literature, I will provide a brief explanation of the origin of viewing

women as responsible for carrying, practicing, and ultimately transmitting culture to their offspring, which is a theme that emerged out of the data. The basic assumption is that since women, most notably women in the industrialized West, have traditionally been relegated to the domestic (household), as opposed to the public (labour force), sphere, they are ultimately responsible for the function of this sphere, which involves the socialization of children (Ortner, 1996). Since women have traditionally been responsible for raising children and teaching them how to function in society, they can then also be seen as transmitters of culture to their children because, theoretically, they will transmit their cultural values and traditions to their children as they are the primary caregivers. While this perspective has been highly criticized by feminist scholars because of the assumptions it makes about women's 'natural' ability to raise and socialize children (Ortner, 1996), it was evident in the data that these assumptions still exist and therefore, provide an interesting point of discussion.

In terms of the findings, there are a few examples of the way in which this idea is perpetuated. First, Male A informed that he has adopted many of his spouse's traditions and cultures (his spouse identifies as Canadian of Irish descent) and participates very little in his own. Based on my observations of this couple, it seems as though the woman is the one perpetuating her cultural traditions and she implied that it was very important to her that the Irish traditions carry on in her family. As well, Male B indicated that one of the potential negative aspects of being intermarried was that it will be more difficult to teach his children his native tongue, which is Persian. He suggested that this was due to the fact that he would have less contact with the children being that he was the male in the relationship, he stated that:

> I know other Persian kids who are my age whose dads are Persian and their moms are not, the only ones who can speak Persian are the ones whose moms became fluent in Persian. The other ones can't.

Also, in discussing food in the context of cultural participation with participant Male B, he indicated that while his wife does the cooking in the household, she does not know how to cook Persian food. When asked if this was something that he missed, he indicated that he does miss eating Persian food, however, there would be opportunity for his wife to learn how to cook this type of food (if she so desired) from his mother. This, again, is an example of the way in which the transmission of culture becomes gendered. If we consider traditions and cultural practices, as well as language and food to be aspects of culture, these responses indicate an assumption that it is women who carry and transmit culture, especially to future generations. The transmission of 'culture' to future generations is a particularly relevant topic in the lives of intermarried couples which is beyond the scope of this study but would provide an opportunity for further research.

Family Relationships

While incorporating a gender analysis into this study provides insight into the internal dynamics of intermarriage, I also wanted to incorporate an analysis of the external dynamics of such relationships, by looking at the relationships the intermarried couples had with their extended family. In this context, family relationships refer to the internal family dynamics and the way in which members spontaneously interact with and relate to one another (Riedmann et al., 2003). In the literature on assimilation, there is little mention of family relationships, however, it can generally be assumed, especially is Gordon's (1964) seven stage variable model, that the immigration process is largely individual. This model discusses the ways in which 'the immigrant' is assimilated into the host society and does not discuss the maintenance or neglect of family relationships. Scholars of transnationalism (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006) have also argued that the family has been one of the least researched aspects of the migration process; however, the very nature of transnationalism as a theoretical perspective takes into account the multi-dimensional links that immigrants maintain with

their country of origin, despite living in a new country (Glick Schiller et al., 1995). In my discussions with intermarried couples for the purpose of this study, relationships with extended family, especially in terms of negotiations and accommodations that had to be made, was a popular topic of discussion which will be presented in the following section.

Location of family

One observation, in regards to family relationships, in my discussions with the participants was that proximity of family plays a role in the degree of interaction, participation and negotiation that takes place. To provide a brief description, in each of the couples, only one of the partners had their family living in the same region. Female A lives approximately an hour away from her parents and siblings, her spouse does not have any family in Canada, as they live in Barbados. Female B has some family in Canada but her parents live in Israel, while her husband's family lives a few hours away. Female C has family in the surrounding area, while her husband does not have any family in Canada. For couple A, they both indicated that they participate mostly in her family gatherings and have travelled to Barbados only once to visit his family. Since Female B's family live in Israel, Male B stated that they have been there only twice for approximately one month at a time. Male B also informed that he and his wife spend a lot of time with his parents, at family gatherings and functions. As for couple C, she indicated that since their children are grown up, they are able to visit the Dominican Republic more and are building a house there for their retirement. In general, couple C have closer relations with her family due to proximity.

Despite the fact that each couple has family who are a considerable distance away yet maintain contact and relationships with them is in line with the theoretical underpinnings of transnationalism. While it seems logical that more contact and stronger relationships would form with the family that is

closer in proximity, from the responses of the participants, they are actively engaging in transnational relationships, as best they can. Despite, in some cases, not knowing the language or having only brief contact, the impression that I gained from these interviews is that the participants seemed to make a sincere effort to maintain these connections and relationships, despite the distance.

Reception of Family

Another area of importance in discussing family relationships with the participants was the way in which they were received by their spouse's family. Interestingly, all of the participants expressed positive views of the ways in which they were received and have since been treated by their in laws. Some of the responses are as follows:

> I am lucky that they consider me their daughter and not their daughter in law (Female B)
>
> Very welcoming…his family received me very well. (Female A)

Male C indicated that he "felt at home" with his wife's family and was very well accepted into her family and Male B indicated that he and his spouse's family are "pretty tight" and that he actually sees his spouse's father more than he sees his spouse because they work in the same industry. Though it is only one of the participant's view, Male B expressed somewhat more difficulty in relating to his spouse's grandmother because:

> She couldn't really pronounce my name…she hasn't had a lot of contact with many Persians. So, it was just something different for her. (Male B)

However, he also expressed that he did not feel this was a hindrance to the relationship, but rather it simply took more time for his wife's grandmother to become familiar with him.

Accommodations and Negotiations

In discussing the dynamics of their relationships, there were many instances in which the participants made reference to occasions when accommodations and negotiations we made, specifically in regards to extended family relationships. While accommodations and negotiations amongst families are common to all relationships regardless of whether the couple is intermarried or not, these themes will be discussed since they were evident in the data and also relate to the literature, particularly the literature on transnationalism. In terms of the literature, in his discussion of areas of conflict within intermarriage relationships, Rodriguez Garcia (2006) explains that negotiation and mutual accommodation of differences occur and cultural practices are transformed and re-interpreted.

Rodriguez Garcia's findings are similar to those that I found in the interviews I conducted for this study. For example, Female B indicated that her husband's family is very accommodating in terms of speaking English when she is there because she doesn't know Persian. Her husband supported this point by mentioning the fact that he makes a point to speak English when he and his wife are among Persian speaking people. As well, both Male and Female B made mention of Male B's large extended family and the fact that this took her some getting used to as she was used to relating mostly to her nuclear family, namely her parents and siblings. Male B also made mention of the fact that it took some getting used to for him to call his in-laws by their first name because in his culture, elders are not addressed by their first name. Male and Female B also both made mention of the fact that they felt further accommodation and negotiations would definitely have to be made when they had children.

Similarly, Female A informed that she is very family oriented and has a big family with whom she is very close. She stated that it took some time, and accommodation, on the part of her spouse, who she considers to be very independent, to get used to and become comfortable relating to and relying on such a large family. Female A stated that:

> I've learned that with him there is a lot of compromise that has to do with my family…before, I always wanted him to come to every family function there was, and the I realized that wasn't as important to him as it was to me, so we compromised in that there are four major things that are very important to me that he attends.

This quote further illustrates the point that relationships, both where couples are of the same culture and different cultures, involve negotiation, accommodation and compromise. For Male and Female C, they both indicated that very few negotiations and accommodations had to be made over the span of their relationship because they came from very similar backgrounds, namely from close knit, large families and similar religious and political leanings. The only main area of accommodation was expressed in Female C's desire to learn her husband's native language in order to better communicate with his family. She stated that sometimes she finds that her spouse gets frustrated when he has to translate everything. This will become increasingly important, according to Female C, when they move to the Dominican Republic once they both retire. It is clear that within the participant's relationships, accommodations are made, especially with family, however, this should not be overly surprising since it can be assumed that in most marital relationships, some accommodation for one another is made, based on a variety of different factors, including the maintenance of family relationships.

Conclusions and Further Research

In this study, my intention was to provide an in-depth examination of two theories in the literature that address intermarriage, namely assimilation and transnationalism, and then explore those theories in relation to four key themes: identity, culture, gender and family relationships. Having exhausted the literature on the topic of intermarriage, it became clear that there was a gap in the literature in terms of contemporary studies on the everyday lives of couples who are intermarried. As a

result of this gap, I conducted in-depth interviews with three couples who are intermarried, not only to gain further insight in the dynamics of such relationships, but also to provide a voice to those who remain relatively mute within the literature. After conducting the interviews and analyzing the data in relation to the two main theories and key themes, the data seemed to be more congruent with the theoretical conceptualizations of transnationalism, in that the lives of intermarried couples are multi-dimensional and involve aspects of negotiation and accommodation on the part of both individuals. Based on the responses of the participants I interviewed, identity, culture, gender and family relationships are all aspects of the relationship that are constantly being discussed, negotiated and re-interpreted. As well, in conducting a study such as this, it is clear that further research, both qualitative and quantitative is necessary to better understand the various dynamics of such relationships. This will be particularly important in the coming years when, it is my prediction, that statistically speaking, intermarriage rates in Canada will continue to rise.

In reflecting on the data collected from the interviews I conducted, it is clear that within the scope of this paper, I could not possibly have analyzed every theme and point of interest that came up. The themes that I chose to explore are evident in the literature and particularly relevant in the discussion of assimilation, transnationalism and intermarriage. However, I think that making mention of some of the other themes that emerged from the data could encourage further research on the everyday lived on couples who are intermarried. One theme that arose in two of the interviews was that of religion and more specifically, the importance the couple placed on their shared religious beliefs. Both of these couples had in fact met through their participation in religious community organizations and functions and very much felt that this was an important aspect of their relationship. Since religion played a role in their identity, as well as their culture (in one instance), this will be a very interesting dimension to explore in further research.

The second theme for research, from one of the interviews in particular, was the distinction between someone exhibiting their culture versus exhibiting their personality. For example, one of the participants indicated that her spouse is an introvert and that he does not let anything bother him because he does not want negativity in his life. When discussing this, the participant then indicated that she was unsure if these traits were 'cultural' traits or 'personality' traits. I found this to be a very interesting distinction and it really brought up the question of measuring culture, especially since culture, according to the transnational perspective, is not a fixed entity, but is rather fluid and flexible (Rodriguez Garcia, 2006).

The third aspect of intermarriage that emerged from the data was societal perceptions and reactions to intermarried couples. When asking about the negative aspects of intermarriage, many of the participants discussed the fact that they have encountered negative reactions from individuals in the public sphere. One of the participants mentioned that when she and her husband moved into a predominantly white community, one of their neighbours was very rude to them and ended up moving away. The other participants who made mention of differential treatment stated that this was specifically felt when they were travelling in the United States, however, all of the participants who commented on negative reactions from the public also mentioned that it is very subtle and therefore difficult to pinpoint.

A fourth theme that emerged in both the literature and the data, but was beyond the scope of this study was the everyday, lived experiences of the children of intermarriage. In his study of children's identities in bi-cultural families, Anderson (1999: 14) explains that the bi-cultural family environment "can be painful, exclusionary, hostile and volatile" as it involves the bridging of two distinct cultural contexts and lifestyles. Anderson (1999: 23) argues that the children of intermarried couples are "culturally 'in-between'" and that they are not passive recipients of competing cultural values and

mores, but rather "participative agents, engaging with those cultural models of childhood from which they make their own pragmatic and hybridized choices". Despite the importance of studying the children of intermarriage relationships, Anderson (1999) points out that this has long been neglected in the literature and requires more study because an examination of the negotiation processes of culturally 'in-between' child would allow for an examination of children as transnational, transcultural processes through everyday interactions. All of these additional themes that emerged from the data indicate that the lives of intermarried couples are very diverse and dynamic. Further research on the above four topics would be very beneficial to gain further insight into these relationships while providing an outlet for intermarried couples to discuss their unique experiences.

In terms of reflecting on the findings of the interviews that I conducted, what I have realized is that every individual has a story. Every couple that I interviewed was in a unique situation and different circumstances led them to where they are presently, and this is certainly not something that can be generalized. In terms of my own expectations of the research findings, given that I have a personal connection to this research (in that I am married to a Nigerian man), I think they simply reinforced my idea that these intermarriage relationships can work, that differences can be overcome, negotiated, accommodated and reinterpreted, as long as there is a will to do so. This was particularly shown with the couple I interviewed who have been married for thirty years and have raised three children into adulthood. In terms of assimilation theory versus transnationalism, I would say that the findings of this are more in line with transnationalism, with only one example (Male A's participation solely in his wife's culture) that would fall in line with assimilation theory. What I came to realize at the end of this research is that I am not in the position, nor was it ever my intention, to label individuals as 'assimilated' or as 'transnational'; however, I do think, based on my findings, that there is generally participation in both cultures, and this is something that is constantly being negotiated and

discussed and the male participants, who are immigrants, continue to identify with their country of origin.

In terms of limitations, the main area of difficulty that I encountered as a researcher was the time constraints of this project. The fact that there was a very small window of time in which to receive ethics approval, begin recruitment and arrange interviews with not only individuals, but couples in this instance, made this project very challenging. As well, time constraints also played a role in the sample size of this study, which is also a significant limitation. Since I was only able to interview six individuals who were intermarried, my findings cannot be generalized, however, I am confident there is still value in the findings of providing an in-depth view into the lives of intermarried couples and there is certainly a call for further research, both qualitative and quantitative, on the same topic. This study is in keeping with the very nature of qualitative research in that its purpose is to open further avenues of research.

As I mentioned above in the methodology section, recruiting couples for this study proved to be quite difficult. The main difficulty was finding participants that I was not personally connected to in any way (which was one of the stipulations of approval made by the Research Ethics Board) and having them agree to be interviewed. It is possible that the topic of the research also made it more difficult to recruit due to the fact that the participants had to be willing to discuss their personal experiences in their marital relationships. This is not something that everyone would be comfortable with.

Another limitation, or perhaps just something to make mention of, is my own personal social location in conducting this research. I, personally, am 'intermarried', which is one of the reasons that I chose to conduct research on this topic, and I informed all of the participants of this during the interviews. While it was my intention to allow all of the participants to 'tell their story', it is

important for me to acknowledge that the questions that I chose to ask during the interview, as well as the way in which I interpret the responses reflect by my own personal experience. This is another reason why further research, both qualitative and quantitative would be beneficial in this topic area to see how findings may be similar or different depending on the researcher and project design.

Finally, another limitation of this study that also needs to be acknowledged is my relations, as a researcher, with the participants. Since two of the three couples I interviewed were in the same age range as me, I felt very comfortable conducting the interviews and asking many probing questions if I needed a point to be clarified. However, I noticed that my comfort level significantly decreased when I conducted an interview with a couple who was significantly older. Upon arriving at the home of the participants, I was greeted with a sense of scepticism and discomfort from the male participant specifically, which somewhat set the tone for the interviews. While I asked all of the interview questions of both participants, (however, as mentioned above, the male participant declined to be audio recorded), I did not feel comfortable asking a lot of probing questions as I did not want to be rude or too nosy. When reflecting on this further, I realize that not only was this discomfort due to the way in which I was received by the participants upon arriving at their own, but also my social location, or perhaps the way in which I was socialized, to be polite and respectful of those who are older than me (especially if they are similar in age to my parents). Since, while conducting the research, I was in the position of ‘researcher’, I was somewhat surprised that my own personal biases would come into play, so much so that it could affect the results of the study. Based on this experience, I have realized that there is really no such thing as objective research because researchers are individuals who have their own story, and ultimately biases, that affect their research. The best I can hope for is that I have adequately and accurately represented and analyzed the stories of the participants in this research.

APPENDIX 1

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (collected in writing)

1) Sex: Male __ Female __

2) Age: _____

3) Marital Status: Married __ Common-Law __

4) How long have you been married or in a common-law relationship? _____

5) Country of Origin: _____

6) If not Canada, how many years have you lived in Canada? _____

7) Household Income: __ 0-30,000/year

__ 31,000-60,000/year
__ 61,000-90,000/year
__ 90,000+ /year

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) How, when and where did you and your spouse meet?

2) What is your spouse's background? How is it different from yours?

3) What would your say are the positive aspects of being intermarried? The negative aspects?

4) Do you and your spouse participate in one another's culture? If so, how? If not, why not?

5) Would you say that intermarriage has had an effect on your identity (i.e. the way that you think and feel about yourself)? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways?

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