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Race, racism, and multiracial couples : a social constructionist perspective

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RACE, RACISM, AND MULTIRACIAL COUPLES: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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Master of Arts
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Abstract

The history of the creation of racial categories is intrinsically linked to the existence of the taboo surrounding multiracial couples. This paper exposes the beginnings of how skin became a tool of oppression, race became a reality, and whiteness became normalized. Furthermore, science and academia are exposed in their biased search for an objective truth, that in Etienne Balibar's words, "(could) integrate the city into the cosmos" (2003), thereby justifying whiteness, segregation, and the status quo. Moreover, this paper then addresses the new formations and manifestations of racism that exist today and exposes their origins. The final section of this paper addresses Canadian multicultural policy and questions its hand in perpetuating and legitimating essentialized cultural and racial categories. The impact of multiculturalism on multiracial couples and multiracality is also addressed, and further anti-racist solutions are suggested to combat the persistence and prevalence of racism.

Key words: multiracial couples, critical race theory, racism, critical white studies, multiculturalism

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This is dedicated to every teacher, student, and contributor of this master's program in 'Immigration and Settlement Studies' for fostering such an inspirational and positive learning environment. Thank you.

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Introduction

The history of the creation of racial categories is intrinsically linked to the existence of the taboo surrounding multiracial couples. This paper exposes the beginnings of how skin became a tool of oppression, race became a reality, and whiteness became normalized. Through addressing the historical constructions of multiracial couples, one can gain a clearer picture of the importance of racialized space to the perceived authenticity of race. Furthermore, within this paper science and academia are exposed in their biased search for an objective truth, that in Etienne Balibar's words, "(could) integrate the city into the cosmos" (2003), thereby justifying whiteness, segregation, and the status quo.

Moreover, now formations and manifestations of racism are addressed and their origins are exposed. As I depict in section two, our current language, thought, and conceptual understanding of race is so deeply entrenched in the historical origins of race that we are simply re-inventing, re-creating, and re-enacting race as a lived reality on both a conscious and unconscious level. The final section of this paper addresses Canadian multicultural policy and questions its hand in perpetuating and legitimating essentialized cultural and racial categories. The impact of multiculturalism on multiracial couples and multiracality is also addressed, and further anti-racist solutions are suggested to combat the persistence and prevalence of racism. It is important to note for the purposes of this masters program in 'Immigration and Settlement Studies' that migration is a major factor influencing the prevalence of multiracial couples in Canada. The 2001 census indicated that almost 7% of foreign-born individuals were involved

in a mixed union compared to only 2% of Canadian-born (Milan and Hamm, 2004, p.5).

Furthermore, this paper uses social construction theory to address the creation and the re-creation of racial categories. Social constructionism is a sociological theory which exposes the ways in which individuals create and participate in a 'perceived reality'. Social constructionism also looks at the various ways in which this perceived reality is then institutionalized and transformed into tradition. Throughout this paper several bodies of literature have been used to expose the origins and persistence of discrimination towards multiracial couples. These bodies of literature included critical race theory, critical white studies, biological and scientific racism, and sociological quantitative and qualitative studies. It is also important to note the difficulty in addressing arbitrary categories such as 'black' and 'white' that simply exist in our collective minds. Moreover, the term 'multiracial couple', becomes even more problematic to use because the term itself assumes the reality of race. However, in order to address the origins or race and its relevance to multiracial couples, it is necessary to use these terms. Finally, this paper uncovers the reality that because of our inability to disconnect from race and power relations as they have been constructed in the past, racism and power relations continue to flourish through these deeply embedded roots.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part One: The Construction of Race and the Desire for Knowledge

i.   Colonialism, Capitalism, and the Invention of Race

Although the connection between the existence of race as a concept and the social construction of whiteness is seemingly unclear, historically, the invention of race is very closely related to the construction of whiteness as an identity. White explorers became preoccupied with judging the differences between themselves and nonwhite peoples of Africa, the Americas and elsewhere as they encountered new land. Explorers in particular from England, having passed through the Protestant reformation and Puritan revolution, were deeply obsessed with social order as they faced the prospect of a new beginning in finding new territory. This new territory triggered fantasies of new found freedom while simultaneously, a deeply rooted fear of witnessing an entire culture and society collapse before them (Campbell and Oakes, 1993, p.147). Therefore, the dark-skinned 'other' became a reference, something that the white society could use to juxtapose itself against, but more importantly, something that could be used to solidify white identity (Campbell and Oakes, 1993, p.147).

According to Winthrop Jordon, the white encounter with the dark-skinned 'other' was rooted in both an unconscious fear of the unknown as well as deeply rooted sexual insecurity. Jordon argues that the white obsession with black sexual potency was simply a manifestation of deeply seeded anxieties and insecurities of their own sexual licenses (Campbell and Oakes, 1993, p.147). As Dei and Calliste state, "Explorers interpreted the cultures of these new people,

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creating a white identity that defined itself as that of a civilized people making contact with the uncivilized and dark other" (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 45). Therefore, white explorers projected their own degenerate sexual desires and fantasies which they were unable to express, and placed them on the bodies of the racialized 'other' (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 47). As a result, the idea of the dark-skinned 'other' as sexually promiscuous, animalistic, disease ridden and immoral began to pervade the European imagination (Payment, 1990; Dei & Calliste 2000; Foeman & Nance 1999). These images were juxtaposed against the idea of white innocence and purity; this discourse (for the most part) effectively created and maintained social space between the European colonizers and the racialized 'other'. Etienne Balibar also emphasized the influences of images of divine-humanality and bestial animality to the construction of racialized formations. Constructions of the races became dependant upon their juxtaposition to the other, forming the 'ideal human' and its imaginary, animalistic 'other' (Balibar, 2003).

All of these particular constructions allowed for the perpetuation and legitimization of the white–European xenophobic ideology. This facilitated and eased the process of colonialism, which was in essence about the control and exploitation of racialized groups. As Baldwin argues, in order to legitimate the black exploitation of this time, the dominant group needed to create an ideology that justified their actions, "In order to justify the fact that men were treated as though they were animals, the white republic has to brain wash itself into believing that they were indeed animals and deserved to be treated like animals"

(Darder, 2004, p. 8). Furthermore, these particular constructions allowed for the normalization of sexual abuse of black women by white men, because black women were perceived as promiscuous and oversexed, thus incapable of being raped. Moreover, these ideologies of divine-humanality and bestial animality served to justify and fuel the fear of interracial intimacy between black males and white females through the construction of these relationships as a threat to the purity of the white woman. At this time, the white women were considered to be breeders of the race and regarded as a symbol of ideal beauty. Therefore, interracial intimacy was considered a threat to that beauty as well as to the purity of the race. (Ferber, 2004, p. 48).

The creation of racialized categories served not only to legitimate and facilitate colonialism, but it also served to support the rise of capitalism in the Western world, which was dependant on cheap and easily exploitable labour. Because the backbone of capitalism was its need to maintain a subservient pool of willing labour, the fundamental structural dilemma posed to the colonizers was "(how can we) confine a pool of subservient labour to menial tasks, when the accumulation of wealth from production inevitably leads to increased economic activities and opportunities for mobility" (Bolari and Li, 1988, p. 29). Differences in skin color became an easy marker to provide the basis and justification for assigning a socially exploited group to easily exploitable jobs (Bolari and Li, 1988, p. 29). For example, this type of oppression was found in the horrific conditions Canadian Chinese railway workers were forced to endure, and black slavery in the United States which was inherently linked to both the economic

and domestic spheres, and facilitated a 'cradle to grave' pool of free labor (Van Tassel, 1995, p.154). Furthermore, through what Bolari and Li describe as a 'new rationality in skin color' (1988, p. 29), racialized groups were denied the opportunity to accumulate wealth and move beyond the socially imposed economic value that defined them and their potential. The beginnings of racism, therefore, were not simply rooted in a group of individuals' xenophobic fear of difference and diversity, but rather intrinsically linked historically to colonialism and economic exploitation which was ultimately a structural imperative of capitalism. As Sarah Chinn states, "The languages of blood, skin, and bodies have proved to be amazingly mobile and adaptable to any number of agendas" (2000, p. 22).

While the social regulation of interracial intimacy was a necessary component to the construction of race and the accumulation of white wealth and power, state regulations such as U.S. antimiscegenation laws provided the most overt forms of social control over the mixing of racial groups and enabled the maintenance of a socially stratified society (Foeman & Nance, 1999). Within these laws contained the logic of what Darder (2004) identifies as "the policing of race", which can be explained as the implementation of official policies and practices by the nation designed to reject and deny the rights of racialized populations (p. 7). Furthermore, in attempts to maintain white domination as well as to preserve what they believed to be a 'white pure race', antimiscegenation laws served to again deny black access to white wealth, power, and prestige.

As DaCosta (2004) states,

> The interpretation of kinship embedded within the logic of anti-miscegenation is not merely symbolic, but also had material consequences. Marriage is...far more than the sentimentalized consecration of love that modern actors imagine it to be. It is also a legal mechanism that regulates the transmission of property. (p. 26)

For example, Louisiana courts developed clear legal restrictions that served to ensure that wealth (in particular property) could not be transferred from whites to their 'colored offspring' (DaCosta, 2004, p. 26). In America during this time, the "one drop rule" was used to harden the boundaries between racial categories, by identifying any individual who was believed to have black ancestry as unarguably 'black'. In Canada, although the "one drop rule" was not utilized as a method of segregation, individuals were instead judged based on their appearance, in particular the texture of their hair, and the shade of their skin. This enabled some multiracial individuals based on their appearance, to integrate into white society without any suspicion and were permitted access to their family inheritance, whereas other multiracial individuals, based on their appearance, were denied these same rights.

Another institutionalized method of segregation prevalent in both Canada and in the United States was the practice of racial zoning and the maintenance of white spaces in the Enlightenment Era. Spatial patterns of segregation became a key way in which racial and sexual boundaries were enforced and maintained (Mawani, 2002, p. 49). In British Columbia during the late 19th and early twentieth century, as colonial interests began to switch from exploitation of natural resources and labor to acquiring rights to Native land, state officials strengthened

their opposition to interracial relationships between white male colonists and aboriginal females. This opposition was situated in two main arguments about the potential hazards of engaging in racially mixed marriages. Firstly, they argued that a respectable British society could not be built upon a foundation of miscegenation and mixed races. Secondly, Methodist missionaries warned that Native women and 'hybrid' children might successfully acquire European property which could potentially threaten colonial power (Mawani, 2002, p. 48). Therefore, these two arguments served as key rhetorical tools to reinforce colonial domination.

Another rhetorical tool which was used by white society to gain access to Native land while also restricting native access to British wealth was the construction of the Aboriginal female as animalistic, hypersexual, and immoral. Therefore, the image of the immoral Aboriginal prostitute fueled the fight for spatial and sexual segregation through the construction of "moral" and "amoral" spaces. As Mawani states "Since boundaries between white settlers and Native communities were not easily maintained, government officials in British Columbia relied on prostitution to defend these permeable borders at to champion a British identity and a white presence..." (2002, p. 64). Finally, in Canada the creation of white spaces and residential segregation manifested itself in the construction of native reserves and the emergence of Chinatowns.

In the United States, the white desire to maintain power and influence was not satisfied merely within anti-miscegenation laws. During the 1900's and 1910's politicians fought for more government control over social planning, and they

looked for more effective methods of social control. Racial zoning became very popular in most of the South and parts of the North (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 206). This desire for residential segregation was deeply rooted and embedded in the fear and threat of interracial sexuality and the social repercussions of the possibility of loosing white power and privilege. In April 1916 Moorfield Storey, a prominent Boston attorney, argued before the Supreme Court against state policy supporting the segregation of races in America. Storey argued that any policy of segregation was unconstitutional because "racial mixing was essential to America's cultural vitality" (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 206). Stuart Chevalier and Pendleton Buckley were the attorneys representing the City of Louisville, in what was called the 'Louisville Brief'. Chevalier and Buckley's defense argument for residential segregation in Louisville was supported by a lengthy report containing social science data defending their position that amalgamation of the races was clearly not in America's best interests (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 206). As Friedrickson states, the key feature of the state laws of residential segregation was a fear of sexual contamination (2002, p. 1). Within this Brief, many respectable social leaders and scholars were quoted claiming their disapproval of residential integration. However, the majority of the report relied heavily on the work of Benjamin A. Gould who was hired to perform several autopsies on the bodies of civil war soldiers. Gould claimed to have discovered that the lung capacity of the black/white 'hybrid' was less than both the white and the black; therefore, acutely ill and thus incapable of hard labor (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 206).

The Louisville Brief also used the work of a Scottish geologist James Bryce, who studied America's perceived 'race problem'. Bryce's findings stated that while similar organisms such as Caucasians and Chinese were deemed capable of interbreeding and producing successful offspring, when 'remote' races such as Caucasians and Blacks interbreed, the offspring were thought to be an inherently inferior hybrid. Furthermore, more evidence was provided which claimed that mulattoes had no identity or culture because they did not belong to either race. Therefore, they had no conscience or morality (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 207). Also included in the Brief was a study completed by an ethnologist named Alexander Harvey Shannon who suggested that interracial marriages were already on the rise and increasing at an exponential rate. He found that during the civil war, which marked the end of Slavery for the United States, mulattoes composed of 13.2% of the entire population and by 1890 that number had already increased by 2%. Using this statistic, Chevalier and Buckley argued that aptitude and fertility were inversely related and that without state assistance, mulattos would breed uncontrollably until they consumed the entire nation (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 206-207). This study in particular encompassed the deeply rooted loathing of white society towards newly free blacks in the United States, which formed a critical component of racist ideology (Campbell and Oakes, 1993, p.150). As Winthrop Jordan states "it is easy to see that (the existence of free blacks) constituted an invitation to development of a new rationale which would tell white men who they were and where they stood in the community – the rationale of racial superiority" (Jordan, 1968: as cited in

Campbell & Oakes, 2000, p. 150). Therefore, in the new absence of slavery, whites were anxious about the possibility of white power and domination disappearing, and feared that an increase in racial intermarriage would mark the existence of social equality. Despite these fears which were deeply rooted in social rhetoric during this time, in the end, the United States Supreme Court found residential segregation to be unconstitutional. To conclude, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the social regulation of multi-racial intimacy was collectively controlled through public discourse, government power, and scientific opinions.

ii. The Maintenance of Racial Categories and their Impact on Multiracial Couples in Early Scientific Work

As briefly touched upon in the previous section, during the Enlightenment Era which lasted from the 1890's to 1920, science was utilized as an extremely influential tool used for the purpose of preventing the integration of certain groups, and the promotion racial segregation and endogamy (Payment, 1990; Dei & Calliste 2000; Foeman & Nance 1999; Perry, 2002). Moreover, endogamy functioned to prevent the diffusion of power and authority to individuals who were not members of the dominant group, as well as served to "accentuate and symbolize the "reality" of the group by setting it off against other discernable social units" (DaCosta, 2004, p. 30). Endogamy also served as an exclusionary device which increased group solidarity and supported the existing social structure and status quo (DaCosta, 2004, p. 30-31). As science began to emerge as a seemingly neutral and clear voice in the late nineteenth century, its

preoccupation with the risks of multiracial sexuality was evident. It was through the ideology of objectivity that science was given the power and legitimization to objectify bodies. As Goldberg states, "the neutrality and distantiation of the rational scientist created the theoretical space for a view to develop of subject-less bodies. Once objectified, these bodies could be analyzed, categorized, classified, and ordered with the cold gaze of scientific distance" (Goldberg, 1990, p. 302). It was through this cold, seemingly objective, scientific lens that the status quo and white-European power was successfully enforced, naturalized, and legitimized. Therefore, it is through the use during this Era of science as vehicle to promote what Michael Foucault (1980) defines as the 'general politics of truth', that a justified true belief was created about the human and its differential capacities (as cited in Goldberg, 1990, p. 305).

There were three general positions held by social scientists at the time regarding the nature of race. The first was the traditional position which held that racial characteristics were innate, fixed and God-given. The rule that 'like begets like' or the idea that superior or inferior groups will reproduce their own kind was a part of natural law, and any tampering, such as the interbreeding of 'incompatible' organisms will have extreme negative consequences (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 201). The second position which included the majority of the scientists of the time identified themselves as 'evolutionists'. Evolutionists placed great emphasis on the role of genetics in determining racial features. This group of social scientists strongly argued against intermarriage. Their opposition was situated in two main points; firstly, miscegenation could slow the evolutionary

progress of, what they believed to be, the more advance race. Secondly, they believed that when organisms with such dissimilar genetics interbred, the possibly of producing unhealthy offspring would increase exponentially (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 201). These two positions carry a common theme which was characteristic of the dominant ideology in the Enlightenment Era; they both supported the idea of biological determinism. Biological determinism is considered to be an offshoot of Social Darwinism and argues that individual capacity, abilities, and potential is determined by 'innate' factors such as genetics, blood, or skin color.

The third position which existed during the early 1900's consisted of only a small number of scientists that identified themselves as 'environmentalists'. However, they would not, as a group, have a significant impact on social opinion for almost an entire generation. Environmentalists agreed with the genetic determinists on the belief that some human physical characteristics were hereditary. However, they argued that other characteristics – such as behavior and aptitude were determined by factors such as life situation, economic status, and education. Environmentalists also disputed that the genetic differences between races were not as significant as evolutionists claimed; they attempted to prove that if one could chart every organism that existed in this world, the differences between the races of humans would be so insignificant they would appear to be the same. Therefore, the environmentalists stated that aside from any negative social consequences (it is here that they almost point to self-fulfilling prophecies), racial 'interbreeding' would have absolutely no negative

genetic consequences (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 202). However, during this time, it was biological determinism not environmentalism that pervaded the scientific community, and the scientifically confirmed fear of racial regression through interracial sexuality fueled the white desire to protect its idea of 'racial purity'.

As previously identified, during the Enlightenment Era most physical anthropologists were biological determinists whose opinions and research was strongly influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection. Darwin's theory was based on the classification of man using Caucasians as the idealized models. According to Darwinism, "Miscegenation or mixing of races was viewed not only as degenerative, but filthy" (Payment, 1990, p. 18). In her book titled 'Technology and the Logic of American Racism' Sarah Chinn argues that Darwinism presented a new way of looking at bodies. Through the influence of Darwinism, bodies became a collection of measurable functions and predictable processes to be "ranked, measured, separated, and interpreted" (Chinn, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, Chinn argues that during this time there was the pervasive assumption that the human body was able to speak for itself "in a language that was clear and manifest". Therefore, inherent in this thinking is the assumption that all that is visible must be expressed through the abilities and potential of an individual. Furthermore, through the scientific interpretation of physical markers such as skin color, Chinn claims, that the body itself appeared to represent an objective truth of differential human capacity that was innocent of any human intention or bias (Chinn, 2004, p. 9).

Many scientists and anthropologists attempted to support and justify Darwin's theory by connecting physical-natural-correlates such as head shape, skin color, hair texture, and body size with human potential and capacity (Goldberg, 1990, p. 302). Furthermore, the idea that the 'black' race was so genetically inferior that it would eventually become extinct was very popular at the end of the nineteenth centaury. Anthropologist Frederick L. Hoffman believed that following the Civil War, which marked the end of slavery in the United States, there was a drastic decline in black health. This was justified by this observation of an increase in black mortality rate, higher incidences of sexual diseases, and a rapid decline in their standard of living. This was evidence enough to Hoffman that the black man, after being turned loose in a civilized society was doomed (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 204). Therefore, instead of attributing the decline in black health to factors that were manifestations of extreme social marginalization such as poor living conditions and diet, Hoffman used what is now identified as 'blaming the victim' ideology to validate and legitimize the dominant group.

During the Enlightenment Era, the argument against interracial relationships was deeply rooted and entrenched in the rejection of multiracialism. During this time, the presence of multiracial children shook the society into a state of fear, panic, and defense because as Darder stated "the power that ratifies 'race' thinking is, willingly or unwittingly, grounded in the notion that 'race', whether biological or cultural, is immutable-indivisible from the essential character of individuals" (Darder, 2004, p.5). Therefore, multiracialism

threatened this ideology of purity and separateness by posing a threat to these essentialized constructions of race, in a time where the white identity was dependent on its juxtaposition to the racialized 'other'. As Ferber states, "multiracial peoples reveal that the borders between races are permeable and penetrable...(moreover) the existence of multiracial peoples throws into question the 'purity' of white identity, making it difficult to distinguish who is and is not white" (Ferber, 2004, p. 46). In very powerful statement made by Louis Agassiz for the promotion of segregation in the United States, Agassiz encompassed the general fear of multiracialism during this time.

> Conceive for a moment the difference it would make in future ages, for the prospect of republican institutions and our civilization generally, if instead of the manly population descended from cognate nations the United States should hereafter be inhabited by the effeminate progeny of mixed races...I shudder from the consequences...How shall we eradicate the stigma of a lower race when its blood has once been allowed to flow freely into that of our children (Ferber, 2004, p. 46-47)

Through his 'anthropological' work, Agassiz was responsible for introducing polygenism into mainstream scientific and religious thought during the Enlightenment Era. Polygenism argues that all human races are products of very separate ancestry, thus they are different species all together. Polygenists (who at the time were identified as Anthropologists) particularly condemned the mixing of races because it was perceived as destructive, and the offspring of these unions were referred to as "a vicious type of half breed" (Payment, 1990, p. 18). De Gobineau, an avid supporter of the polygenist theory made this comment about mixed blood peoples,

> (They are) beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, and if intelligent, both weak and ugly. (As cited in Payment, 1990, p. 17)

Furthermore, some polygenists even went so far as to reason that because 'negroes' and whites are incapable of forming fertile hybrids, multiracial offspring were perceived to be an entirely different species (Goldberg, 1990, p. 303). However, it is important to note that inherent within much of the scientific language at this time, is the fusion of scientific terms with moral judgment. Therefore, moral judgments became masked as science through the integration of a new 'objective' language of numbers, statistics, and predictions. Finally, during the Enlightenment Era, Polygenism provided an effective way to justify the mistreatment of immigrants and racialized minorities in Canada and the United States.

Medical professionals during the Enlightenment Era also weighed in on more of the potential hazards of engaging in a mixed romantic relationship. Harvard professor, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler reflected on the state of what was then identified as the mulatto, a term at the time used to define a person with mixed black and white ancestry. Although this is a derogatory identification, it is used within this section to represent the historical ideas around multiracality. Shaler argued that the mulatto was less healthy and less fertile than either his black or white parent (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 205). Therefore, his research validated the popular social opinion that mulattoes develop 'disharmonic' characteristics such as large frames combined with small hearts and kidneys. Shaler also went onto note that the mulatto also has severe moral and psychological problems "From the white he inherits a refinement unfitting him for

all work which has not a certain delicacy about it", however from the black parent the mulatto acquires "a laxity of morals which whether it be the result of innate incapacity for certain forms of moral culture or the result of an utter want of training in this direction, in still unquestionably a negro characteristic" (Shaler, 1900: as cited in Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 205). Therefore, Shaler's research which ultimately served to validate public opinion, argued that the mulatto was an outcast in both worlds "too civilized to be comfortable with the black, but too primitive to live with the white without giving offense" (Shaler, 1900: as cited in Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 205). In the scientific view of the time, a racially mixed couple, were certain to produce ill-adjusted and incompetent offspring that would place a heavy burden on the society at large and contaminate both the races. (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 205).

However, it is important to note that Shaler utilizes the power of racialized discourse which in turn "allows elite groups to claim enlightened and meritocratic views, while applying racist definitions of social reality" (Castles, 1996, p. 30: as cited in Darder, 2004, p. 11). Therefore, Shaler's research is given validity through his power and influence as a white male, and also through the use of scientific language and its claims on objectivity.

In the 1870's a man named Dr. Sanford B. Hunt, a United States surgeon and pioneer in anthropometrics' claimed to have discovered physical evidence which demonstrated that the intelligence of the mulatto was lower than that of the white or even the black. He claimed that the mulatto's brain size was significantly less than both the average white and black brain size. Therefore, he

reasoned that brain size must be correlated with intelligence. Therefore, intermarriage between blacks and whites would produce offspring that would be inferior even to 'pure blooded' blacks. He also argued that the evolutionary differences between the races were so great that it would take thousands of years for blacks to gain the intellectual capabilities of whites (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 201). It is also important to note again that the social construction of the idea of 'pure races' was essential to creating and enforcing racial boundaries. However, another individual who had a slightly different opinion of the mulatto was Henry Guppy, a fellow of the London Anthropological society. Guppy claimed, that although few pure blooded 'negroes' could occupy positions of responsibility and trust; some mulattoes could potentially occupy these same positions (Bolt, 1971, p. 23).

Inherent within these scientific claims on the human body is the declaration of *truth,* which became intricately tied to *belief*, and thus produced *knowledge.* This knowledge constructed 'whiteness' as the standard for humanity. Furthermore, it was through the exercise and power of the 'white standard' that to this invisibility, the privileges of normalcy and unexamindness were granted and therefore "reserve(d) for markeness (are) the characteristics of derivedness, deviation, secondariness and examinability, which function as indices of disempowerment" (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 6). Therefore, racialized bodies in the Enlightenment Era were subject to examination and judgment through a white oppressive lens that served to confirm the existence of the radicalized 'otherness' and justify white power. As Amanda Lewis states,

"Racialization...has always been about both meaning and domination. The racialization of whites has always been tied intimately to a history of defining *self* both through the symbolic construction of *the other* and through the actual domination of others" (2004, p. 630). Finally, the deeply rooted history of this radicalized 'otherness' continued to provide the foundation on which new forms and manifestations of racism and discrimination thrived in the twentieth century.

iii. Racism and the Construction of Multiracial Couples in Popular and Academic Literature 1950-1970

Despite the reality that by the mid-twentieth century almost all of the racist scientific claims of the Enlightenment Era were dismissed, a new racist language and discourse emerged to fit this new terrain. In an attempt to understand the logic behind segregationist ideology during the 1960's, Charles Stember (1976) studied the files of an organization that retained an extensive sample of extremist journal publications during this period. Though an analysis of this literature, Stember was able to firstly, identify the key rhetorical tools used to invoke fear of interracial sexuality, and secondly, expose the reality that the language used to support segregation during the 1960's and 1970's is very much entrenched in the white-colonialist discourse of the Enlightenment Era.

Included in Stember's study was a sample of all issues such as *The Chronicle, The National Chronicle, Common Sense,* and *The Councilor.* Stember's original sample size consisted of 568 journals from which he selected at 10% representative sample (or 57 issues) based on the prevalence of each of the journals. Stember then counted the number of times interracial intimacy was

refernced and observed the "degree and prominence of each" (Stember, 1976 p.19). The prevalence of negative constructions of interracial relationships was very high within the sample; Stember found that 39 out of the 57 issues (or 70%) contained one item which contained references to interracial intimacy. All together the 39 issues contained 141 items which negatively referred to interracial sex (which is an average of 4 per issue). In total, 1/5 contained major stories and 4/5 contained small ads these items ranged from major news or feature stories to small ads (Stember, 1976, p.20).

Stember also found that where photographs were used, there was a theme that arose among most of the images, the display of black males and white females displaying closeness. This image, as previously addressed in this paper, still continues to carry many of the same meanings, and its use in these journals is intended to arouse the same fear and hatred that it did historically. Furthermore, another theme Stember found within the photographs used to depict interracial relationships, were pictures of interracial couples with their children intended to send the message that with interracial marriage comes multiracial children who will therefore be marginalized in society (Stember, 1976, p. 21). This ideology that multiracial individuals are somehow inherently outcasts in society has also existed in social discourse and scientific literature dating back to the early twentieth century, and within this paper the nature of this ideology was addressed through the works of Shaler, Hunt, and Guppy. However, it is made clear through Stember's findings that these particular constructions of

multiracial individuals still persisted in the 1960's and were used as grounds for maintaining and promoting a fear of integration.

The study also noted that, many of the articles constructed interracial romantic relationships to be connected with illegal activity such as drugs, and made claims that there was a new 'spreading cult' of interracial sex. Furthermore, many articles connected interracial sex with Hollywood movies, hippie culture and civil rights (Stember, 1976, p.21). This ideology of fear surrounding a perceived 'spreading disease' of interracial intimacy was also prevalent historically, and in this paper directly addressed though the work of Alexander Harvey Shannon, who claimed that after the Civil War mulattos were increasing at such an exponential rate that, without state regulation, they would overrun the nation. However, forty years later interracial relationships continued to be relatively uncommon, therefore providing evidence that the ideology of a 'spreading disease' of interracial intimacy was used primarily to instill fear. Finally, Stember's findings suggested that much of the segregationist literature of the 1960's was situated in the fear of interracial marriage, sex and procreation.

However, these particular constructions of multiracial couples were not isolated to segregationist literature, but also found within academic literature at the time. Much like science during the Enlightenment Era sought after an objective truth that could define multiracial sexuality as filthy, much of the academic literature during the 1960's and 1970's sought to prove that multiracality and multiracial couples were unhealthy. It is also important to note the power of neutrality and objectivity that society lends to each of these

disciplines, as well as the importance of the perception of objectivity to the influence of the ideas and stereotypes that they support.

The academic literature that addressed interracial marriage during this time was riddled with stereotypes, biases and racism that resonate of racialized ideologies as they have been constructed in the past. As Kalmijn (1993) argues, much of the theory on interracial marriage was developed during the 1960's and 1970's, and then quickly declined (as cited in Foeman and Nance, 1999). Foeman and Nance (1999) completed an extensive analysis of the social research conducted in the area of interracial relationships during the time period of the 1950's to the 1970's. They concluded that there were four areas of mythology that were prevalent within most of this research. These four areas of mythology can be directly traced back to ideologies and opinions that prevailed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first myth, ties directly to the social discourses found in the early years of colonization, this is the myth of black hyper-sexuality. This myth claims that 'black' people have unusually high sex drives, and are 'slaves' to this desire. As previously mentioned, images of divine-humanality and primitive bestial-animality have very early origins dating back to the formation of concepts of race itself. Several researchers during the 1960's attempted to authenticate this claim; however it is not surprising that none of the research conducted provided any evidence that supports this racist stereotype (Brayboy, 1966; Porterfield, 1982; Smith, 1966: as cited in Foeman and Nance, 1999).

The second area of mythology found in the research in the 1950's to 1970's is the myth of *hypergamy*, or status marrying. Many of the supporters of this theory are avid supporters of exchange-type theories (Kalmijn, 1993; Schoen & Wooldredge, 1989; Van den Berghe, 1960: as cited in Foeman & Nance, 1999). Supporters of this theory argue that racialized minorities often marry white individuals for their status. Furthermore, to explain the prevalence of economically successful visible minorities marrying white individuals, the white partner is said to exchange the status of her race for the higher socioeconomic standing of their visible minority partner (Foeman and Nance, 1999, p. 543). However, recently there has been significant amount of research completed to contest these claims, and indicate other variables which are more important than simple socio-economic exchange, and much research argues that greater equality rather than inequality increases the likelihood of interracial romantic relationships (Foeman and Nance, 1999, p. 544,). This theme of racialized minorities depending on their 'white' partner to improve their 'troublesome' condition through intermarriage was also prevalent within the social scientific work that existed in the Enlightenment Era. During this time, racial theorists believed that 'blacks' universally could not help but be sexually attracted to 'whites'. This, they justified, could be explained because to blacks, interracial mating meant evolutionary progress, which is what each human constantly strived towards (Hovenkamp, 1985, p. 204).

The third area of mythology which is found within some academic work during this time is the myth of interracial relationships as a manifestation of

neurotic conflict (Foeman & Nance, 1999, p. 544). Brayboy (1966) argued that whites who engage in relationships with visible minorities are doing so in an attempt to act out, to punish their parents, or to make a social statement (Brayboy, 1966: as cited in Foeman & Nance, 1999). As support for these claims authors provide examples of interracial couples who are riddled with problems such as incest, drug addiction, and abuse (Brayboy, 1966; Brown, 1987; Smith, 1966; and Solsberry, 1994: as cited in Foeman and Nance, 1999). Inherent in these studies is the assumption that homogeneity of backgrounds allows for a far more healthy relationship. Therefore the researchers' biases, in this instance, are reproduced in the findings of their research.

The fourth area of mythology that Foeman and Nance found inherent within their extensive review of past research in this area is the myth regarding children of mixed marriages. Researchers have argued that individuals with biracial heritage lack a strong and solid sense of identity. They are often referred to as social outcasts, who exist between the two worlds and can never be fully accepted into either group; therefore they can never be 'whole selves' (Brown, 1987; Cross, 1971; Morten and Atkinson, 1983; Gibbs; 1987; Teicher; 1968: as cited in Foeman and Nance, 1999). However, many social scientists have worked to refute these claims and argue that biracial individuals like any non-majority individual can evolve toward a sense of pride and 'positive uniqueness' (Foeman and Nance, 1999, pg. 548). These claims can be clearly linked to the scientific research during the Enlightenment Era, but also resound of Shaler's

statement which claims that the mulatto is unable to adjust to society because they are forced to live between races as an outcast.

To conclude, as Forman and Nance argue, this body of research points to an interesting pattern; the literature almost entirely ignores the possibility of the consideration of interracial relationships as 'healthy' (1999, p. 545). Furthermore, historical ideas of race continue to be reproduced and re-created through the use of a more socially acceptable language and discourse.

iv.   Current Academic Literature: Moving Towards a Positive Representation of Multiracial Couples

A wide body of recent literature on multiracial unions has disproved these myths identified by Foeman and Nance. Furthermore, new research contends that interracial unions and multiracality should in no way be considered unhealthy (Killan, 2001; Foeman and Nance, 1999; St. Jean, 1998). Some current literature also argues that multiracial unions may allow the individuals to experience far richer experiences than if they simply decided to choose a partner within their own culture or ethnicity. Another characteristic of recent literature is that it has focused on the success strategies of interracial couples. One example of this is the research completed by Foeman and Nance on the experiences of interracial couples. They developed a new model for interracial relationship development, wherein they included four stages which successful couples often work through at their own pace and order. The first stage is "racial awareness", as Foeman and Nance state "Interracial couples that survive likely learn in this early stage to develop an awareness of at least four concurrently operating sets of

perspectives: a) their own, b) their partner's, c) their collective racial group's, and d) their partner's racial group's." (1999, p. 549). The second stage involves the process of coping with social definitions of race. During this phase, a couple learns reactive and proactive strategies to insulate themselves from situations where they may experience discrimination and/or racism (Foeman and Nance, 1999, p. 551). The third stage Foeman and Nance identify as "identity emergence", it is here that "interracial couples view the unique racial configuration of their families as a positive source of strength" (Foeman and Nance, 1999, p. 553). The fourth and final stage Foeman and Nance identified was "maintenance", during this stage couples emerge with successful 'strategies and perspectives' that will strengthen and fuel the relationship towards a positive future (Foeman and Nance, 1999, p. 554). Although it is problematic to claim that for every multiracial couple, these stages are relevant or realistic, this research provides a positive way of approaching the struggles that multiracial couples encounter, as well as provides an analysis of multiracial relationships that are healthy and successful.

Part Two: Modern Racism and Multiracial Couples

i. Transferences, Repetitions, and Translations

At the beginning of his lecture on critical race theory, Jacques Derrida asks the questions "Who would confess today "I am a racist?"... (Moreover) who would claim that they have never been touched or infected with, or by, some form of racism?" (2003). This question, much like this section, seeks to expose the reality of the new manifestations and formations of racism. Through the use of excerpts from interviews with multiracial couples on subjects such as racism, discrimination, whiteness, and coping mechanisms, this section seeks to call into question the prevalent white-Canadian convention of insisting that race is no longer of any consequence.

Today, multiracial couples continue to evoke a mixture of responses that range from subtle forms of discrimination to more overt forms of racism. This new racism is very much entrenched within "old images and schemes of the human and its limits" (Balibar, 2003). As Fields states,

> Nothing handed down from the past could keep race alive if we did not constantly reinvent and re-ritualize it to fit our own terrain. If race lives on today, it can do so only because we continue to create and re-create it in our social life, continue to verify it, and thus continue to need a social vocabulary that will allow us to make sense, not of what our ancestors did then, but of what we choose to do now. (Fields, 1990, p.118: as cited in Darder and Torres, 20034, p. 39)

Therefore, these new manifestations of racism are products of *transferences*, *repetitions*, and *translations* of historical racial discourse (Balibar, 2003). Racial discourse is transferred from one place or person to another through the

repetition or re-ritualization of racial categories and typologies, as well as through the translation or re-invention of new social vocabularies and sets of ideologies. To put it in a more succinct manner, modern racism today is simply a re-production of racist ideologies which flourished in the Enlightenment Era. It is also important to note what Balibar identifies as the 'uninterrupted subjugation' of the radicalized 'other' that persists through the preservation of power relations (Balibar, 2003). Finally, the remainder of this paper seeks to address this major question, "In the face of calls to racelessness, of colorblindness and racial privacy, the question becomes what traces such erasures conjure and license... (Moreover) how do social formations continue to be marked by racial trace?" (Traces Conference, 2003).

In order to answer this question, interviews with multi-racial couples were derived from two separate sources which depicted the different manifestations of racism as it exists today. These quotes depict that because we have been unable to disconnect ourselves from race and power as it has historically been constructed, a history of deeply rooted racism continues to affect the reality experienced by multiracial couples. Furthermore, these quotes expose the reality that we are still deeply entrenched in racial categories and in the perpetuation of the radicalized, racialized 'other'. The first source I have decided to use contained extensive interviews with 21 heterosexual black-white interracial couples. Out of the 21 couples, 19 were married and two couples were in a committed relationship. The age of the interviewee's ranged from 23 to 51, and out of the 42 individuals interviewed, 29 held a bachelor's degree and 20 had

some form of education beyond a bachelor's degree.   The research was conducted by Rosenblatt, Karis and Powell and their findings were reported in the book entitled "Multiracial Couples: Black and White Voices". The second source used within this section contained interviews conducted with ten black-white couples and focused on "their life together, their perception of others' perceptions of them, and their unique processes of negotiating (...) differences" (Klllan, 2001, p. 1). Each of the couples selected to participate in this study had been married for a minimum of one year and have had at least one child together. The sample was acquired through a snowball technique, and the data was collected through in-depth interviews which lasted 1.5 to 2 hours. The findings of these interviews were conducted by Kyle Killan and reported in a journal article titled "Reconstituting Racial Histories and Identities: the Narratives of Interracial Couples".

Finally, because the terms 'prejudice', 'discrimination', and 'stereotypes' are used within many of these interviews it is important to make a distinction between the terms, it is also important to note that these definitions are not meant to be exhaustive.

- "Prejudice" – " an attitude, judgment, opinion, or belief held prior to getting to know a person that is applied, in ignorance, to that person and is adverse to that person"
- "Discrimination" – an "action that treats a person differently based on the social category in which one classifies that person. The term usually refers to treatment that is adverse to a person in a certain category"
- "Stereotyping" – " is a process of ascribing simplistic, uniform, often negative, characteristics to all people whom one classifies in a particular category" (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 2).

In order to maintain the existence of racial categories we need to create and re-create a new social vocabulary that justifies and perpetuates the status quo. Thus, racial categories need to continue to be verified and renewed through these social vocabularies and sets of ideologies.   In this first quote Patricia explains an instance where a comment was made to her when she was driving in their family vehicle,

> One night we were driving...and these guys pulled up to us and said, "Hey, zebras. Hey, there's a zebra family.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 129)

Words such as 'zebra', 'Oreo' and 'jungle fever' carry many derogatory implications, and are in the current context, often used to project an image of two halves that both visually and socially cannot fit together. These terms are a more popular replacement for traditional racist language, particularly because they convey a similar hatred while refraining from any term or action that is outwardly rejected in modern society.   Therefore, these terms are new *translations* of language that historically were used to discriminate. Finally, these terms seek to firstly, verify the existence of racial categories, and secondly, maintain and defend historical ideas of spatial segregation between these constructed racial categories.

Despite our greater knowledge of technology and science over the last hundred years that served to disprove the racist scientific claims of the Enlightenment Era and refuted the reality of racial categories all together, racism continues to exist.   Teun van Dijk (1993) argues that the prevalence of this 'new

racism' "has only softened the style of dominance of ... *Western nations. Far from abolished are the deeply entrenched economic, social and cultural remnants of past oppression and inequality; the modern prejudices about minorities; the economic and military power or the cultural hegemony of white over black, north over south, majorities over minorities*" (as cited in Darder, 2004, p. 20).

Furthermore, along with the style of the dominance of Western nations, the style of discrimination and racism has also been softened. Often instances of discrimination do not manifest themselves in the form of active rejection or overt racism, but in a purposeful avoidance or covert discrimination. In this quote Bayard and Ann speak about their experiences at a restaurant where a waiter refused to serve them,

> Bayard: One time we were in Rochester, and we went into this little corner restaurant, and we sat there for 24, 30 minutes, didn't even get a cup of water, I don't think.
> Ann: And they weren't even busy...I mean, this was right downtown.
> Bayard: I mean, there was hardly anybody else in there. The waitress talked to one of her friends or something. She wasn't doing anything.
> Ann: I couldn't believe it.
> Bayard: And we just got up and left.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 126)

The manifestation of covert racism has become very prevalent in a time where (we would like to believe) overt racism is, for the most part, not condoned. One difficult characteristic about covert racism is its ability to guise itself as something other than what it is. For example, if confronted, the waiter is likely to claim that she simply thought that the table had been taken care of, or that she was extremely busy.

Another repetition in the interviews of racism as it was manifested historically was the re-ritualization and maintenance of 'white only' spaces. Within this quote, Shirley who is a white female, expresses an instance wherein a stranger who had previously been pleasant and courteous to her. However, after realizing she was involved in a mixed union, the stranger behaved in a very different manner,

> When I first moved down here...I used to wait for the bus at a PDQ and used to wait sometimes inside. And there was a (clerk) there that was very friendly toward me, "Hi, how are you?" and chat, chat, chat. And then one day, this went on for, you know, weeks, months, whatever. On day, Shane waited for the bus with me, and things changed after that. The guy was, "You can't wait in here anymore". (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 126)

In this quote, Shirley was granted the privilege of seeking shelter at a PDQ. What Shirley was unaware of, however, was that this privilege was given to her based on her whiteness (and arguably the fact that she was a female). Therefore, without even noting it, Shirley was granted access to a 'white only' privilege which was taken from her once the clerk realized that she had violated his social expectations of what white woman's conduct entailed. It is also important to note that because Shirley's partner was black, this situation sheds new light into the persistence and the maintenance of white spaces, and overt exclusion of black access to these spaces.

Another couple experienced a similar event when they were traveling in Canada,

> Joyce: we were traveling in Canada and I went in to...get the room for the night; fine. Went back out to the car and the person in the motel looked out the door, kinda came back in and said sorry, you cant stay here...We left...I was just kind of in shock.
> Gregory: ...We were like a thousand miles from from and you're tired, you're pissed and you're tired: I'm getting out. I know if I go in there I'll just say some things that I don't want to say. Se we say, "OK, let's go to another motel,"...It still hurts. But there's only so many battles that you can fight like that" (Joyce is white; Gregory is black).
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 128)

As indicated in this quote, once the hotel manager noticed that Joyce and Gregory were in a multiracial relationship, he quickly made sure that they would be unable to stay overnight. Gregory also states that "it still hurts. But there's only so many battles that you can fight like that", this implies that the discrimination that multiracial couples face is often so hurtful, that sometimes the best method of coping is simply 'moving on' and 'choosing your battles' and in this instance, finding a new place to sleep.

As identified within this section, couples are forced early in the relationship to develop proactive and reactive strategies; therefore the couple often learns to 'insulate' itself from negative situations or individuals. In his research Killan noted four strategies that he found through his in-depth interviews that individuals who were faced with this type of discrimination employed as a reactionary tactic (Killan, 2001, p. 30). Firstly, the tactic of 'fighting fire with fire' was utilized by a black female interviewee,

> The least amount of negative energy I get, I'll do one of two things: I either scowl back at that person or I'll hug (her spouse) tighter.
> (Killan, 2001, p. 30)

·Another tactic that Killan found prevalent in the reactions of interracial couples to discrimination was the strategy of trying to 'make a good impression'. In his research one white female participant noted her attention to this detail as a response to the negativity that she faced from being in a mixed relationship,

> I remember (her husband) saying one time when the kids were little that it was important when we went out as a family that we were clean, that we presented ourselves well, that we looked nice…because when we go out, maybe people are going to take a second glance more often, and for those people who ten to have negative impressions anyway, there's no reason to reinforce those impressions (Killan, 2001, p. 30).

The third tactic that Killan noted was the couple's tendency to disassociate themselves from each other. This may include avoiding acting romantic in the public sphere. As Killan argues, this disassociation can cause extremely harmful effects on the individual and put strain on the relationship (Killan, 1999. p. 30). The fourth response that Killan noted in his research was the interracial couples itinerary restriction, for example one couple in the study said that they refused to accept a job in Georgia for fear of a strong negative social reaction to their relationship (Killan,1999, p. 31). Finally, as St. Jean argues, the situations of individuals who are involved in interracial relationships today closely resemble the experiences of many immigrants. This is because, as indicated, they both experience the reality of discrimination, prejudice, and oppression (St. Jean, 1998, p. 406).

Wherever the prejudice or racism is derived from, such as family, friends or strangers, one common theme arises; multiracial relationships continue to be

constructed as abnormal. As Virginia states,

> You don't fade into the background. For sure, people are always aware of who you are. It's a continuum from people being thoroughly disgusted and assuming that there has to be something deeply pathological, probably sexually pathological, and all of the stereotypes about things like that. The other extreme is fascination, where somehow this is a, although it's equally unreal, that somehow there's something very exotic about our relationship, our family, and somehow therefore we must have the answers to all sorts of social questions...The other thing is that people often think that we are an exception because we are educated, because we speak well.(Virginia is white).
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 122)

In this quote, Virginia makes the statement implying that individuals often assume that because she and her partner are educated, they are an exception to the 'types of people' they usually see engaged in multiracial relationships. However, a recent study by Milan and Hamm on mixed marriages in Canada reported that the more educated an individual is, the more likely that person is to engage in a mixed marriage (Milan and Hamm, 2004). Furthermore, the findings also point to the Canadian immigration system as a potential contributor to the increase in mixed unions because the majority of new Canadian immigrants are highly educated. The findings indicated that while 5.6% of the Canadian population with a University degree is involved in a mixed union, this was true for only 2.3% of the population with a high school diploma. Moreover, even as the Canadian-born become increasingly educated, only 2.1% of the Canadian-born versus 6.7% of the foreign born population are involved in mixed unions (Milan and Hamm, 2004, p.5). Therefore, these findings expose that highly educated

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individuals who pass through the Canadian immigration system are major contributors to the increase in the prevalence of mixed unions in Canada.

It is interesting to note that despite reality of these statistics, the rhetoric Virginia is referencing appears to be arguing otherwise. As stated in this first section 'Beginnings of Race Matters', multiracial couples were historically ostracized, marginalized, and were targets of racism and discrimination. In Canada, for example, during the Enlightenment Era, if a white man decided to marry an Aboriginal female, the female and her children would lose access to Native rights and property, whereas, white males would loose their 'white' status and power.   Whites who chose to cross racial boundaries were no longer perceived as 'white' but were in essence 'racialized' (Payment, 1990). The ease, with which one can, within their lifetime, be assigned with the identity of two socially juxtaposed races, speaks to the fluidity of race itself as a social construct.   Therefore, during the Enlightenment Era in British Columbia, multiracial families formed ghettos, outside the boundaries of white society and often outside the boundaries of Native society.   Furthermore, it is unlikely that access to education and equal opportunity was available within these ghettos. Therefore, the trend noted by Virginia about assumptions made about multiracial couple's education level is likely to be traced back, and originate from, the historical social marginalization of individuals involved in multiracial unions.

Finally, although since the Enlightenment Era, science and laws have changed their position on the validity of multiracial couples; social discourse has maintained and adapted negative constructions of these relationships to fit into

the modern context. Moreover, as indicated in these quotes, white spaces continue to be created and their boundaries maintained, derogatory terms continue to be re-invented to discriminate and define these families, and these relationships are often subject to judgment and scrutiny. As Eve clearly states,

> Everybody always tells me that interracial couples don't work...I still don't think that people feel it's OK. I think a lot of people, although they wouldn't say it to my face...don't think its right.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 123)

iii. 'Whiteness' and the Voices of Multiracial Couples

When addressing racism that affects interracial couples, it is important to take into account that a white individual in an interracial couple may not have the same level of experience or understanding of racism as their partner. Furthermore, they may have an understanding of racism as it exists on a theoretical level, but may find difficulty in identifying covert racism or struggle with reacting to overt racism. In this quote Nora, a white woman, speaks about her reaction to a racist comment,

> I think there was only one incident where I kind of had to come back at somebody because of something they said to me...about the relationship in terms of our racial differences... (a coworker) just said something about "Well, is it true what they say about black men? "...Implying their virility, their sexuality, and things like that, and I just said "Well, if you mean that they're kind and wonderful and sensitive kinds of people, yes, it's true."...There have been times when it's been kind of awkward because I didn't know whether, I mean, it's not the kind of thing you just want to blurt out (that I'm in an interracial marriage). And I don't want to sound defensive about it, but yet, if somebody is saying something that verged on being biased or racist or something, I want to make people aware that they can't talk like that in front of me.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 234)

The racist statement that Nora refers to is a very obvious repetition or a re-ritualization of a particular construction of black males, which can be traced back to colonialism. As addressed earlier in this paper, this particular construction of black males as hyper-sexual served a variety of purposes such as the justification of colonialism as well as the segregation of races. Today, the repetition of this particular construction serves a similar purpose, to objectify black males and to maintain power relations through racial segregation.

Furthermore, it is important to address Nora's comment towards her coworker. Nora's response to the racist comment is a manifestation of how white partners may struggle with an appropriate reaction to racist remarks. Whereas the coworkers comment was rooted in a racist generalization, Nora's comment was also a homogenizing generalization of black men, implying that they are all 'kind and wonderful sensitive people'. By simply responding to a homogenizing comment with another comment of the same nature, racial biases simply go unchallenged and socially constructed categories are validated. Therefore, although Nora sent out a clear signal that she will not support the remark made, her coworkers' derogatory comment was not problematized or disputed.

In this quote, Ann, a white spouse, speaks about a sensitive racist incident that also has historical traces. However, unlike Nora, she was entirely unable to react in the way that she wished that she would have,

> I work in a (mall), and there was white man who came in. We had these little black (baby dolls). And he was a real nice customer, him and his wife, and he picked up a little black boy (doll) and showed his wife, and he said, "Oh, we should put this on a little noose." And I just sat there, and I was really, I was really stunned. I should have said something, and I didn't, I mean, I let him just walk out of my store, and I felt really bad that I didn't say something to him like, "Wait a minute. You're talking about my family. You can't assume because I'm white that you're not going to offend me. (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 234)

The racist comment that Ann refers to, again, has deeply embedded roots that can be traced back to a history of American racism and brutality. The customer in this example serves to, in another manifestation; re-live this history through the repetition of racist language and images.

Furthermore, in this quote, Ann expresses feeling of guilt and frustration about her inability to confront the customer after hearing a statement that was racist and inappropriate. It is debatable whether or not the customer would have made the same comment if Ann was a black woman. It is also interesting to note that in both of Ann and Nora's quotes, there appeared to be a sense of comfort exhibited towards them by the individual expressing the discriminatory remark. This comfort may have derived from a sense of solidarity in 'whiteness', meaning that Nora and Ann's 'whiteness' was translated into a set of assumptions and expectations about their history and identity. Thus, inherent within these

judgments is the supposition that neither Ann nor Nora would have a problem with the comment being made.

Furthermore, because white partners are likely to be closely involved with the realities experienced by their partner and their children, and because they are often faced with racism and discrimination due nature of their relationship as well, some white partners are forced to see racial constructs in a new light. Therefore, in order to truly understand the discrimination that their partner faces, white partners often need to reassess the influence of socially constructed racial categories, in particular their own 'whiteness'. Dot, a white female makes this statement,

> I think often the white person in an interracial marriage is not used to being…on guard…White people don't realize how free they are. And then suddenly be in a situation …when you first begin an interracial relationship, the change, where you are suddenly aware of people looking at you and maybe wishing you harm, maybe in fact intending to do you harm (is) very, very stressful.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, pg. 160)

Therefore, as Dot identifies in her comment, white spouses are often forcefully made aware of the reality that they might not be granted the same privileges as they have had in the past, based on their involvement in a multiracial relationship. For some white partners, because of this reality, they may begin to acquire a new consciousness that they previously did not possess, and begin to see things that they would not have noticed otherwise.

Whereas Ann would have liked to confront the racist comment, but was unable to, a trend found in current literature is the white partners' refusal to

understand or react to racism. This rejection is identified as a 'no race talk' ideology, 'No race talk' is a dominant cultural convention which renders an unspoken rule of social control over individuals' public and private lives. This ideology can seep into the relationship, and create a situation where one or both of the spouses refuse to acknowledge race as an influential factor in their lives. For example there is a trend that white spouses 'don't look for' 'don't notice' or are oblivious to negative public reactions to their relationship (St. Jean, 1998; Foeman & Nance, 1999). Gloria, a black female made this comment about her husband's reaction to a racist comment directed towards her,

> I told him someone yelled, "nigger." I was on the corner down there; I was with the baby, just driving by. And his first reaction is, "Well, what did you do to provoke that?" (laughs). And I thought, "That's the difference between black and white. Why would I have to do anything to provoke it?". (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 240)

This attitude is reflective to the issues that Lewis addresses in the article "What Group". In her article she states that white individuals often claim that race is not a significant factor in today's society, and that we are somehow, beyond race (Lewis, 2004, p. 624). This color-blind ideology, as Lewis argues, serves to 1) explain and to protect the current racial formation, and 2) deny to reality of group-based privileges/penalties, thereby "obscuring the relations of domination" (Lewis, 2004, p. 636). Therefore, this colorblind 'erasure' enables the existence and persistence of racial categories and stereotypes. It is also important to note that, through his comment, Gloria's husband not only denies the existence and impact of racism, which in turn devalues Gloria's real experiences and feelings, but also exposes the distance in realities experienced between the two partners.

When one partner refuses to accept the validity of the struggles and experiences of their significant other, it may create feelings of frustration and animosity between the couple.

One interviewee expresses her frustration about her white male partner's disregard and lack of awareness towards the existence of subtle forms of discrimination.

> I think Gary was less concerned than I was, initially, and I think part of that had to do with...being a white male and not having to be concerned about, because I remember...in early years, people would do things, like. They'd get in the elevator and assume we weren't together and stand between us. And Gary didn't notice those things, and I would notice those things, one, as a female, that as a black female, where you were always, you sort of have that, always that sense about somebody is doing something different to be because of the color of my skin...We would go places, and people would look at us, and I don't think he would notice that they were looking. And part of that's his personality, but part of that I think, if you grow up in a smaller town and you grow up as a white male, you don't have to be concerned about those types of things.
> (Rosenblatt, Karis, and Powell, 1995, p. 239)

This quotation perfectly describes the struggle that white partners have with acknowledging and responding to the realities of the world around them. Whether it is the minimalization of overt racism such as in Gloria's partners case, or failure to notice subtle discrimination in the elevator, white partners do not necessarily recognize the experiences and realities of their partner.

To conclude, as depicted through these various quotes, racism and discrimination continue to be maintained through transferences, translations and repetitions of historical constructions and creations of racial categories. Furthermore, through the re-ritualization of race, and the re-invention of new

discriminatory behaviors and language, current power, racial, and spatial

dynamics continue to be maintained.

Part Three: Multiculturalism Policy and Multiracial Couples

i.   Multiculturalism: 'Essentially' a New Translation of the Same?

Multiculturalism is often regarded as synonymous with our collective idea of what it means to be Canadian. However despite all of multiculturalisms claims of diversity and equality, rather than facilitating the questioning of racial categories and recognizing the fluidity of culture, multiculturalism seeks to essentialize ethnicity into easily palatable pieces to be consumed. Not only does this serve the purpose of simplifying and objectifying entire cultures, but it also understands 'ethnic' cultures to be something to be "displayed, performed, admired, bought, sold or forgotten" (Bissoondath, 1994, p. 77). Drawing from this, another critique of multiculturalism holds that it constructs culture as if it were a 'project', something *fixed* that can be lost, recovered or maintained (Michaels, 1994, p. 758). This creates scenarios wherein people are judged and defined based on whether or not they are true to this idea of an 'authentic' culture. As Bissoondoth argues, multiculturalism denies the reality that "Culture is life. It is living, breathing, multi-faceted entity in constant evolution. It alters every day, is never the same thing from one day to the next. Stasis is not possible. A culture that fails to grow from within inevitably becomes untrue to itself, inevitably descends into folklore" (1994, p. 75).

Yet another criticism of multiculturalism claims that it advocates and demands that Canadian immigrants place their ethnic identity first and foremost. Therefore, multiculturalism results in a 'policed diversity' wherein immigrants are expected to contribute their separate ethnicities to the Canadian 'mosaic' and

thus, creates a social system wherein 'ethnicity is positioned outside Canadianness' (Mahtani, 2002). Immigrants are then expected to supply an essentialized and fixed understanding of their culture to the Canadian public to be neatly placed on the peripheral circle which surrounds the dominant white power. In this way, multiculturalism arguably serves to uphold, reproduce, and remain unchallenged the systems of racialization through its discourse of equality.

Another criticism of multiculturalism is that this new 'multicultural' obsession with *cultural identity* is in all actuality a new manifestation of an old obsession with *racial identity* (Michaels, 1994, p. 758). For example, in Canada, individuals of multiracial heritage are frequently faced with questions such as "where are you from? ... No I mean, where are you *really* from?." Within these questions lies the need to identify a certain objective truth or knowledge about the individual and their personality, history, or future. In this way, individuals are again essentialized despite the appearance of an anti-essentialist ideology, and we again are forced to struggle with the politics of identification.

Moreover, multiculturalism as a policy also compartmentalizes 'really fluid and flexible senses of place, nation and identity' (Mahtani, 2002, p. 11). As Levine-Rasky argues, one key problem with our current conventional race relations strategies such as multiculturalism is that 'they lack reflection on fundamental assumptions about the meaning of social difference, race, gender, and inequality' (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 9). It is also important to note that when

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the structures of inequality are hidden it becomes extremely difficult to deconstruct and change them (Darder, 2004, p. 16).

Mahtani conducted interviews with 24 Canadian women, who self identify as mixed race, about their feelings on multiculturalism. One interviewee stated her concerns about multiculturalisms ineffectiveness in eliminating racism, and it's investment in perpetuating the status quo.

> Shima; I hate the word multiculturalism.
> Interviewer: ok. Tell me why.
> Shima; well to me, it's sort of like this government created term to like make Canada into some pathetic attempt at patriotism, a way for people of colour to be able to look at Canada in patriotic ways. All I can see is this cheesy commercial with kids of different colours, holding hands. It just brings up this really kinda fake, superficial, 'let's dance for each other, and make each other spring rolls to show how much we love eachother1' sort of idea. It doesn't do anything in terms of racial biases or prejudices. It doesn't break any stereotypes or barriers. Like if anything it just perpetuates them because it sort of minimalizes entire cultures1 into the dance, and the food. So in that sense I hate it
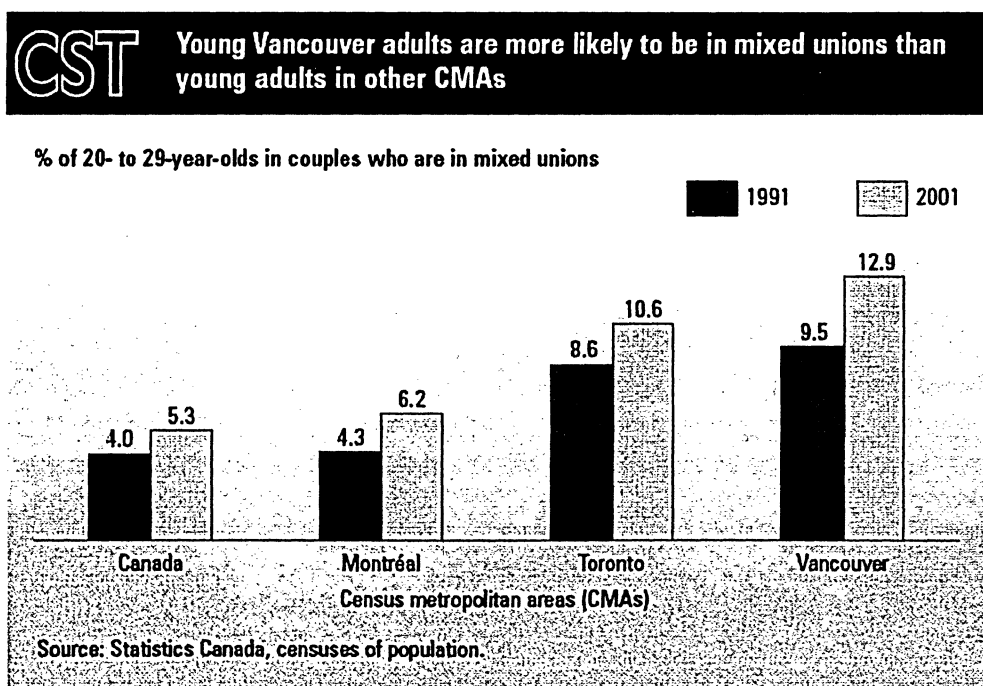> (Mahtani, 2002, p. 12)

Another concern expressed over multiculturalism's ineffectiveness is as Levine-Rasky states, its tendency to "express no concern for the contradiction between the rhetoric of equality and persistent patterns of inequality for groups of citizens nor for how policies designed to rectify social inequalities paradoxically serve to reinforce divisions between groups" (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 9) Therefore, multiculturalism's lofty claims of equality have yet to be realized, and power relations continues to remain unquestioned as expressed through the discrimination faced by racialized minority groups, as well as individuals involved in mixed unions. Furthermore, imbedded in multiculturalism discourse is the idea

that we as Canadian's can be considered non-racist (Dei and Calliste, 2000, p. 48) and that "racism does not make people talk about race, talk about race sustains racism" (Gordon & Newfield, 1994, p. 151). Finally, the key problem with our investment in multiculturalism to end racism and promote equality is that "there is no vision about how social relations could be materially and substantially restructured for a viable shared future" (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p.9). Therefore, in these many ways multiculturalism fails both as an ideology and a policy to challenge the status quo.

ii.   Multiculturalism and Multiracial Couples: Strength in Diversity

Despite all of these shortcomings and failings of a policy and an ideology that we, as Canadians, put such trust and faith, multiculturalism has not failed in fostering positive change in Canadian society.   Multiculturalism policy has influenced immigration policies, which in turn, have created a Canadian atmosphere of diversity particularly in metropolitan areas.   This diverse atmosphere fosters an environment wherein social constructions of multiracial relationships are capable of being reconstructed in a positive way.   One of the most relevant recent studies on mixed unions in Canada was completed by Milan and Hamm and is based upon data extrapolated from the 1991 and 2001 censuses. In their article "Mixed Unions", the authors state that a "greater acceptance of diversity" may explain why the majority of mixed couples live in large urban areas. The authors argue that "big cities provide more opportunities to meet others from a variety of backgrounds" (Milan and Hamm, 2004, p. 4).

They also claim that because of the reality that visible minority groups are more likely to reside in larger metropolitan areas, this also increases the likelihood of mixed unions in these metropolis. To support this argument Milan and Hamm provide statistic from the latest census data indicating that while in 2001 the overall average of 20-29 year olds involved in mixed unions was 5.3 percent, for Toronto the average was exactly double or 10.6 percent. The rate of couples involved in mixed unions in Vancouver was even higher at 12.9 percent. Therefore, it can be argued that multiculturalism has lead to greater interaction between cultures, therefore, has facilitated the rise in mixed unions in Canada.

CST **Young Vancouver adults are more likely to be in mixed unions than young adults in other CMAs**

% of 20- to 29-year-olds in couples who are in mixed unions

■ 1991   ▨ 2001

Canada	Montréal	Toronto	Vancouver
4.0 / 5.3	4.3 / 6.2	8.6 / 10.6	9.5 / 12.9

Census metropolitan areas (CMAs)

Source: Statistics Canada, censuses of population.

(Figure 1: Milan and Hamm, 2004)

Furthermore, the diversity prevalent in major metropolitan areas such as Toronto and Vancouver allow for the potential and opportunity for an environment to be created wherein positive representations of multiracial unions are common.

The authors argue also argue that mixed unions can be seen as a positive outcome of Canada's multiculturalism policy (Milan & Hamm, 2004, p.1). While I agree to an extent with this statement, on the grounds that multiculturalism has indeed fostered a diverse atmosphere wherein diverse groups are in constant contact and exchange with each other, however, I find it problematic to claim that these mixed unions are a direct outcome of a policy that has not yet found a way to integrate individuals of mixed heritage, as well as multi-racial couples into the neat Canadian 'mosaic'. Furthermore, in their research, Milan and Hamm found that since 1991 there has been a 35% increase in mixed unions in Canada. This increase is argued to be a result of a greater societal acceptance of non-traditional behaviors. However, as depicted in section two, the decrease in the occurrence of overt or obvious discrimination or racism, does not imply that there is a greater acceptance of certain behaviors, but implies that there are simply more covert manifestations of this discrimination.

Finally, despite the reality that multiculturalism fails in challenging the current power relations and in preventing racism and discrimination. Multiculturalism and the increase in diversity as a result of Canada's immigration system are both components that enable for an environment wherein many cultures are able to connect on many different levels, therefore increasing the occurrence and acceptance of multiracial couples.

<u>iii.   Reforming Racism: Anti-Racist Approaches</u>

Although it easy to identify the things that are not working in our society and in our lives, the difficult task becomes finding a solution. Throughout the research on this topic, many theorists have offered suggestions to combat the repetition and reinvention of racism that continues to thrive and persist. One of the strongest suggestions was made by Nadhum Chandler at the conference 'tRACES: Race, Deconstruction, and Critical Theory'. Chandler proposes a process which he calls *'re-racialization'*, this process involves the 'destabilization of the oppositional distinction' from one racial category to another (2003). Therefore, one can no longer say 'I am not black' or 'I am not white'. I wish to take this proposal further to suggest that this approach could challenge essentialized and monolithic ideas of culture. Therefore, one can no longer say 'you have sold-out your culture', or 'you have been white-washed'.

Integrating this concept of 're-racialization' through the implementation of anti-racist Canadian education system, is a possible tool and a step to the elimination of racism through the deconstruction of the oppositional nature of racial identity. Kanu (2003) adopts the term *curriculum as cultural practice* to argue that curriculum can be used as two different vehicles. The first, curriculum can be used to neutralize difference and to assimilate and perpetuate the present status quo. Secondly, it can be used as a vehicle for reform, a vehicle for self empowerment, and a place for a critical deconstruction of dominant ideologies (p. 69). Furthermore, through the integration of a, anti-racist, post-colonial ideology into the Canadian education system, other cultural experiences and perspectives

can be respected, valued, and incorporated (Dei, 1996, p. 179). Therefore, through the use of curriculum as a vehicle for reform racism can be effectively challenged.

Furthermore, at the same conference, Etienne Balibar suggests the need to overtly challenge colorblind ideology, and to 'objectify racism' through "solving the riddle of its driving forces" (2003). This riddle can be unraveled through the learning and understanding of race was first constructed, as well as an understanding of how it has continued to evolve and thrive. However, one of Balibar's strongest points was his instance that we must reject any ideology that claims that there will be no end to racism, rather, he insists that we need to believe and anticipate its end (2003).

Conclusion

Within this paper I have exposed the history of the creation of racial categories through the "normalization, universalization, homogenization, and identification of (man)" (Etienne Balibar, 2003) by addressing historical and modern constructions of multiracial couples. Through an in-depth understanding of race as a concept derived out of colonialism and capitalism, as well as an understanding of the creation of race a tool to maintain white power and privilege, I hoped to form a strong foundation on which current racism against multiracial couples could be understood. I also sought to identify the process by which 'old racism' towards multiracial couples has been re-invented, re-ritualized, and re-created to persist today. Furthermore, I addressed the strengths and failures of Canada's multiculturalism policy in its ability to challenge racism, and I also addressed its impact on multiracial couples and multiracial individuals.

To conclude, Omi and Winant identify two problematic sets of ideologies surrounding race, the first, considers race to be a truth in itself, something objective, and something real. The second problematic ideology, perceives races as simply an illusion or something that simply doesn't exist (Omi and Winant, p. 68: as cited in Michaels, 1994, p. 769). These two ideologies continue to strengthen and re-create racial categories despite their fragility and arbitrary nature. To combat this reality, as a collective, we need to look beyond the preaching's of Canadian multiculturalism and move towards an anti-racist solution.

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