# Scrambled Eggs: A Study of My Biraciality

by

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**Abstract**

Throughout this project, I go through the process of researching, analyzing, and examining my identity as a biracial, half Asian and half white, woman living in Canada during the twenty-first century. I use a research creation methodology in order to combine academic research with autobiographical narratives and visual pieces. I begin by investigating the ways in which Western academia has historically conceived of multiracial individuals, often as dehumanized objects for study rather than people with subjectivity and important lived experiences. Next, using genealogical research conducted by two of my aunts, I trace the histories of both sides of my family. Here, I examine the migration of my maternal family to and from Hong Kong, and the immigration of my paternal family out of Europe to North America, in order to consider the personal and societal circumstances that brought together two families from very different backgrounds. Finally, I document experiences, emotions, and encounters from my own day to day life that have had a significant influence on both my identity and my relationships with my self and my biraciality. Overall, by examining my biraciality from a variety of perspectives and while writing and creating through this process, I seek to gain new insights into my identity and a better understanding of my experiences with trying to navigate the world in a racially ambiguous body.

## Preface

Some of the research contained in this thesis includes unpublished genealogical research conducted by my maternal aunt Lily, and my paternal aunt Laurel (pseudonym). This thesis has received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, under the project name "Scrambled Eggs: An Examination of My Biracial Identity Through A Multi-lensed Theoretical, Genealogical, and Autobiographical Perspective," No. Pro00127191, on February 14, 2023.

**Acknowledgements**

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My gratitude also goes to my aunts who allowed me to use their genealogical research in my thesis, and who have done the work to preserve our family stories. I am also extremely thankful to my mother, father, and grandmother for their unending support and encouragement, and their confidence that I would eventually finish this project. Lastly, I thank the friends who picked up the phone when I called them to cry over my thesis, who provided welcome distractions throughout these long months, and who sent me bubble tea to help keep my caffeine levels up. Thank you all!

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# Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of my biracial identity. It is a project that works through my personal struggles with culture, race, family, in-betweenness, and self-acceptance. During my late-teens and early-twenties in particular, I went through a period of intense identity crisis rooted in my mixed[1] race heritage. I did not have an outlet through which I could channel these emotions and lacked multiracial friends or family members who could understand what I was going through, so I kept these feelings and experiences to myself. Now, through this project, I have finally begun to unpack this emotional complexity by laying it bare on the page.

My thesis is comprised of three sections. The first offers a literature review and examines the ways in which mixed race subjects have historically been theorized about in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western academia, particularly through notions of hybrid degeneracy and Everett Stonequist's concept of the "marginal man." Here, I also consider how ideas about marginality and in-betweenness were revisited and subverted in the late twentieth century by postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha through his ideas about hybridity and a "third space," and I note how contemporary multiracial artists contemplate their own perceived hybridity through both art and autobiography. The second part of this project traces my family history through Asia, Europe, and North America. Based on intergenerational stories collected by my aunt Lily, I reflect on the individual and societal circumstances that brought the maternal side of my family to Hong Kong, and eventually to Canada. I then use my aunt Laurel's AncestryDNA test and Ancestry account to examine the paternal side of my family and their various immigration stories and offer an analysis and critique of genetic ancestry testing services. The final section of my thesis contains a series of nine autobiographical vignettes that document some of the significant, and at times hurtful, experiences that continue to have a lasting impact

[1] Throughout this thesis I use the term "mixed race" without a hyphen. However, I leave quotations that use "mixed-race" with a hyphen as is.

on me as I attempt to navigate the world as a biracial person searching for a stable sense of identity that is grounded in self-acceptance. Interspersed amongst these vignettes are visual art pieces that I created in 2022 while reflecting on the themes of this project.

**Methodology**

In "Story as World Making," Kathy G. Short suggests that stories permeate every facet of our lives, and provide ways of knowing both ourselves and the world. Stories are an integral part of our society because they express "what it means to be human and [make] accessible the most fundamental experiences of life" (11). Essentially, "stories make us human. The nature of life is that it's a story" (10). Although Short notes that stories have the capacity to open our imagination and show us new worlds, she also indicates that they can constrain our thinking and limit our perspectives, "since our view of the world is a web of interconnected stories, that worldview, along with our biases and misconceptions, is also embedded into our stories" (14). Since narratives hold power, Natalie Loveless highlights the need "to be attentive to which stories *we are crafted out of* as well as which we participate in crafting; which stories we teach, and which stories we are taught by" (21). To do research, then, is not simply to ask questions, but "to tell stories and to pay attention not only to which stories we are telling and *how* we are telling them, but how they, through *their very forms*, are *telling us* (24).

While stories may shape our ethics and worldviews, they also have the power to shape our identities. As Robyn Fivush and Widaad Zaman observe, "narratives are both the process and product of how we create meaning from the events of our lives," with autobiographical narratives being "intimately linked to identity and well-being" (52). However, they also note that as individual autobiographical stories occur within wider socio-cultural narratives, understanding

the experiences of others can help us to understand our own personal experiences (52). In particular, Fivush and Zaman suggest that "intergenerational narratives," meaning "the various types of stories families tell about previous generations, such as stories of the experiences of grandparents and parents before the child was born[,] . . create meaning beyond the individual and provide a sense of self through historical time and in relation to family members" (52). In other words, knowing the stories and the circumstances of those who came before you is important because it can help you to better situate and comprehend your own life story. As I think through my personal experiences of multiraciality, part of the groundwork involved in this process includes contemplating the stories that I am "crafted out of," the narratives from my family history that I have inherited and that continue to stick with me as I navigate through my everyday life.

Along with the inclusion of intergenerational narratives, personal stories and visual art also feature prominently throughout my work. In the foreword to *War baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art*, Kent A. Ono links these genres by asserting the fundamental role autobiographical stories have had, and continue to have, in both mixed race Asian American writing and art (ix). He asserts that art is "both necessary and invaluable to understanding self and world, self in world, and world in self," and as such, acts as a vehicle for "the subject's need to materialize, objectify, concretize, and publicize the experience of mixed race Asian Americanness" (ix). In this way, art allows for the creation of objects that embody "reworked, reimagined ideas resulting from the subject's experiences of living and being within the world" (ix) in the form of visual representation. While visual representation is a fertile ground for creative expression, it is also a site of anxiety for many multiracial people. Leilani Nishime helps us understand this anxiety by noting that as a society, "we treat race as if it originates in bodies

and as if it could be understood in the same way across space and historical period, placing it outside of culture . . . but because audiences read multiracial bodies differently across contexts, those bodies are a crucial site of confrontation with our experience of race as always and transhistorically legible" (xii). The reading of mixed race bodies as racially ambiguous also often results in actual confrontations, particularly through questions and/or statements that undermine multiracial identity such as: "What are you?"; "Where are you from?"; "You don't look __"; and "You're not really __". In *Other Tongues: Mixed-Race Women Speak Out*, a collection of writing, artwork, and photography that provides multiracial women with a space to "speak out," record, examine, and compare their experiences, Carol Camper highlights the intersection of mixed race autobiography and a preoccupation with the visual:

> The personal has turned out to be critical. Mixed-race people aren't subjects to be studied, analysed and categorized. We are people of lived experience who can represent ourselves. All persons struggle with issues of identity as they journey through life. The mixed-race person's struggle is often not conducted with privacy and dignity. Our very bodies are subject to dispute, discussion, and suspicion. (18)

For multiracial individuals, as we go through our everyday lives, our identities are often assigned to or chosen for us based on how we look, how other people think we should identify, and what communities they assume we should belong to. By depicting ourselves and our experiences through both narrative and visual autobiographical representations, we claim the agency to determine both who we are and how we are defined.

While the autobiographical continues to play a significant role in the construction of mixed race identities, following Camper, Adebe DeRango-Adem and Andrea Thompson argue that creativity also has a meaningful place in such discourses (27). They draw attention to the

importance of "recognizing one's potential for creativity as a source of value for creating your own categories," within and between both "personal and collective dimensions of identity, for both play a creative role in stories of the self" (27). DeRango-Adem and Thompson go on to suggest that "agency means being able to shape our selves both according to and against labels. Having a voice means contributing to the larger narrative about race in a way that allows individuals to learn from each other's stories" (27-28). I have chosen to explore my own mixed race experiences through a research-creation approach because I want to prioritize my personal and familial stories, while also situating them within the institutional discourses that attempt to define what multiraciality is and decide what it should mean. Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk indicate that research-creation can be viewed "as a form of intervention because it is contradictory to a hierarchy of research significance that places the scientific method at the pinnacle of models for knowledge production and dissemination" (11). Essentially, research-creation challenges the boundaries of what we think counts as knowledge, and what should be regarded as research. The research for this thesis takes a variety of forms, including: reading, gathering and working with sources, and following citation practices; interacting with my family members in order to ask questions and gather intergenerational stories; going through old photographs, records, and clothing; as well as documenting encounters and experiences from my day-to-day life, and creating visual art pieces based on these episodes. According to Chapman and Sawchuk, by "generating situated forms of knowledge, combined with new ways of developing and disseminating knowledge, research-creation helps reveal different contexts and methods for cultural analysis" (11-12). By choosing to focus on storytelling, artwork, and the personal, I view my research and knowledge production methods as vehicles that allow me to

claim the agency to explore, document, and define my identity in my own terms, according to my own subjectivity.

**Notes on Terminology and Style**

Throughout this project, I use the terms "mixed race" and "multiracial" interchangeably. I started doing this out of the desire to have some variety in my terminology, so that I would not be repeatedly using the same term. However, since words and terminology choices matter, this eventually led me to the question of whether one term might be preferable to the other. In the editor's note to the first issue of the *Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies*, Daniel G. Reginald addresses this debate, as it was a primary concern when selecting the name of the journal. According to Reginald, the term multiracial (referring to a person with two or more racial backgrounds) emerged as early as 1980 in Christine C. Ijima's doctoral dissertation, "The Ethnic Identity of Racially Mixed People: A Study of Black-Japanese" (4). He suggests that the term gained traction throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as many scholars and activists "preferred the term multiracial in order to move away from any associations with being 'mixed up' as in 'confused,'" and "some individuals believed the term mixed race was an externally imposed label originating from West European colonialism and domination. The term multiracial thus seemed to provide an opportunity for a new conceptualization that jettisoned this legacy of problematic associations" (5). However, others prefer the term mixed race because multiracial can be used to refer to both "racially heterogeneous populations (e.g. multiracial society)" and to "individuals of mixed heritage, ancestry, or background" (4), thereby confusing the use of "multiracial with the meaning of 'diversity' as in 'multiculturalism'" (5). Ultimately, the journal

accepts both terms, as each one is "widely used in the field of mixed race/multiracial studies and consciousness, as well as in the public imagination" (5).

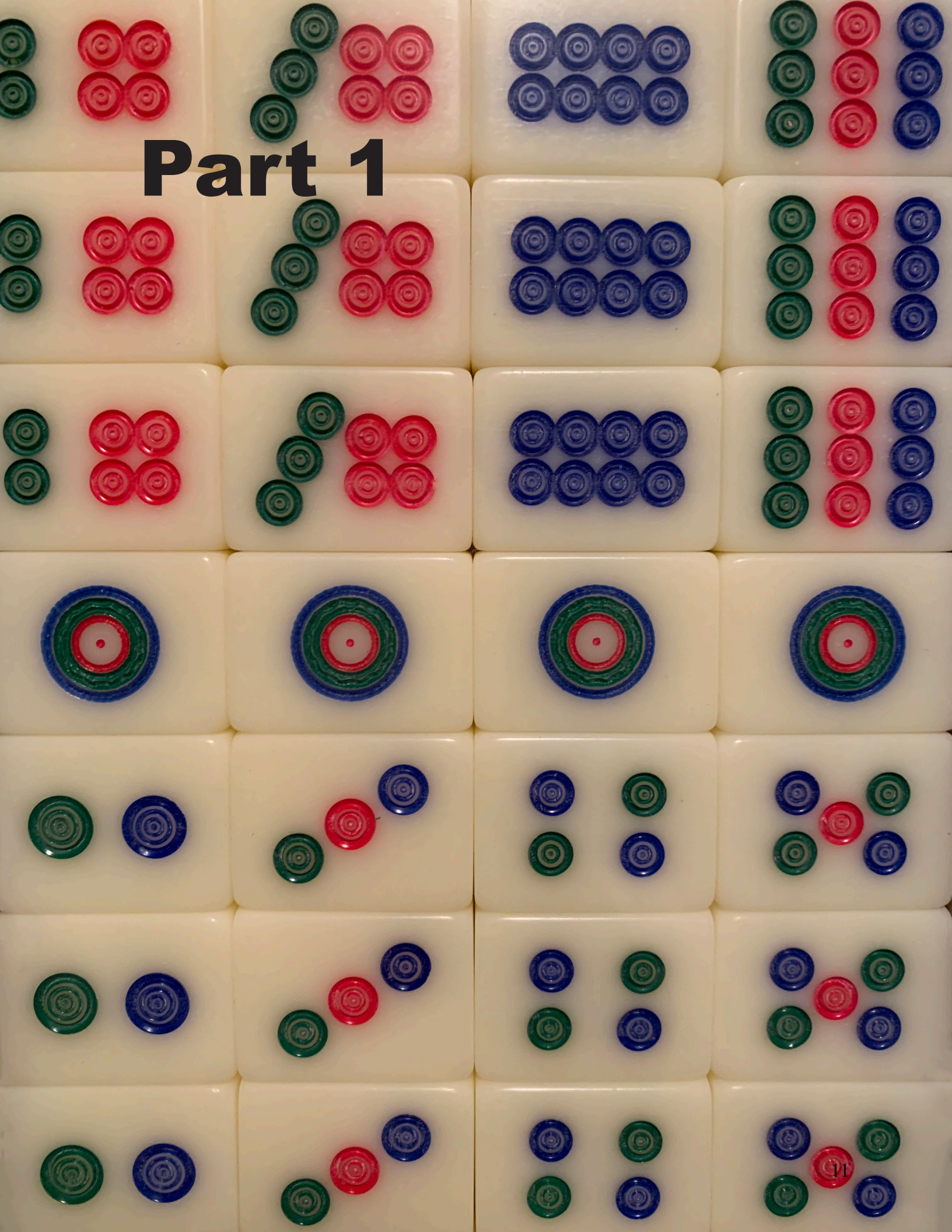
Under their entry for "biracial, multiracial, mixed-race, two or more races," *The Diversity Style Guide*, a resource aimed at helping journalists and writers select accurate and culturally sensitive vocabulary, specifies that "biracial refers to people of two races; multiracial refers to people of two or more racial backgrounds. Preferred terms include *multiracial, biracial, multiethnic, polyethnic*." The guide then directs writers to "[u]se mixed and mixed-race with caution as some people find these terms offensive; however, others embrace them" ("Biracial, multiracial"). While reflecting on whether or not I need to choose between "mixed race" or "multiracial, I realized that when referring to myself in particular, I employ a variety of terms, including mixed, mixed race, biracial, and multiracial. Even though terminology matters, I use all of these terms because I do not have a specific attachment to or preference for any of them, probably because none of them feel quite right. In my everyday life, if someone asks me about my background then I would most likely say that I am "half Asian and half white," or that I am "mixed." The answer to that question also depends on different factors, such as who is asking, where I am, and how I feel at that particular moment on that particular day. I am not fully committed to "half" or "mixed" because they both imply that there is a lack of wholeness and purity which bothers me, but I am also not ready to abandon them either. I like using "biracial" and "multiracial" when I write because I think they sound good when I read them in my head, but I do not typically use them when I am talking to someone in person. In fact, I do not think that I have ever referred to myself as "multiracial" unless it was in writing. However, that does not mean that I am ready to choose "mixed race" over "multiracial." In the end, I have decided that I am going to keep using both terms, because I am not able to bring myself to commit to

either of them. I also believe that I have the authority to determine what terminology I want to define myself with, which includes the authority to change my mind and choose a different term at a later date, if I see fit.

At certain points in the third section of this project, I use terminology that blends the distinction between race and ethnicity. Specifically, I refer to one acquaintance as "half Japanese and half white," and another as "half Korean and half white." Here, I was aware of the details of each individual's Asian heritage but not those of their white heritage. While thinking about my use of this terminology, I also realised that in my daily life I often refer to myself as "half Chinese and half white" mainly because my mother immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong and I know that her ancestry is Chinese, while my father's relatives immigrated much earlier from a variety of areas in Europe that my family no longer has any specific connections to. It is also worth noting that, as Anne Juanita Morning explains in *The Nature of Race: How Scientists Think and Teach About Human Difference*, "sociologists tend to define racial categories as being based on beliefs about physical difference, while ethnicity is thought to involve categories reflecting cultural differences (for example, in language, religious practice, customs, etc.). Yet the term *ethnicity* is frequently used as a substitute for *race*, and not just in informal conversation" (11). Reginald suggests that this collapse in distinction is partially due to both academics and members of the public viewing "'ethnicity' as a less 'problematical' concept—and thus as a suitable substitution for race" (5), a phenomenon that resurfaces in my examination of genetic ancestry testing services. Upon further reflection on my own choice of terminology, the idea that "race" is problematic or that it makes people uncomfortable may be behind my default response of saying that I am "half" or "mixed" rather than "biracial" or "multiracial." In

some situations, by not explicitly saying "race," it somehow feels like I can prevent an already uncomfortable interaction from becoming even more uncomfortable.

Finally, I have decided to stray from the MLA style guide and its instructions on formatting "foreign words." The MLA advises that "in your research, you may find that certain key concepts important to your work do not have a direct English equivalent. In this case, keep the term in the foreign language and italicize it" ("Quoting & Translating"). However, the guide also notes that "there are a number of commonly used foreign words, abbreviations and phrases that are part of American English: ad hoc, cliché, concerto, genre, sic, versus. Such popular words can be found in a dictionary and are considered a part of the English language. There is no need to translate them" ("Quoting & Translating"). Interestingly, all of the examples given by the MLA of foreign words accepted as part of American English originated from other European languages. Throughout the second and third parts of this project, I sometimes use words in Cantonese, and I have made the stylistic choice to leave these unitalicized. Writer and artist Khairani Barokka argues that italicization can be viewed as a "form of linguistic gatekeeping; a demarcation of which words are 'exotic' or 'not found in the English language,' and those that have a rightful place in the text: the non-italicized." She goes on to suggest that "italicization is too often used to bolster a sense of superiority when it comes to the unitalicized, and to reinforce a thick patina of whiteness or cultural domination" ("The Case Against Italicizing 'Foreign' Words"). I did not want to create a division in my writing where it felt like I was prioritizing or privileging one side of my heritage over the other, so in the work that follows, my Cantonese stands alongside my English, unitalicized.


Part 1

Excerpt from:

THE AMERICAN
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VOLUME XLI JULY 1935 NUMBER 1

# THE PROBLEM OF THE MARGINAL MAN[1]

EVERETT V. STONEQUIST
Skidmore College

Significantly varied as these mixed-blood situations are, they all involve some cultural conflict and racial prejudice; and they have an unsettled, problematic character. There is a pull and pressure from both sides. The person of mixed blood, by his dual biological and cultural origin, is identified with each group. His awareness of the conflict situation, mild or acute, signifies that in looking at himself from the standpoint of each group he experiences the conflict as a personal problem. Thus his ambitions run counter to his feelings of self-respect: he would prefer recognition by the dominant race, but he resents its arrogance. A sense of superiority to one race is counter-balanced by a sense of inferiority to the other race. Pride and shame, love and hate, and other contradictory sentiments, mingle uneasily in his nature. The two cultures produce a dual pattern of identification and a divided loyalty; and the attempt to maintain self-respect transforms these feelings into an ambivalent attitude. The individual may pass in and out of each group situation several times a day; thus his attention is repeatedly focused upon each group attitude and his relationship to it. A process of repeated stimulation or meaningful conditioning goes on which becomes of central significance in his life-organization. His racial status is continually called in question; naturally his attention is turned upon himself to an excessive degree: thus increased sensitiveness, self-consciousness, and race-consciousness, an indefinable *malaise*, inferiority and various compensatory mechanisms, are common traits in the marginal person.

mixed-blood

conflict prejudice

unsettled, problematic character

both sides mixed blood

dual

conflict

conflict personal problem

superiority

counter-balanced inferiority

contradictory

mingle uneasily in his nature

dual divided loyalty

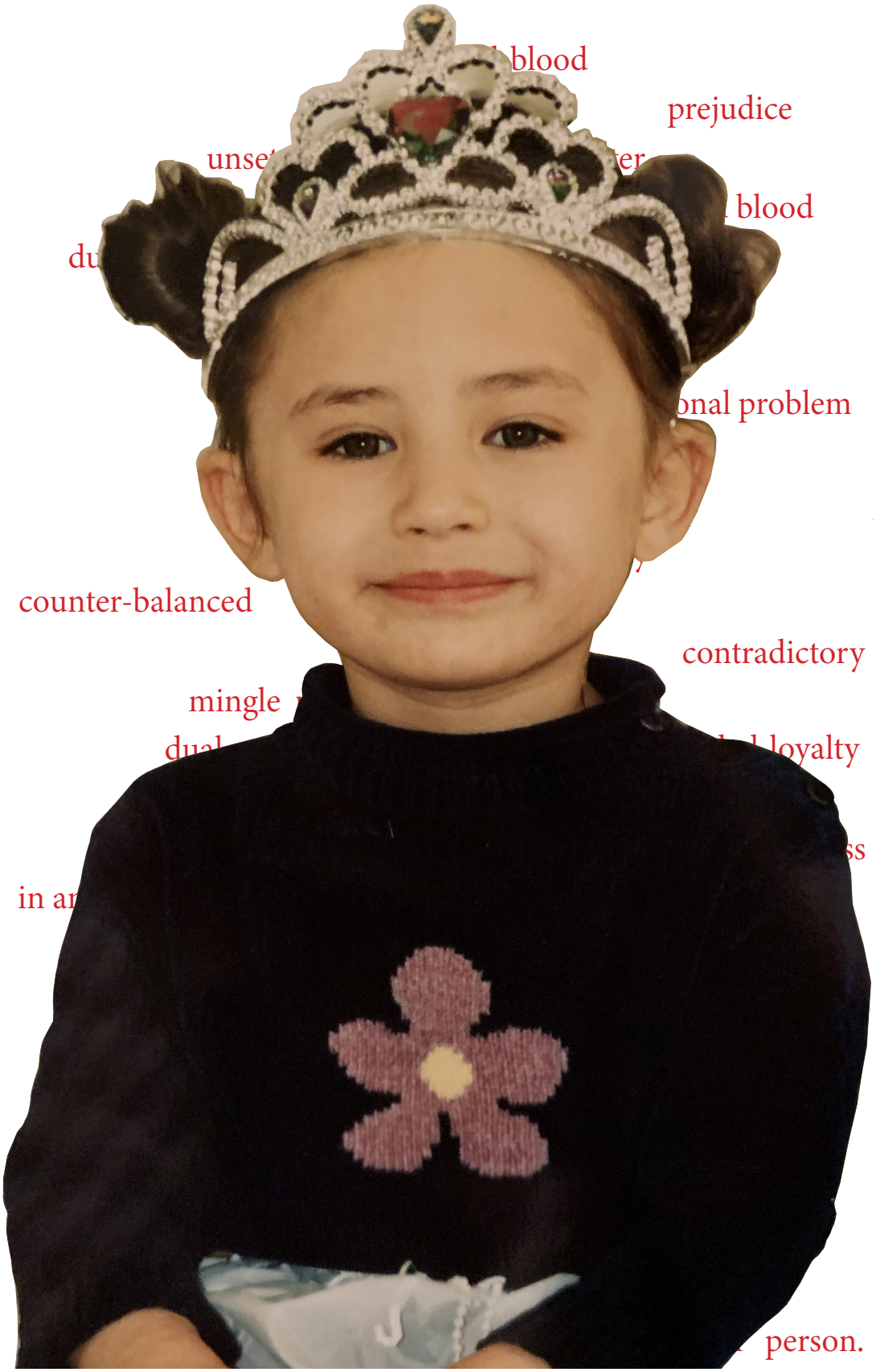
ambivalent attitude pass

in and out

continually called in question

indefinable *malaise*, inferiority

are common traits in the marginal person.


blood
prejudice
blood
onal problem
counter-balanced
contradictory
loyalty
person.

**Notions of Hybrid Degeneracy**

The multiracial person and their indefinable *malaise* has long been a source of concern within the North American racial imaginary. This concern is rooted in the fear and apprehension of race mixing and its potential consequences. As articulated by Nancy Stepan, nineteenth-century racial thinking that originated in Western Europe and migrated to North America was characterized by "a deep social aversion to 'bad breeding,' and to 'impurity of blood.' There was a worry that the incorrect mingling of classes, or ethnic groups, would produce a social chaos that would break the traditional boundaries between groups" (105). By the mid-nineteenth century, the popular aversion to miscegenation resulted in a proliferation of theories that attempted to answer the question of what really happened when races "amalgamated." One particularly prominent theory was that of "hybrid degeneracy." Cynthia Nakashima summarizes hybrid degeneracy as the belief that "people of multiple heritages are genetically inferior to both (or all) of their parent races" (165). She further suggests that the central purpose of this theory was deterring "White people from marrying and/or having children with people of color and by making sure that all of those people who had already been racially mixed could not claim any privilege for their European ancestry" in order to "keep the dominant White race 'pure' and in power, separate and superior" (166).

Linked to the concept of hybrid degeneracy was the idea that race mixing resulted in disharmonies of both the body and the mind. In the first half of the twentieth century, a frequently used example drawing attention to the potential consequences of "inharmonious" mixtures was the illustration of a dog resulting from the breeding of a Saint Bernard with a dachshund. In the drawing, the dog has the short stubby legs of the dachshund and the large body of the Saint Bernard, leaving the animal out of balance with its stomach nearly dragging on the

ground. The image began circulating in Western European scientific circles within the first two decades of the 1900s, and in 1930 the American zoologist and geneticist Herbert Spencer Jennings remarked that the combination depicted is "neither beautiful nor efficient," a result that he felt was surely to repeat in "human race crosses" (282). Jennings' belief in the occurrence of inharmonious racial combinations was influenced by the work of Charles Davenport, an American biologist and eugenicist. In particular, Jennings cites a study conducted in 1929 by Davenport and his assistant Morris Steggerda entitled *Race Crossing in Jamaica* as proof that miscegenation could lead to offspring with discordant traits. Prior to his fieldwork in Jamaica, Davenport already held the opinion that miscegenation was harmful to society, and in 1917, in order to highlight the overall risks that he believed were associated with interracial unions, he asserted that:

> . . . miscegenation commonly spells disharmony—disharmony of physical, mental and temperamental qualities and this means also disharmony with environment. A hybridized people are a badly put together people and a dissatisfied, restless, ineffective people. One wonders how much of the exceptionally high death rate in middle life in this country is due to such bodily maladjustments; and how much of our crime and insanity is due to mental and temperamental friction. (367)

Here, Davenport contends that miscegenation is a cause for concern from both a biological and a sociological standpoint. He maintains that the multiracial individual is a societal problem due to their poor physicality, mental instability, and fundamental deviancy stemming from their unnatural origins. Although William Provine suggests that the biological argument lost support throughout the American and British scientific communities in particular as a response to the aftermath of World War II and Nazi ideologies regarding race and eugenics (795), theories

focused on psychology, group social interactions, and the influences of culture such as the "marginal man" took their place.

**The Marginal Man**

One of the theory's most influential texts, *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict* was written by Everett Stonequist and first published in 1937. Throughout the work, Stonequist uses the term "marginal man" primarily to describe people who occupy a space in-between distinct "social worlds" (usually comprised of different racial and/or cultural groups), who are "on the margin of each but a member of neither" (2-3). He conceives of the marginal man as: "reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds, one of which is often 'dominant' over the other; within which membership is implicitly if not explicitly based on birth or ancestry (race or nationality); where exclusion removes the individual from a system of group relations" (8). This position of marginality, along with potential conflicts between their multiple "social worlds" was said to result in varying degrees of "maladjustment," ranging from mild feelings of loneliness and alienation to extreme forms of mental disarray and confusion, occasionally leading to suicide (201-202). According to Stonequist, the marginal man goes through three life cycle periods: the first stage is marked by the absence of internal conflict resulting from the subject's lack of race or nationality consciousness (122); the second phase is a "crisis experience," in which the subject becomes aware of group conflict and internalizes it as a personal dilemma, thereby altering his perception of self and transforming him into the marginal man (122, 140); the third stage involves all of the ways that the subject attempts to respond to his crisis, including any adjustments he attempts to make, or his potential spiral downwards into a state of prolonged "maladjustment" (122-123).

Stonequist further suggests that the marginal man often exhibits a particular set of "personality traits" as a result of his "crisis experience" and his awakening to the reality of his conflicting social worlds, which are also influenced by his personal situation, unique life experiences, and other inherited or already-existing attributes (139). The characteristics of the marginal man include: "inferiority complexes," which are sometimes compensated for with the development of "superiority complexes"; hypersensitivity or extreme levels of self-consciousness and race-consciousness; and a "divided loyalty" manifested in the form of an ambivalent attitude (144-156). It is these nervous and constantly fluctuating qualities that Stonequist hypothesizes are behind earlier biologically driven theories about "racial disharmonies" (147-148). In order to overcome this period of crisis, the marginal man can make adjustments to his situation by attempting to assimilate into the social world of either the dominant group or the subordinate group (130). However, assimilation into the dominant group is only possible when "the racial and cultural barriers between the two groups are not felt to be impassable" (131), such as in cases where the individual is able to "pass" between each group undetected. A third option that is presented is the adoption of a kind of intermediary role that occupies a space between both worlds (130-131). Stonequist posits that as a result of this in-between position and the psychological strain associated with it, the marginal man may come to possess a certain creativity and the "mental freedom" to become a force of change that manages race-related or cross-cultural conflict, acts as "the crucible of cultural fusion," and helps to usher in some kind of new social reality (155-156, 221-222). Essentially, while marginality has the potential to lead to disorganization and instability, it also has the possibility to open up paths towards an alternate social world. It is important to note that while Stonequist conceives of the mixed race individual as one version of the marginal man, he also considers other groups such as

immigrants, African Americans, Asian Americans, and diasporic Jews to fall within the classifications of the marginal man. As such, instead of explicitly presenting an argument for or against miscegenation, Stonequist uses the marginal man theory to more broadly consider what can occur when different races or cultures interact, come into conflict, and attempt to adapt to each other.

Although Stonequist suggests that there are a variety of different groups who fit within the mold of the marginal man, the theory has had a significant impact on the scholarship surrounding people of multiracial heritage in particular. As articulated by David L. Brunsma and Hephzibah Strmic-Pawl, "the core intellectual agenda in the scholarly study of multiraciality from the beginning centered on multiracial identity—how it forms and develops, and how it is maintained and changed. Identity has always been at the heart of psychological and sociological research on multiraciality" (Brunsma and Strmic-Pawl). The notion that mixed race identity is often unstable, and mixed race individuals are tormented as a result of being caught between multiple social worlds was accepted throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. However, beginning in the 1990s with the emergence of a field of scholars of mixed race who were openly critical of the damaging perspectives perpetuated by prior mixed race scholarship, academics have often been critical of the discourse that paints the multiracial subject as a stereotypical marginal man. In the chapter "An Invisible Monster: The Creation and Denial of Mixed-Race People in America," Cynthia Nakashima asserts that such sociocultural arguments differ very little from earlier biologically-based race thinking that stigmatized miscegenation and pathologized mixed race individuals, as "both connate a hierarchy, with the Caucasian race and European-originated culture on top and all other races and cultures on the bottom" (171). Similarly, as Frank Füredi examines the changes in twentieth-century Western

perceptions of race and racism and its relationship to international affairs in *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*, he argues that the literature surrounding the marginal man typically implied the denunciation of interracial unions. "The discourse on the in-between was at once a discussion of maintaining existing social, cultural and racial boundaries. By his very existence the Marginal Man was seen to put into question the durability of these boundaries," writes Füredi. And by doing so, he "threatened to encroach on the status of the European" (149). Füredi further suggests that the theory of the marginal man, particularly Stonequist's interpretation of it, justified the dismissal of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist movements, by blaming such sentiments on the overreactions of the hypersensitive and mentally disorganized marginal man (148). Rooted in white fear about the ability to maintain their position of power at the top of the racial hierarchy, the notion of the unstable, untrustworthy, maladjusted marginal man was an attempt to stop other races from encroaching on whiteness and the privileges associated with it.

**Exploring the In-between**

As a theory rooted in white supremacy and racialist thinking, the problematic nature of the marginal man hypothesis is clear. However, the idea of marginality remains relevant within contemporary discourse about multiracial identity. Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe notes that with the revival of scholarly interest in mixed race studies beginning in the late twentieth century, "the 'in-between' or 'marginal' status of 'mixed race' subjects" came to be "at once reinforced, subverted and challenged" (8). At the same time, the in-between was an important line of inquiry pursued in postcolonial studies, particularly through the concept of "hybridity." In *The Location of Culture,* the prominent postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha theorized this space of hybridity

in the context of the colonizer and the colonized, suggesting that "cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in the relation of Self to Other" (35-36). Instead, he posits that inter-cultural contact lead to a hybridized "Third Space of enunciation," which disrupts both Western narratives of "culture as a homogenizing, unifying force" and "hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures" by foregrounding "the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (37). In this way, Bhabha presents hybridity as a disruptive force that questions and confronts colonial hegemony, and the stories about history, culture, language, nation, and identity that colonial regimes impose.

While Bhabha's concept of hybridity provides an in-between "Third Space" for cultural identity to operate that subverts the colonizer-colonized binary, it also highlights a shift towards a positive, celebratory reading of hybridity as something that is generative, rather than monstrous or unnatural. However, this attempt to shift the connotations of hybridity has been subject to criticism. In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, postcolonial scholar Robert J. C. Young questions the concept of hybridity and asserts that "the use of hybridity today prompts questions about the ways in which contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the racialized formulations of the past" (5), as the term itself is inextricably linked to the history of European colonization, white supremacy, and so-called "scientific" ideas about race and miscegenation. This link raises questions about the ethics of working with a concept so closely related to such damaging systems of violence and oppression, especially in cases where the history of the connection between hybridity and race is not highlighted or examined.

Nonetheless, positive notions of in-betweenness were also being explored by scholars in critical race studies in the late twentieth century, particularly in relation to mixed race studies. For example, in the early 1990s, Naomi Zack's *Race and Mixed Race* explored the history of racial identity and racism in America, suggesting that although the American "biracial schema" that categorizes people as either Black or white is fundamentally racist, it could potentially be disrupted by the addition of a "mixed race" category. According to Zack, "if it is possible for people to be of mixed race, based on their genetic endowment alone, then race is not an essential or even an important division between human beings, either naturally or culturally" (97), a realization she suggested could eventually lead to "racelessness" and the position of "anti-race" (164). While Zack demonstrates a reading of hybridity that regards in-betweenness as positive and transformative, this kind of thinking that conceives of multiracial people as the solution to racism has also been critiqued as overly simplistic. Robert Reece addresses this oversimplification by articulating that it "ignore[s] the reality that children of interracial relationships almost always are socialized into existing racial categories based on their appearance; they are never raceless and rarely blended" (115). Reece's claims are supported by a 2015 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, in which 55% of multiracial American respondents indicated that they had been subjected to race-based discrimination in the form of jokes or slurs (Parker et al.), demonstrating that mixed race people are not part of a uniform community that somehow escapes or transcends racism.

Despite such critiques, twenty-first century contemporary artists and theorists have continued to explore marginality, hybridity, or in-betweeness, specifically in relation to multiracial individuals. Such an exploration is offered in *War Baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art*, a collection published in 2013 that aims to examine the connections

between critical mixed race scholarship and art. Here, Laura Kina and Wei Ming Dariotis suggest that Bhabha's conception of the "Third Space" enables us to visualize multiracial Asian American art within the context of both "Asian American art history and mixed race representations" (6). According to Kina and Dariotis, *War Baby/Love Child* goes beyond envisioning hybridity as merely a space in-between binaries such as "theory/practice and First/Third World and Self/Other" in order to adopt poet Mei-mei Berssenbrugg's metaphor of "fenestrated capillaries," the notion of "blood flowing through many tiny veins, like diverging and converging streams, but veins in which there are windows, providing opportunities to take advantage of the multiple and shifting perspectives" (6). Kina and Dariotis note that the term "fenestrated capillaries invoke[s] the idea of blood, blood quantum, bloodlines, mixed blood, watering down the blood and the idea of capillary action—a drawing together from multiple disparate sources" (6) to recall and talk back to the history of mixed race scholarship that is preoccupied with notions of the biological and anxiety over the imagined purity of one's blood, while simultaneously highlighting the possibilities implicit in a hybrid, multiracial, cross-cultural perspective.

According to artist Torika Bolatagici, who identifies as a multiracial woman of Indigenous Fijian and Anglo-Celtic Australian ancestry, "locating oneself in a hybridised space of in-betweenness allows a unique perspective to emerge from artists who claim mixed race ancestry. Their hybrid location allows the opening up of a Third Space which enables them to provide counter-narratives that defy colonialist representation" (82). She further suggests that these counter-narratives can also "redress popular representation[s] of the mixed race experience [such as the 'tragic mulatto' trope] and facilitate a movement beyond the dichotomy which seeks to reduce people of mixed race to the sum of their parts" (76). An example of this can be found

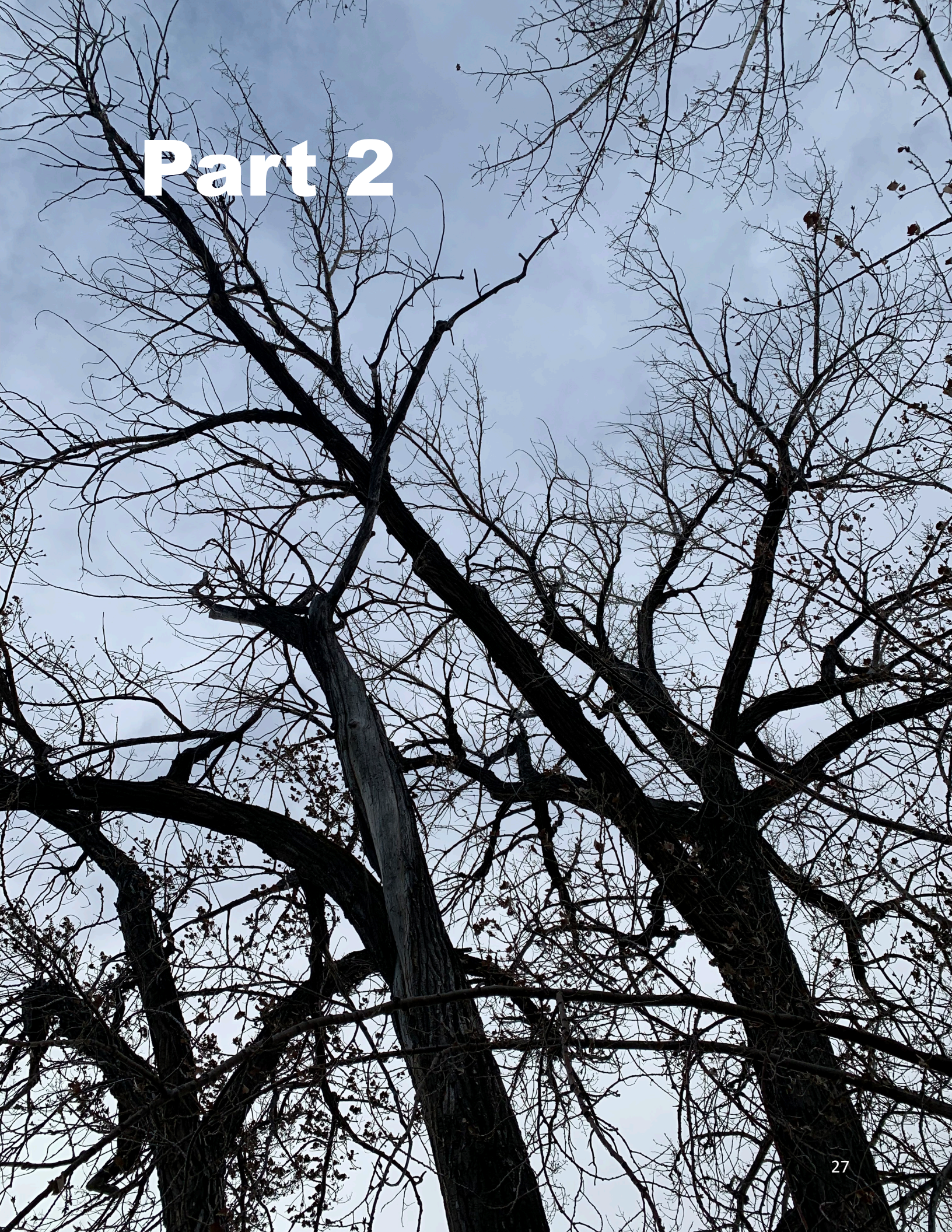
in the work of Kip Fulbeck, an artist of Chinese, English, and Irish descent, particularly in his book *Part Asian, 100% Hapa*. The book is made up of a series of photographs depicting multiracial people with Asian heritage. Each individual is allotted a two-page spread. The first page indicates the person's self-designated ethnic background and offers them the opportunity to respond, in their own words and with their own handwriting, to what Fulbeck describes as "the question that accompanies the lives of us in-betweens like a second skin," namely, "*What are you?*" (16). This is followed by a second page containing an image of the individual "unclothed from the collarbone up, and without glasses, jewelry, excess makeup, or purposeful expression," in an attempt to portray participants as their "natural selves" (16).

As indicated by prominent critical mixed race theorist Paul Spickard in the book's afterword, Fulbeck's stylistic choices harken back to nineteenth- and twentieth-century eugenic studies in which "scientists" "tried to measure the mixture of race in each person by measuring their noses and eye folds and skin tones" (260). In these studies, "people of colour did not have individual identities or stories, and they did not get to speak for themselves. They were just racial equations like 'half-Chinese, one-quarter Polynesian, one-quarter European'" (260), and were treated "as if they were exhibits in human zoos" (260-261). Fulbeck ultimately subverts the eugenic gaze by giving participants the agency to define their own identities and the power to speak for themselves. In response to the question of "What are you?" one individual writes "I am circumpolar. I am many little bridges joined. My parents + grandparents have many stories of making paths, and following paths, + crossing paths. I come from whalers, trappers, adventurers, nomads—all trails led to a point: me" (78). Another writes, "multiracial and proud!" (252), while yet another writes "I am 100% Black and 100% Japanese" (148). Each participant chooses exactly how they want to identify themselves, some with humour, some with vulnerability, some

with personal anecdotes, and some with details about their everyday lives. As indicated by Kina and Dariotis, Fulbeck's creative collaboration with his participants speaks to the notion that:

> The power and importance of the first-person narrative, of seeing oneself reflected in others, holds particular significance for those who have historically been underrepresented and/or misrepresented, or Othered. For those constantly subjected to a kind of fetishized Gaze, first-person narrative is a process of self-determination and self-exploration that often generates a counternarrative. (10)

In the writing and artwork that follows, I attempt to go through my own process of self-determination and self-exploration in an effort to establish the narrative of my personal identity, first by examining the stories of my relatives, and then by working through my own thoughts, experiences, and emotions.


Part 2

**Mok Family History**

These are narratives from my great-uncle Bing Wo that detail his childhood memories and a version of our family history that was told to him by his aunt Kwai Fong. My great-aunt Lily recorded his stories and translated them into English in order to preserve this knowledge and make it accessible for the younger generations. I have edited her notes and added some historically significant details. The first story begins five generations ago.

**Guest People**

According to Kwai Fong, her father Mok Hon Chou and mother Chan Chu lived near a small town called Nantou, in the Bao'an County of Guangdong Province during the late 1800s. As the patriarch of the family, Hon Chou was nicknamed Grandpa King by the younger generations because he ruled the family like a king, and Chan Chu was nicknamed Chicken Feather because she was wishy washy. While living in Nantou, they raised three children, Kwong Yin (also nicknamed Big Sweet Potato), Kwai Fong, and Chun Yin (my great-grandfather).

We are Hakka people, a term whose characters, 客家, directly translate to "guest" and "family." Anthropologist Nicole Constable suggests that Hakka can also mean "guest people" or "strangers," and that the term refers to a Han Chinese ethnic subgroup thought to have originally come from north central China and migrated mainly to the south (3). It was in southern China that locals began to refer to the migratory group as Hakka, and "unlike other Chinese, such as Cantonese, Chaozhao (Teochew), and Shanghainese, whose identities and languages correspond to their place of origin, the Hakka, whose place of origin is a topic of debate, generally accept[ed] the label" (12). Descendants of these Hakka, particularly those from rural Guangdong

farming communities, began emigrating from China as early as the seventeenth century, mainly for economic and political reasons,[1] often taking up jobs as manual labourers abroad, working on railways, in mines, on plantations or farms, or opening their own small businesses, thus giving rise to a substantial Hakka diaspora (4-5)[2].

As indicated by anthropologist Myron L. Cohen, the traditional social structure in rural China dictated that one village was typically populated by one clan from the same lineage, with the same surname (although multi-surname villages did exist) (57). Disputes over land rights, sometimes leading to violent conflict between clans, was common, especially between Cantonese locals (Punti) and Hakka settlers. In the early 1900s, the Mok clan was involved in a dispute with the Tsang clan. The Tsang clan ultimately won the feud and, as a result, wanted everyone in the Mok village to convert their surname to Tsang. Mok Hon Chou, a stubborn man of strong will and honor, refused. He chose to flee the village with his wife and three children instead.

After leaving their clan, the family passed through Shenzhen and eventually settled in the New Territories, which at the time was part of British colonial Hong Kong. The British Empire came to possess Chinese land following the First and Second Opium Wars, which occurred from 1839-1842 and 1856-1860, respectively. Historian Abby S. Whitlock highlights that the origin of these wars was mainly British economic interests and their desire for freer access to mainland Chinese trade markets (2-3). The First Opium War began when Chinese government officials took issue with British opium dealers operating in Hong Kong and negatively impacting the

[1] For example, many Hakka left South China after the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) and the Hakka-Punti Wars (1850-1867). In the late nineteenth century, Christian Hakka communities fleeing religious and ethnic persecution also left the country (Constable 5).
[2] Constable indicates that Hakka communities have migrated across the globe, to "Taiwan, Malaya, and other regions of Southeast Asia, as far as South Asia, Africa, Oceania, Europe, the Caribbean, and North and South America" (4-5).

region's economy by increasing the rates of opium addiction and hastening the outflow of silver coins (2). When Qing dynasty forces took action against the British opium dealers by seizing and destroying their supply, Queen Victoria sent an expeditionary force to Hong Kong that ultimately subdued the Chinese forces and occupied the land (2). The end of the First Opium War resulted in Hong Kong Island being ceded to the British "in perpetuity" (2); the Second Opium War led to the British acquisition of the Kowloon Peninsula; and later on, in "negotiations" following Chinese defeat after the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, the British demanded a ninety-nine year rent-free lease of the New Territories that lasted until 1997 (2-3).

While living in the New Territories, the family made a living by learning various trades. Hon Chou worked as a shoe repairman while the oldest son Kwong Yin became a carpenter. When they saved up enough money, Hon Chou and Kwong Yin were able to purchase some land and build a small house for the family. Here, Hon Chou and Chan Chu gave birth to another son, Fook Yin. After living in the New Territories for more than a decade, Hon Chou learned how prosperous the economy of Hong Kong Island had become. He decided to try his luck there with the three younger children, while Kwong Yin chose to stay behind in the New Territories, eventually getting married and raising a family of seven children.

In Hong Kong, the family rented a flat on the second floor of 225 Des Voeux Road West in Sai Ying Pun. Hon Chou earned money by repairing shoes at the bottom of the stairway, while Chan Chu worked as a seamstress and repaired clothes outside of their flat, thus earning the nickname Yee Seung Pau (Clothing Lady) from their neighbours. Not long after arriving in Hong Kong, two more children, Dak Yin and Mei Hing, were born.

Hon Chou decided that the two boys, Chun Yin and Fook Yin, should attend school; however, Chun Yin was not particularly interested. When Hon Chou found that he had skipped

class in order to play dominos in the back alleys, Hon Chou pulled him out of school and told him to sell jade and zhu yee sing (jewelry that looks like gold but is not) in the streets of Sai Ying Pun. He worked hard and made a decent living. After a year of selling jewelry, at the age of nineteen he wedded Chan Leung, who he was matched with through an arranged marriage. After her family's medical history was examined by the Mok family, Chan Leung was brought by a relative to Hong Kong from Bao'an County. She was a woman of small stature, seventeen at the time of their marriage, and was the daughter of a scholar. Together they eventually had two children, Bing Wo in 1933 and his younger brother shortly after.

The couple continued to make a living by selling jewelry. When sister Kwai Fong heard that there were wholesalers of jade and zhu yee sing in Guangzhou, she decided to go and buy some merchandise for Chun Yin to sell. In those days, most women, especially single ones, did not travel by themselves. Therefore, it took Kwai Fong a lot of courage to travel on a boat by herself, with each round trip taking a week. Whatever merchandise she overbought for Chun Yin, was then given to their mother Chan Chu to sell on Tai O, a nearby island. Eventually, the family raised enough money to rent a store on First Street, and they decided to name it Chu Kee (Kee meaning brand) in honor of Chan Chu. Operating the jewelry store was a family affair. While Chun Yin was working as an apprentice in order to learn how to make and repair silver jewelry, Fook Yin was appointed to be a cashier at the store. Since he liked to play more than he liked to work, Fook Yin spent a lot of time reading comics, and could often be found trying out different snacks from street vendors all over Sai Ying Pun. When Hon Chou found out that Fook Yin had pocketed money from the cash register, he replaced him with Dak Yin, who was only fifteen at the time. However, Fook Yin was eventually forgiven and allowed to learn how to make silver jewelry.

**World War II**

Several years after the births of Bing Wo and his younger brother, World War II broke out. The Mok family was still living on the second floor of 225 Des Voeux Road West at the time. In 1938, one year before the War began, Hon Chou decided to rent out the ground floor as well, and to use this as a space to sell and store firewood. Chun Yin would go around peddling the fire wood to restaurants, like Doi Nam and Ming Fong, that used it to power their wood burning stoves for cooking, while Chan Leung took care of the business' finances.

Hong Kong was brought into the War when the Empire of Japan launched an offensive attack, now referred to as the Battle of Hong Kong, in December of 1941. According to Bing Wo, right before the Japanese forces landed in Hong Kong, many of the city's policemen abandoned their posts, threw their firearms and uniforms out into the street, and ran. Most people stayed indoors in order to avoid trouble. The whole Mok family hid inside their firewood store to stay together and keep safe. During this time period, the whole Sai Ying Pun area was rampant with gang members from various triad organizations. One day, three men dressed in police uniforms came to the family's house and asked Chun Yin to help a woman who needed to have a jade bangle taken off, without breaking it, because she was worried about being robbed. Chun Yin said he would have to go to the jewelry store in order to get the tools to help her, so he took the policemen to Chu Kee. Once inside, the men turned on him. They pointed a knife at Chun Yin and told him to open the safe. Chun Yin said that he did not bring the key to the safe, but they insisted. One of the men started to cut his thighs with a knife, first the right thigh and then the left. At this point, Chun Yin knew that his situation was dire and opened the safe, which the three thieves immediately emptied. No report was made to the actual police because there were none to be found.

Lawrence Wai-Chung Lai notes that prior to the battle, British government officials had already decided that defending Hong Kong would be a lost cause, but they also believed that the Japanese would not dare to attack the British Empire (117). At the beginning of 1941, Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly remarked to his chief of staff that:

> "there is not the slightest chance of holding Hong Kong or relieving it. It is most unwise to increase the loss we shall suffer there. Instead of augmenting the garrison it ought to be reduced to a symbolic scale . . . . Japan will think long before declaring war on the British Empire, and whether there are two or six battalions at Hong Kong will make no difference to her choice." (qtd in Lai 117)

Eventually, the decision was made to bolster Hong Kong's defences with two Canadian battalions; however, when the battle began, the defensive forces were outnumbered by a ratio of three to one by the Japanese (117). After eighteen days of fighting, Governor Sir Mark Young made the decision to surrender the city on Christmas Day (116). Referred to as Black Christmas, this day marked "the first time in history, a British Crown Colony was surrendered to enemy forces with her governor taken as a prisoner" (116). What followed was a miserable period of three years and eight months until British governance returned in 1945 (116).

A 2018 exhibition called *Three Years and Eight Months: Hong Kong During the Japanese Occupation*, curated by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, notes that the occupation was a period of great suffering. Hong Kong "was a scene of devastation; industrial and commercial activities were curtailed," with "fear and suffering permeating citizens' everyday lives" (*Three years*). During this time, Japan imposed laws and issued policies aimed at assimilating Hong Kong into its permanent territory. Districts, streets, and buildings were renamed, the Hong Kong dollar was replaced with military notes, the Japanese calendar and

festivals were adopted, and students were instructed in the Japanese language and history. As a testament to the harsh living conditions under Japanese occupation, the city's population dwindled from 1.6 million in 1941 to 600,000 in 1945, due to death and departure (*Three Years*).

During the War, the Mok family continued to sell firewood harvested from both Hong Kong and Lantau Island. They were also commissioned by the government to hand out rice rations to the public at the firewood store, while receiving a small payment for the service. When rations were no longer needed, they began buying bags of rice from traders at the wharf and carried them on the trams back to the store where they started selling rice. The family had some cooking oil too, but hid it under the bed in the last room upstairs. When there was more than enough for the family, they also started selling oil.

Back in the 1940s, certain sections of Sai Ying Pun were filled with all kinds of warehouses. Triad members would climb to the roofs of the warehouses, playing pranks and stealing merchandise. People saw them steal, but no one dared to say anything. However, the Japanese soldiers suspected what was occurring and tried to catch the burglars. One day, two thieves were trying to evade capture, and happened to run to the second floor of 225 Des Voeux Road West, where the Mok family lived. One hid under a basket made of bamboo that was big enough to cover his whole body. Another pushed open the doors to get into the patio, which was the living quarters of Chun Yin and Chan Leung, who happened to be there by herself. The thief climbed into her bed and covered himself with her blanket, which traumatized her so much that she became very ill and developed post-traumatic stress disorder. She was taken to live in a temple in Tuen Mun in the hopes that the tranquility would help her recover, but she died a year later. Not long after her death, Chun Yin got remarried to Tsang Wai Fong in 1943. She was twenty-nine at the time, and the oldest of twelve siblings whose father worked as a dessert

vendor. Together, the couple gave birth to four daughters, including my grandmother and aunt Lily.

Unfortunately, Dak Yin, Chun Yin's youngest brother, died of a sudden illness during the War. Bing Wo remembers that the playful Fook Yin also had a close encounter with death around this time. Nicknamed Tsing Wen, meaning free as the clear clouds in the sky, naturally Fook Yin did not like to stay home. One day, he was sitting on the curb of Eastern Street (Dung Bin Gai), relaxing and watching the people going by, when a Japanese truck rounding up opium addicts and dead bodies pulled up. When the Japanese authorities saw how thin Fook Yin was and how tired he looked that day, they thought that he was one of the opium addicts, so they dumped him into the truck. As they collected more bodies, Fook Yin was buried underneath them. Not wanting to be shot, he dared not make any sound and pretended like he was dead. When the truck finally stopped at Little Park (Fa Yuen Tsai), they dumped all of the bodies into a large pit. The workers, who were Chinese, found Fook Yin still alive and told him to run away quietly when the Japanese were not paying attention.

As children living through a War, Bing Wo and his friends were so accustomed to seeing dead bodies out in the streets that they did not think much of it. There were dead and dying people all around, and some of them had parts of their thighs carved out. Rumor had it that restaurants like Doi Nam used human thighs as meat in their barbecued buns. Others said that they were just bitten by dogs, but Bing Wo did not agree because he could not find any teeth marks on the thighs. In those days, dead bodies were colloquially referred to as "salt fish" in Hong Kong. So one day when Kwai Fong told Bing Wo there was a salt fish next door, since Bing Wo was still a young child and did not understand, he innocently asked her why she did not take it home for food. No children were allowed in Fa Yuen Tsai during the Japanese occupation,

since it was used as a dumping ground for the dead. The second year after the War was over, people found the pit that Fook Yin had narrowly escaped burial in and started digging up bodies. When kids were allowed at Little Park again, Bing Wo and his friends would go there to play soccer. They often kicked up scattered fingers and toes.

**Postwar Matchmaking, Marriage, and Migration**

By 1953, Bing Wo was already twenty years old, and the elders in the family decided that it was time to help him find a wife. Although arranging a marriage was a family affair that depended heavily on the opinions of parents and elders, through a process called seung tai, the young couple that was being matched had the opportunity to meet each other and become acquainted, to see if they would get along. For Bing Wo's first few matches, the families agreed to meet at Doi Nam restaurant, where the prospective couple would sit at one table, with their parents observing from nearby. Unfortunately, Bing Wo was not particularly interested in any of the girls that his family tried to match him with. He was also tired of going through the matchmaking process. By the fifth attempted match, the families decided that he would pick up his prospective partner and take her to a movie at the Queen's Theater. However, instead of going on the date, Bing Wo decided that he would play a trick on his parents. Rather than going on the date himself, he convinced an acquaintance (who sold watches next door to the firewood shop) to take his place. When Chun Yin found out what Bing Wo had done, he was infuriated and locked the doors to both the firewood shop and the upstairs living quarters, and he refused to open the doors for Bing Wo when he came home later that night. According to Bing Wo, he waited outside for over two hours, and then came to the conclusion that his parents had disowned him, so he took the family car and went to stay with a classmate.

Several months prior to the incident, Bing Wo's stepmother, Wai Fong, had bought the car (a British-made Austin), so that Bing Wo could drive his four younger half-sisters to school each morning. The youngest sister, Lily, remembers coming home one day to find her mother screaming and crying while talking about the car and how Bing Wo had betrayed her. This was the first of two occasions on which she witnessed her mother crying. Several years later, Bing Wo married Lai Hung, a girl he had started dating after the failed matchmaking attempts. There were no wedding pictures, and no guests attended the ceremony. Since Bing Wo had run away from home, the marriage was not recognized by his parents until they later reconciled.

In the 1960s, the four younger Mok sisters were teenagers attending high school. They walked over an hour to school each day ever since Bing Wo ran off with the family car. The eldest sister, my grandmother, enjoyed listening to music, especially Paul Anka. Her interest in music led her to take part in her school's band, where she got to know a certain male student. The two began dating, and soon, much to the surprise of their friends and family, announced that they would be getting married. The birth of my mother followed soon after. Over fifty years later on a visit back to Hong Kong, Lily revealed to us that these circumstances led to the second and final time that she saw her mother cry.

Following the marriage, my grandmother worked hard to earn money for the family. She would travel to the British military bases throughout Hong Kong and sell jewelry to expatriates and servicemen looking to buy souvenirs for their families living back home. She spent long hours sourcing the jewelry, travelling to the bases, and trying to make sales, and thus had very little time to spare. My grandfather was also busy attending school in Paris, where he lived with some of his friends from high school. As a result, my mother was primarily raised by her grandparents Chun Yin and Wai Fong in the rooms above the firewood store.

My grandfather was flighty, always looking to have a good time and for a shortcut to make easy money. One of my aunts described him as a fei jai, meaning that he was fashionable and liked to pay attention to his looks, but that he was also a player and had a hot temper. When My grandfather returned from Paris, he had been in correspondence with friends who lived abroad in North America. Based on their accounts, he thought that he would be able to make good money there and decided that he would immigrate to Canada with his wife and daughter.

In those days, Hong Kong society was still very patriarchal, and men were typically at the head of the family as the decision makers. This social norm has its roots in traditional Chinese philosophy, particularly the Confucian school of thought. As documented by historian Patricia Buckley Ebrey, Confucian literature dictates that women should behave according to principles such as "humility, resignation, subservience, self-abasement, obedience, cleanliness, and industry" (72). Lui Xiang's *The Biographies of Heroic Women*, an influential text that highlights popular Confucian notions about the proper conduct and ideal virtues of women was written around 18 BCE. One of the women highlighted is "the mother of Mencius," who is considered by Xiang to be an exemplary woman because the son that she raised eventually became a renowned philosopher, second only to Confucius. She is presented to signify the idea that according to cultural standards, "a woman's duty is not to control or take charge. Instead she must follow the 'three submissions.' When she is young, she must submit to her parents. After her marriage, she must submit to her husband. When she is widowed, she must submit to her son. These are the rules of propriety" (Xiang trans. in Ebrey 73). Although written centuries ago, such sentiments still prevailed over my grandmother's life in the 1960s and continue today.

While the influence of Confucianism has significantly impacted Hong Kong gender norms, Eliza W.Y. Lee suggests that British colonialism has also contributed to their

entrenchment. According to Lee, economic and social affairs in British colonial Hong Kong were characterised by a "complex situation of selective intervention and nonintervention by the colonial state, often according to the strategic need to maintain effective domination" (3). Lee highlights that while attempting to preserve British imperial control, "the colonial state can be regarded as patriarchal insofar as it has perpetuated women's subordination through its public policies, actions, and inactions . . . The governing strategy of elite co-optation and its repercussions have resulted in the prolonged maintenance of patriarchal social institutions in the name of respecting . . . society" (3-4). While examining the circumstances of women in Hong Kong through a socio-legal perspective, Carol Jones further elaborates on this notion by pointing out that the British government sought counsel "on the proper interpretation of Chinese law from a small number of expatriates and local 'China experts'" (169), often merchants, businessmen, or landowners, "all of them male, all of them adamantly patriarchal, and all of them competing to be the authentic 'voice' of the local population" (169). Jones further suggests that "Hong Kong law regarding women is not so much the product of a conflict between colonizer and colonized, as a product of values shared between them" (170). This collaboration also functioned as a system that allowed for the continued normalization of the mui tsai practice (in which unwanted female children were sold as servants or brothel workers) until the 1950s, the authorization of male polygamy until 1971, and the perpetuation of unequal gendered inheritance rights in the New Territories until 1994 (Lee 4).

According to my mother, if it was not for her father and his impulsive nature, along with the culture of patriarchy that silenced her mother, the family would probably never have left Hong Kong. However, the circumstances being as they were, my mother and her parents immigrated to Canada in 1970, and settled in Lethbridge, Alberta. One of her earliest memories

of Canada is seeing deer for the first time and feeding them Cheetos, not knowing that it was bad for them.

Historically, Alberta, and Lethbridge in particular, were not friendly to Chinese immigrants. Howard Palmer, a historian specializing in Western Canadian Studies, notes, "the Chinese were rated as the most undesirable ethnic group in Alberta—the group least likely to be assimilated and most conspicuously remote in culture and 'race'" ( "Anti-Oriental Sentiment" 31). He documents that such sentiments began in the early 1880s as 17,000 Chinese labourers from the province of Guangdong were brought to Canada in order to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway. With the completion of the western portion of the railway in 1885, the majority of these labourers remained in British Columbia, while some returned to China or the United States and others migrated to the prairies or the eastern provinces (31-32). While anti-Chinese sentiment existed in Alberta prior to the twentieth century, Palmer argues that it was notably less "virulent" than in British Columbia, mainly due to the relatively low population of Chinese migrants in Alberta ("Patterns of Racism" 138). Although the Chinese in Alberta were not directly competing for jobs with white labourers, as they typically "engaged in various types of domestic service, principally cooking and washing, as well as working as hotel workers, domestic servants, and market gardeners," opposition to them settling in Alberta was still pervasive and often stoked by inflated rumors and stereotypes about drug use and gambling (139). According to Palmer, the Chinese were considered to be so culturally different from European settlers "that many opinion leaders in Alberta who advocated assimilation programmes for immigrants in general believed Chinese immigrants neither could nor should be assimilated" due to stereotypes of "Chinese illiteracy, alleged moral turpitude, alleged ignorance of sanitation practices, and lack of experience with self-government" (139).

In *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada*, David Chuenyan Lai indicates that from 1885-1923, during the period of restricted entry when Chinese immigration was reduced through a head tax before being essentially prohibited by the Exclusion Act of 1923, the most significant prairie Chinatowns were located in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Winnipeg (8, 68). However, despite its importance, local historian and city-councillor Belinda Crowson notes that "there is very little documented history on the Chinese community in Lethbridge. There are few photographs and records. Even individual Chinese residents who operated businesses for 40 years may only show up in the Lethbridge *Herald* 1 or 2 times. This is not a story of Lethbridge's past that is easy to tell or easy to find" ("History on the Dust Heap"). An important piece of this history that has been documented is the hostility facing Chinese migrants who settled in Lethbridge. According to Lai, when Chinese immigrants first began living in the city just prior to the turn of the twentieth century, white landowners were averse to the thought of leasing their land or property to the Chinese, particularly in locations that white renters considered to be desirable; the result was residential segregation produced by leasing Chinese Canadians "wooden shacks on the edge of town" (90). As of 1909, Lethbridge had 102 Chinese residents, along with several Chinese operated laundries, restaurants, and stores. In 1910, a group of white laundry owners took issue with their Chinese competitors and complained that they were located too close to the city center. As a result, bylaw no. 83 was passed by city council, which mandated the segregation of Chinese-owned laundromats in a "restricted area" (90). The bylaw is explained in the following excerpt titled "All Chinks Must Move," originally published in the *Lethbridge Daily News* on December 23rd, 1910 (square brackets inserted by Johnston and den Otter):

The Chinese laundrymen in Lethbridge feel as if they have been ordered off the earth, for all of them that don't move from their present locations to the part of the city west of Smith Street [4th Street South] some time during the next eight days will be violating city by-law No. 83. The Celestials are much wrought up over the matter and have banded together to see if something cannot be done to amend the present by-law, which reads as follows:

"And for the better regulation of laundries and insuring their location in places having adequate sewer connection it is hereby provided that no laundry shall be hereafter established in that portion of the city which lies in the south of the north side of Courtland Street [6th Avenue South], to the east of the west side of Smith Street or north of Baroness Road [1st Avenue South], and any such laundry now established on any of the said streets shall cease to be maintained thereon from and after the 31st day of December, A.D. 1910."

This is part of the city by-law which is "respecting the erection and removal of buildings, fire limits and prevention of fire," and the part noted above was passed by the city council some months ago, at the request of residents who do not desire to have laundries in close proximity to their residences.

The by-law means that there can be no laundries in the North Ward and that there can be none in the greater portion of the city to the south of the tracks. The designated district is not very extensive unless the Chinamen want to set up business in the coulees.

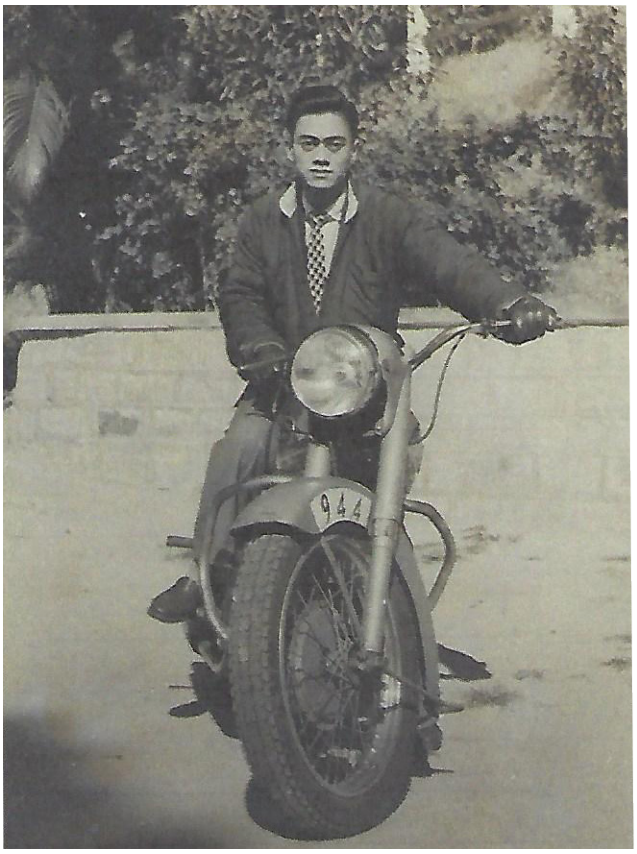
The [white owned] Lethbridge Steam Laundry is a few yards outside the proposed limits and will not be affected by the by-law. Practically all the Chinamen will have to move unless the by-law is amended. (qtd. in Johnston and den Otter 86)

The sentiments expressed and the actions described in this article highlight the hostility that Chinese residents faced. They are also consistent with the attitudes behind other anti-Chinese movements throughout Alberta at the time that sought to disenfranchise, segregate, or force the Chinese to leave certain areas through boycotts, taxes, and bans on who was allowed to work at Chinese-owned businesses (Palmer 139). Although bylaw 83 was repealed in 1916, Crowson notes that Chinese residents and their businesses had already moved to the restricted area and established their community, which became known as Chinatown ("History on the Dust Heap").

Once settled in Lethbridge, my grandparents decided to open their own small clothing store that they named The Pant House, where they primarily sold jeans and accessories such as belts, earrings, and necklaces. Since they moved to the city over fifty years after bylaw no. 83 was repealed, they did not have to abide by the expectation that they would live or operate their business in Chinatown. In fact, by this point in time, the Lethbridge Chinatown had already begun its decline. By 1986, a survey of Chinatown disclosed that it was virtually a ghost town with almost no inhabitants and only three remaining stores in operation (Lai 141). During this time, the Pant House had several successful years until my grandfather's gambling, drinking, and money management problems caught up with him. The store closed and he returned to Asia, at times living in Saipan, the Philippines, and Hong Kong, while my grandmother and mother stayed behind and continued to make a life for themselves in Lethbridge.

Chun Yin

Wai Fong



Bing Wo

My Grandmother

My Mother

Mother, Grandmother, and Relatives

My Grandparents' Wedding

My Grandparents in Banff

Bing Wo, Grandmother, and Relatives at Chu Kee

Chun Yin and Wai Fong in Toronto

My Mother in Montana

Mother and Grandmother Visiting a Relative's Import Shop

GANDALF JEWELLERY INC.
~~280 EUCLID COURT~~, COQUITLAM, B.C. ~~V3K 3W7~~ V3J 3R7
TELEPHONE (604) 931-4922 TELEX: 4351273
2323 COMO LAKE AVE.

SOLD TO: The Pant House, College Mall, Lethbridge Alta.
SHIPPED TO: SAME

| INVOICE DATE | FEDERAL SALES TAX NO. | ACCOUNT NO. | YOUR ORDER NO. | OUR ORDER NO. | SALESMAN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DATE SHIPPED July 13/76 | PROVINCIAL SALES TAX NO. | | F.O.B. VANCOUVER PPD. ☐ COL. ☑ | | SHIPPED VIA MAIL |

| QUANTITY ORDERED | QUANTITY SHIPPED | BACK ORDERED | DESCRIPTION | UNIT PRICE | PER | AMOUNT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | 24 | | Belts (new price 4.00) | 3 75 | | 90 00 |
| 3 | 0 | | Nickel Buckles (discontd) | | | |
| 3 | 3 | | M.J. Leaf Leather | 2 50 | | 7 50 |
| 3 | 3 | | E 48 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | W 48 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | V 48 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | S 48 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | D 72 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | AK | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | AD | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | A 48 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 3 | 0 | | #33 Picture Buckle | 3 50 | | |
| 3 | 3 | | A 36 | 3 00 | | 9 00 |
| 1 | 1 | | Green Jade Bracelet | 8 00 | | 8 00 |
| 1 | 1 | | " "Elephant Pend. | 2 00 | | 2 00 |
| 3 | 3 | | #501 - Silver Dove | 5 00 | | 15 00 |
| 1 | 1 | | #407 - Red Bead | 5 00 | | 5 00 |
| 1 | 1 | | 147 - Puka + Tung. | 9 00 | | 9 00 |
| | | | Shipping | | | 2 45 |

No. 746 TERMS: 2% 10/net 30. TOTAL 220 95
STOCKFORMS #1018-4 LARGE INVOICE RULED E. & O. E.
ORIGINAL - THIS IS YOUR INVOICE YOUR CHEQUE IS YOUR RECEIPT PLEASE PAY LAST AMOUNT . . .

1976 Invoice From The Pant House

**Randle Family History**

While the knowledge about the maternal side of my family is largely based on stories that have been passed down through several generations, information about the paternal side of my family is mostly based on documentation from online ancestry archives. Several years ago my Aunt Laurel took an AncestryDNA test in order to try to trace a genetic family illness, and began using information that she remembered about our family to digitally construct our family tree and to attempt to sketch our ancestry as far back as possible. The knowledge in this section is based on this ancestry research and on stories that have circulated within our family throughout the years.

**Thunder Bay**

Before travelling to Western Canada as a young adult in search of labour, my father lived in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where most of his family still lives today. Thunder Bay is a city at the edge of Lake Superior that was created through the amalgamation of two smaller twin cities, Fort William and Port Arthur, in 1970 ("History of Thunder Bay"). It is also located on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek. The area was first set up as a fur trade post by the French as early as 1678, and then overtaken by the North West Company in 1803, when Fort William was created. Port Arthur, originally named "the Depot" and located at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River, had been used as a location for ships to dock since 1805, and was chosen as the starting point for a route to Fort Garry in what is now Winnipeg. This led to an increase in the population of Port Arthur and the beginning of its rivalry with Fort William. Although my father's grandparents all ended up in Thunder Bay (on both sides of the city), how they got there and how their lives unfolded is comprised of very different stories.

**Maternal Ancestry**

Mary Elizabeth Benn, my great-grandmother, was born in 1892 to Robert Benn and Mary Daw. Both Robert and Mary were the children of Irish immigrants, who likely fled the country in the years surrounding the Great Famine, which began with the largescale failure of potato crops in 1945. In *The Irish Potato Famine*, Carole Gallagher explains that this crop failure was caused by *Phytophthora infestans*, a highly contagious fungus that infected the potatoes and caused them to rot (12). This was extremely problematic because by this point in time the Irish had been growing potatoes for over two hundred years and depended on them as a primary source of food (13-14). Mary's parents were born during the mid-1830s in County Mayo, in western Ireland. According to Irish historians Bernard O'Hara and Nollaig ÓMuraíle, County Mayo was particularly hard-hit by the famine, as close to 90 percent of the population was almost completely reliant on the potato ("County Mayo"). This reliance had resulted from the material conditions of hundreds of thousands of Irish living in poverty and labouring as peasants at the mercy of their landlords (Gallagher 32-33). Many survived by cultivating their own potatoes, which were easy to grow and did not require much labour or farming expertise (13). Without their primary food source, people who could not afford to buy food began to starve and contract diseases such as scurvy, typhus, relapsing fever, and dysentery (50, 54). The situation was exacerbated by anti-Irish sentiments and the ruling British government's refusal to provide meaningful aid. Gallagher suggests that although there is no official date that signals the ending of the Great Famine, by 1952, the number of casualties had begun to fall (88). Prior to the famine, a 1941 census counted the population of Ireland as 8 million, but 10 years later, the population had dropped to 6.5 million due to approximately 1 million deaths, and 1.5 million emigrations (88-91).

Western Ireland was the area that experienced the greatest hardship, and the Great Famine decreased its population by close to a third according to Gallagher (89). Among those who fled were the families of Robert and Mary, who migrated to Scotland and England, all before the mid-1850s. Robert was born in 1860 in Tranmere, England, while Mary was born in 1859 in Govan, Scotland. The two married in 1880, and they lived together in England while raising three children until Robert passed away in the early 1900s. Prior to his death, the family already had money problems and were struggling to support themselves. According to my Aunt Laurel, under unclear and potentially unscrupulous circumstances, Mary Elizabeth immigrated to Canada in 1906 at the age of fourteen, as part of a church-funded migration scheme called Home Children, a program in which poor or orphaned children were sent to the British colonies.

Marjorie Kohli, a scholar of juvenile migration, indicates that the conditions brought about by the British Industrial Revolution, namely significant overpopulation in the cities along with soaring rates of poverty, eventually gave rise to the Home Child emigration program. As noted by Kohli, social attitudes towards children and childhood during the Victorian era differ greatly from those of today. Back then, "children of the lower classes did not play but rather worked to help support the family," as "many families could not afford having a mouth to feed that did not pay its way. There were precious few schools for the masses to attend and even less opportunity to consider the luxury of an education. For many, just keeping food on their table, a roof over their heads and clothes on their back was a daily struggle" (2). Under the Poor Law (a system for administering poor relief), local parish wardens had the responsibilities of overseeing and managing the pauper children, which frequently resulted in them working for tradesmen through either an apprenticeship or an indentured labour contract, where they were often mistreated and abused (7). Children were also sent to workhouses, institutions in which those

who were unable to support themselves were provided with accommodations and employment, and where children could receive minimal, often inefficient, schooling. Workhouses were designed in a "prison-like style," and "inmates were not to be clothed or fed any better than the lowest class found outside the institution" so as to make life inside the workhouse "as undesirable as possible" (7). The Poor Law Amendment Act was passed in 1834, and in order to prevent people from taking advantage of poor relief, those who refused to be sent to the workhouses could be denied any other form of relief (7).

In his analysis of the politics and policies surrounding the Home Child phenomenon, Roy Parker suggests that by the 1860s, "much of the growth in [British] pauperism was actually among children," and that by 1871, 400,000 children were on some sort of poor relief (7-8). Increasing rates of child pauperism combined with an Evangelical revival that took place throughout the 1860s led to the establishment of religion-based humanitarian groups, many of which were devoted to helping "the poor, destitute children of the cities" (Kohli 10) and "child saving in general" (Parker 8). Groups would often rent out buildings that were used as "Homes" to house and feed the children, to give them religious teachings, and to instruct them how to perform various tasks such as sewing, wood chopping, and delivering newspapers (Kohli 10). Many Homes also attempted to find jobs and other placements for the children (Kohli 11). As these Homes quickly exceeded capacity, one proposed solution was to rehome the children by sending them abroad to the colonies. The first group of Home Children was brought to Canada in 1869. Parker notes that although there were instances of unwanted or pauper children being shipped throughout the British Empire as early as the seventeenth century, the Home Child initiative was a systematic approach to child migration in which 80,000 children were brought to Canada in the years shortly after Confederation until the First World War (xiii).

According to Parker, Canada was considered to be the preferred destination to bring child migrants for several reasons. First, the replacement of sail by steam, especially on the trans-Atlantic routes, meant that ships could travel to their destinations faster, while tough competition on these routes also brought down the fares. Next, as a relatively unindustrialised society that relied heavily on an agricultural economy, Canada appealed to British notions of "rural tranquility" associated with a "healthy environment and upstanding morality," making it a seemingly ideal place to let endangered children begin a new life. Additionally, Canada was in need of healthy, young, able-bodied people who could help support economic development. And finally, Canada was the location that overall caused the least logistical or political concerns (275). Once in Canada, most Home Children were placed in rural areas, typically on farms. Boys became agricultural labourers, while girls became domestic servants (136). Parker suggests that instead of the name "Home Children," a more fitting term would be "hired boys and girls" because although the children were often placed in farm families, "in comparatively few cases were they regarded as members of those families, or adopted in the full sense of the term . . . Any ideas of permanence or of ensuring the security that family life might offer children took second place to considerations that derived from the arithmetic of a child's labour value" (142). Home Children often found themselves in precarious situations during their placements because they were frequently treated worse than the biological children of the adults with whom they were placed; they were exposed to abuse, both physical and sexual; it was not uncommon for them to be rejected for unsatisfactory or insufficient labour; and they were often taken advantage of through low wage rates, withheld wages, or wages that went completely unpaid (143).

It was under these circumstances that Mary Elizabeth immigrated to Canada at the age of fourteen. Her father passed away the year after her immigration, so it is likely that the family was

persuaded to send her to Canada by British emigrationists touting the possibility of a better life. Mary Elizabeth presumably worked as a domestic servant until her marriage to Joseph Harold Landmesser at the age of twenty.

Joseph Harold Landmesser was born in 1885 in Chicago, Illinois to Pavel Landmesser and Julianne Guenther. Both Pavel and Julianne were born during the mid-nineteenth century in Prussendorf, located in the Saxony-Anhalt state of Germany. Although Pavel's genealogy is unclear, Julienne was the daughter of Polish migrants. While living in Germany, Pavel and Julianne had one child together before immigrating to the United States in 1872 along with Julianne's parents, Paulina Oranska and Augustianus Laurentius Guenther. The family settled in the city of Chicago, where Pavel and Julianne welcomed four more children including Joseph.

According to historian John Radzilowski and cultural studies researcher Ann Hetzel Gunkel, Chicago is now home to nearly one million people of Polish descent, and it is considered to be "the most prominent Polish community in the United States" (xi). They indicate that Polish immigrants have been settling in Illinois for approximately two centuries, a phenomenon that largely began as a result of nineteenth-century political instability and the occupation of Poland by Russian, Prussian (now German), and Austrian forces (5). Pavel, Julianne, Pauline, and Augustianus were part of a mass Polish immigration movement to the United States, and Chicago in particular, that began in the 1850s and was primarily driven by economic interests. Radzilowski and Gunkel note that during that period of time, "wages in the New World outpaced those in Europe, and hard-working immigrants could earn good money" (6). Once in Chicago, men often worked as labourers, as the city's rapid growth created a large demand for workers. There was also a number of Polish men who held skilled positions, particularly as tailors benefiting from an expanding garment industry (17). Alternatively, women typically took care of

the household or sometimes took on boarders in order to bring in some extra income (17-18). According to my Aunt Laurel, our relatives opened their own tailor shop in the city, which did quite well and allowed them to live a comfortable life.

In 1911, Joseph moved to Canada at the age of twenty-six, where he met Mary Elizabeth in Shawinigan, Québec. They were married a year later, and ended up having nine children together. After living together in Shawinigan for several years, Mary Elizabeth and Joseph decided to try their luck further west in Ontario. They settled in the Thunder Bay region, near Oliver Lake, a place where later generations would build a cabin and enjoy weekends swimming in the lake.

One day shortly after the birth of their ninth child, Mildred Mary (my grandmother), Joseph left the family and moved to Manitoba with a woman named Etta Pearl Moore, under what appear to be adulterous circumstances. He later married Etta Pearl. In Joseph's absence, Mary Elizabeth raised their children alone until she married Ellis Alex White two years following this ordeal. Joseph passed away in 1954 in Winnipeg shortly before his sixty-ninth birthday, while Mary Elizabeth passed away in 1970 in Thunder Bay at the age of seventy-eight.

**Paternal Ancestry**

As documented by Canadian historian Peter A. Bakersville, by the early nineteenth century, Upper Canada (now part of modern day Ontario) had the reputation of being "a 'poor man's country', a country to which a struggling family in the Old Country could emigrate with reasonable hopes for bettering its position" (67). This occurred primarily through an "agricultural ladder" in which "families arrived with a little cash, worked for a period to save a down payment, purchased farmland (often on a time plan) and after years of intensive labour, owned

and operated their own rural enterprise" with the goals of being able to "support their family and to bequeath to their children a small stake for future development" (67). Bakersville notes that "between 1815 and 1865—a period known as the era of 'Proletarian Mass Migration'—well over one million emigrants entered British North America from the British Isles" (68). Included in this number are most of my father's paternal great-great-grandparents.

The first Randle to come to North America was John Randle and his wife Selina Marshall. John Randle was born in 1817 to John Randle, his namesake, and Ann Whetstone. Selina Marshall was born in 1832. Selina was John's second wife, and they married in 1850 when John was thirty-three and Selina was only seventeen. Together they lived in Warwickshire, England, and were part of the working class. According to my aunt, the Randles were not financially well off, which was likely the primary reason that led to their immigration to Canada in the early 1860s. The family eventually settled in Amabel County, a community in Southwestern Ontario located on the Bruce Peninsula at the edge of Lake Huron. They bought land in the town of Oliphant, which is located on an old portage route connecting Georgian Bay to Lake Huron. As indicated in *Green Meadows and Golden Sands: The History of Amabel Township, 1851-1982*, a book compiled by the Amabel Township Historical Society, the portage route has been in use for thousands of years, initially by First Nations, followed by trading parties, fur traders, settlers, and now tourists (207). Although my aunt did not have any direct stories to pass on about my three-times great-grandparents and their life in Oliphant, an excerpt from *Green Meadows and Golden Sands* notes the following:

> John Randle and his wife Scelina [sic] Ward Randle lived at Hawkesbury Lane, Birmingham, Warwickshire, England. In about 1862 they set sail for Canada with William, aged five, and Jane, aged two and a-half. They were settled in Woodford; other

> children born were: Hannah, John, Joseph and Sarah. Later the family moved to Wiarton and then to Oliphant, where they lived in a log house where the Winskill cement block house now stands. William married Hannah Booth; Jane married Daniel Renshaw . . . Hannah married Elias Jones; John married Rebecca Hodgins; Joseph died of pneumonia; Sarah married Hector McKenzie and died when her first baby was born. She and her baby are buried in Balsam Grove Cemetery in Oliphant.
>
> Mr. John Randle was a great gardener, and a refined Christian gentleman. Often at a time when a minister could not be present for a funeral service he would take charge. Mrs. Randle died at sixty-nine from a heart condition; Mr. Randle spent his remaining years with his daughter, Mrs. Renshaw, and died in 1904. (237)

John and Selina's firstborn son, William John Randle, was married to Hannah Booth in 1886. Her father was John Booth, who immigrated to Canada from Yorkshire, England sometime between 1823 and 1855. Eliza Lucinda Wheeler, born in 1847 in Kingston, Ontario, was her mother. While John Booth was a British immigrant, Eliza Lucinda's family had already been settled in North America for some time. Eliza Lucinda's mother, Julia Ann Weldon, was born in the early 1820s in New York State. Her father, Garrison Christy Wheeler, was also born in New York State in 1816. Through him, this branch of the family tree can be traced back several hundred years to John Osgood, who was born in Wherwell, Hampshire, England in 1595 and immigrated to Massachusetts in 1638 during the Great Puritan Migration.

Together, William John Randle and Hannah Booth had twelve children and moved to the Port Arthur area in 1941. Their second son, also named William John Randle (although he went by the nickname Jack), married Gladys Elizabeth Molton in 1923. Gladys Elizabeth's parents

were Gertrude Teressa Yates and Robert Danbury Molton. Gertrude Teressa's maternal ancestry was German, and her grandparents, Ludwig Köhl and Theresa Orngarn, immigrated to Canada from Hamburg, Germany in 1857. Her paternal relatives were Scottish, and her grandparents, William Yates and Mary Giffen, arrived in Canada in 1850. Robert was of Scottish and English descent. His mother, Serena Coombs, was born in England and migrated to Canada sometime between the mid-1840s and mid-1850s. His father's family came to Canada several decades earlier in 1817, and his grandfather, Israel Malton, was born on the ship mid-voyage. Once in Canada, the spelling of the "Malton" surname shifted to "Molton" and at other times "Moulton."

Gertrude Teressa Yates and Robert Danbury Molton were married September 16, 1903 in Lambton, Ontario. They had two daughters: Gladys Elizabeth born in 1905, and Dorothy May born in 1911. The family moved to Cloud Bay (a community around forty-five kilometers outside of Fort William) shortly after Dorothy's birth, where Robert farmed. At the age of forty-seven, Robert's life came to an abrupt end on May 9, 1922 when he was shot to death by Frederick Baldwin. Alanna Buso, a writer for the Thunder Bay Museum's "Looking Back" column published in *The Chronicle Journal*, explains that Robert, on his way to borrow some horse clippers from one of the family's neighbours, was blindsided by an assailant with a gun. His body was later discovered by his twelve-year-old daughter Dorothy. According to an autopsy, he was shot three times and had one bullet each in his chest, back, and head. The gun used to kill him was a Winchester 30-30 rifle, the same type of gun that Robert Molton himself kept at home. Shortly after the murder occurred, police, neighbours, and community members returned to the crime scene to search for the murder weapon and discharged bullet cartridges. One of the search party members, thirty-year-old Frederick Baldwin, a man who worked with Robert Molton as a farmhand, became the prime suspect when he discovered a bullet cartridge

and proceeded to step on it, in an effort to conceal it from the authorities. Unfortunately for Baldwin, he was caught in the act and since investigators had already been suspicious of him, he was charged with "vagrancy" so that the police could keep him in custody while continuing to gather sufficient evidence. Community members alerted police to prior conflict involving Baldwin and Molton, supposedly due to Baldwin's relationship with Molton's eldest daughter, Gladys, to whom he was apparently engaged (Buso).

Once jailed, Baldwin's guilty conscience compelled him to confess to the crime, and he was promptly charged with first degree murder. Buso notes that during his confession, he declared:

> "Molton and I did not get along together, and continually quarrelled about one thing or another (. . .) at about half past two o'clock I came down and got a rifle which was standing up in the corner of the little house. I got three cartridges on a shelf in the kitchen and had taken them and put them away in my pack sack. I took the rifle and the cartridges and went out for the purpose of shooting Robert Molton. I had thought of killing him many times before, but made up my mind to do it now with the rifle." (Baldwin qtd. in Buso)

Following his statement, Baldwin took investigators to the location at the nearby river where he had attempted to hide both the Winchester and the cartridges. He later tried to implicate Robert Molton's wife, Gertrude, and daughter, Gladys, in the crime. He declared that Gladys had supposedly refused to marry him "unless her father was 'out of the way'" (qtd. in Buso) and that Gertrude had shown him where Molton kept his gun and ammunition. However, while under interrogation, both Gertrude and Gladys denied even knowing that Molton possessed a Winchester. Additionally, Gladys testified that her father was actually "thrilled with their

relationship and harboured no ill will towards Baldwin" (Buso). The women's testimony was found to be credible, and neither were ever charged with any crime. Baldwin, on the other hand, was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by hanging. He was executed two months after the trial, on January 15, 1923. As indicated by Buso, he was the third of six convicted criminals that were executed in Port Arthur history.

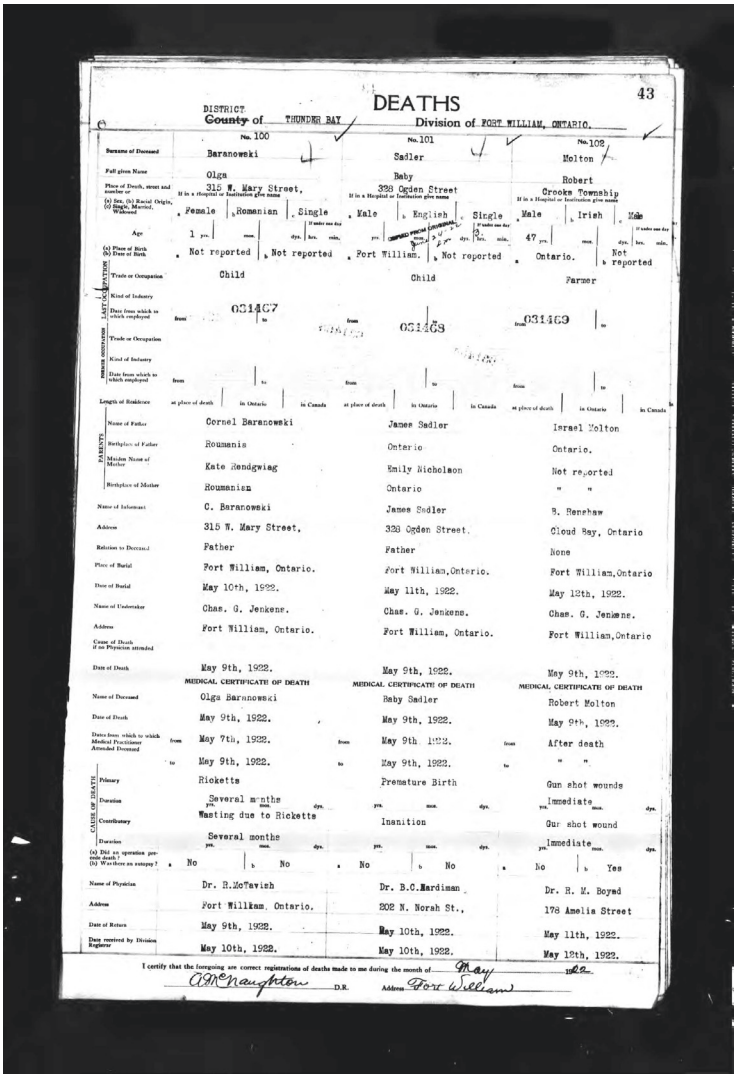
Gladys went on to marry Jack Randle three months after Frederick Baldwin's execution. Although no one in the family is certain whether or not she and her mother were involved with the murder, they both went on to live normal lives. Gertrude remarried in 1929, while Gladys and Jack went on to have seven children. Born in 1927, my grandfather John Keith (Buck) Randle was their third child. From what my father and aunts remember, he was always a hard worker. Beginning at the age of fifteen, he worked as a truck driver until his retirement in 1994. He began his career by helping his father haul pilings to local grain elevators that were under construction at the time. He later went on to work an assortment of trucking jobs, including hauling pulpwood to the papermill, delivering various materials to construction sites, and driving Euclids and Belly Dumps. After settling down with a company that would later be taken over by Lafarge, Buck spent thirty-seven years operating cement trucks, notably without ever getting into an accident. During this time, Buck married Mildred Mary Landmesser when they were thirty and twenty-nine, respectively. Together they had five children, and Buck also took in Mildred's son from a previous relationship. Mildred tragically passed away from illness at the age of thirty-eight, widowing Buck and leaving him to raise their six children. Four years later, Buck married his second wife, who he remained with until his passing in 2020.

Family Members on the Farm

John and Selina Randle

William John Randle Family

Robert, Gertrude, Gladys and Dorothy Molton



DEATHS 43

DISTRICT County of THUNDER BAY Division of FORT WILLIAM, ONTARIO.

| | No. 100 | No. 101 | No. 102 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Surname of Deceased | Baranowski | Sadler | Molton |
| Full given Name | Olga | Baby | Robert |
| Place of Death, street and number or If in a Hospital or Institution give name | 315 W. Mary Street, | 328 Ogden Street | Crooks Township |
| (a) Sex, (b) Racial Origin, (c) Single, Married, Widowed | a Female, b Romanian, c Single | a Male, b English, c Single | a Male, b Irish, c Male |
| Age | 1 yrs. | 3 dys. | 47 yrs. |
| (a) Place of Birth (b) Date of Birth | a Not reported, b Not reported | a Fort William, b Not reported | a Ontario. b Not reported |
| LAST OCCUPATION Trade or Occupation | Child | Child | Farmer |
| Kind of Industry | | | |
| Date from which to which employed | from 031467 to | from 031468 to | from 031469 to |
| PREVIOUS OCCUPATION Trade or Occupation | | | |
| Kind of Industry | | | |
| Date from which to which employed | from to | from to | from to |
| Length of Residence | at place of death / in Ontario / in Canada | at place of death / in Ontario / in Canada | at place of death / in Ontario / in Canada |
| PARENTS Name of Father | Cornel Baranowski | James Sadler | Israel Molton |
| Birthplace of Father | Roumania | Ontario | Ontario. |
| Maiden Name of Mother | Kate Rendgwiag | Emily Nicholson | Not reported |
| Birthplace of Mother | Roumania | Ontario | " " |
| Name of Informant | C. Baranowski | James Sadler | B. Renshaw |
| Address | 315 W. Mary Street, | 328 Ogden Street. | Cloud Bay, Ontario |
| Relation to Deceased | Father | Father | None |
| Place of Burial | Fort William, Ontario. | Fort William, Ontario. | Fort William, Ontario |
| Date of Burial | May 10th, 1922. | May 11th, 1922. | May 12th, 1922. |
| Name of Undertaker | Chas. G. Jenkens. | Chas. G. Jenkens. | Chas. G. Jenkens. |
| Address | Fort William, Ontario. | Fort William, Ontario. | Fort William, Ontario |
| Cause of Death If no Physician attended | | | |
| Date of Death | May 9th, 1922. | May 9th, 1922. | May 9th, 1922. |
| MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH | | | |
| Name of Deceased | Olga Baranowski | Baby Sadler | Robert Molton |
| Date of Death | May 9th, 1922. | May 9th, 1922. | May 9th, 1922. |
| Dates from which to which Medical Practitioner Attended Deceased | from May 7th, 1922. to May 9th, 1922. | from May 9th 1922. to May 9th, 1922. | from After death to " " |
| CAUSE OF DEATH Primary | Rickettsia | Premature Birth | Gun shot wounds |
| Duration | Several months | | Immediate |
| Contributory | Wasting due to Ricketts | Inanition | Gun shot wound |
| Duration | Several months | | Immediate |
| (a) Did an operation precede death? (b) Was there an autopsy? | a No b No | a No b No | a No b Yes |
| Name of Physician | Dr. R.McTavish | Dr. B.C.Hardiman | Dr. R. M. Boyed |
| Address | Fort William, Ontario. | 308 N. Norah St., | 178 Amelia Street |
| Date of Return | May 9th, 1922. | May 10th, 1922. | May 11th, 1922. |
| Date received by Division Registrar | May 10th, 1922. | May 10th, 1922. | May 12th, 1922. |

I certify that the foregoing are correct registrations of deaths made to me during the month of May 1922.

A McNaughton D.R. Address Fort William

Robert Molton Certificate of Death (*Ontario Deaths*)

Buck and Mildred's Wedding


My Father and Relatives

My Father

Buck and My Father

My Parents

## Reflection

Exploring my family history has been a fascinating and constructive process that has allowed me to reflect on my identity and think about how stories from the past continue to inform and have bearing on the present. Although the Mok and Randle families came from very different places, historical circumstances and individual decision-making ultimately brought them together. The differences between the Mok and Randle families can partially be seen through the distinct ways in which each have attempted to preserve and document their histories: through the retelling of stories by the Mok family, and the use of AncestryDNA services by the Randle family. What follows is an examination of AncestryDNA, a consideration of the reasons why one side of my family has chosen to make use of their services while the other has decided to avoid them, and my personal decision regarding genetic ethnicity testing.

## AncestryDNA

AncestryDNA is a genetic testing company that uses saliva samples to conduct autosomal DNA testing (which traces maternal, paternal, direct, and indirect genetic relationships), in order to estimate a person's genetic ethnicity by comparing, as the company puts it, their DNA sample with samples "from more than 1,800 global regions" ("About AncestryDNA"). A testing kit costs around $129, and provides consumers with ethnicity estimates, information about DNA matches, and access to research tools and records that can help them learn about their genealogy and start to build their family trees. Since the company's launch in 1996, consumers have reportedly used Ancestry's services to create more than 100 million family trees and 11 billion ancestor profiles ("Ancestry Surpasses 15 Million"), and as of 2022, the company has collected DNA tests from over 20 million users ("About AncestryDNA"). However, despite the popularity

of AncestryDNA and other genetic testing services, in recent years concerns have been raised about the privacy of DNA data, the accuracy of genetic ethnicity estimates, and the way that these services interact with the idea of race.

**Biological Privacy**

As public awareness of the potential privacy and security issues related to genetic testing services continues to grow, science journalist Catherine Roberts notes that beyond the sensitive information contained in our DNA, private genetic testing companies such as AncestryDNA also collect non-DNA data, which is routinely shared with third parties such as Microsoft, Google, and Facebook ("The Privacy Problems). Additionally, Roberts indicates that when consumers opt into "research" that uses their de-identified DNA and other supplementary data, they open themselves up to privacy vulnerabilities, particularly when it is not clear what this "research" entails or who it will be conducted by, as there is a risk of being re-identified by the data that is shared. As journalist Lindsay Van Ness reports, there are also significant concerns about the use of "investigative genetic genealogy" by law enforcement agencies, which involves the use of DNA databases to identify criminals through the DNA of their relatives ("DNA Databases"). In *The Lost Family: How DNA Testing Is Upending Who We Are*, Libby Copeland notes that even if a consumer consents to make their DNA accessible to law enforcement, doing so additionally provides access to the genetic information of their relatives, regardless of whether or not these relatives consent to or even know about such access. According to Copeland, by the time a public genetic database has samples from approximately three million Americans with European ancestry, around ninety-nine percent of white Americans "would be potentially identifiable to law enforcement, at which time the United States would essentially have . . . a de-facto national

DNA database" (161). As of 2022, AncestryDNA has over 20 million people in their database, and likely well over 3 million people of European descent. On their website, AncestryDNA states that they do "not voluntarily cooperate with law enforcement," but that they will release information about subscribers to law enforcement in the United States "in response to a valid trial, grand jury[,] . . subpoena" ("Ancestry Guide") or search-warrant. Copeland draws attention to a 2019 case in which a Florida detective was granted a warrant to search all of genetic testing company GEDmatch's database, regardless of whether users had consented to making their DNA available for such purposes (165). Such a case highlights the reality that once a genetic testing company is in possession of your DNA, what happens to it is essentially out of your control.

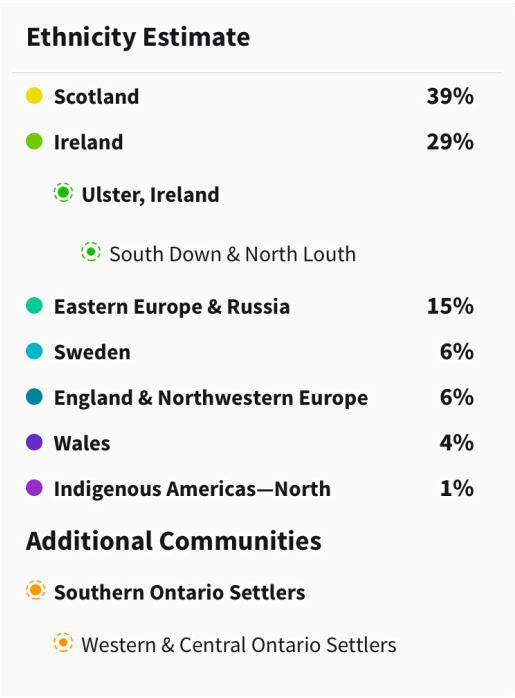
Such privacy issues are the main reason why members of the Mok family are hesitant to use genetic testing services like those provided by AncestryDNA. The thought of having their DNA in the hands of a large corporation that could potentially use it for questionable purposes or purposes to which they do not consent disturbs many of them, particularly the older family members. While the issue of the use of public genetic databases by law enforcement is widely known, particularly after the highly publicized 2018 arrest of Joseph DeAngelo, the Golden State Killer, which was made possible by such investigative techniques, Copeland posits that these databases could also be made use of by other institutions, such as governments, for the purpose of surveillance and discrimination (164). According to a *New York Times* article published in 2019, the Chinese government is already engaging in such activities by gathering DNA samples from Uighurs and other ethnic minorities, many of whom are held in detention camps (Wee and Mozur). These samples are being used in various scientific studies exploring a range of possible outcomes, such as: creating an image of an individual's face solely from a DNA sample; developing facial recognition technology that can categorize people by their ethnicity; and using

DNA to determine whether or not someone belongs to an ethnic minority (Wee and Mozur). In relation to my family, when compared to the Randles, I think that coming from Hong Kong, a region whose citizens have an increasingly conflicted relationship with China and its authoritarian government, has made the Moks more wary of the potential dangers that a government or other institutional body can pose to citizen wellbeing and safety. This wariness, in turn, makes them more sceptical of paying a company to take possession of their DNA.

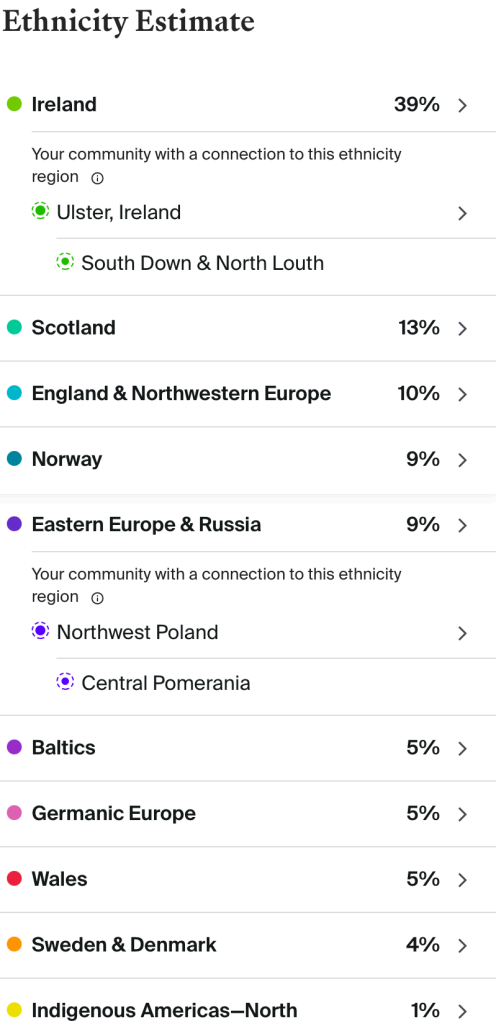
**Ethnicity Estimates**

Beyond these privacy and data security issues, there has also been scrutiny over what exactly the genetic ethnicity estimates such companies produce mean and what they can actually tell us about ourselves and our histories. According to the AncestryDNA website, the company blends "advanced DNA science with the world's largest online family history resource to predict your genetic ethnicity and help you find new family connections. It maps ethnicity going back multiple generations to provide insight into such possibilities as: what region of Europe are my ancestors from, or am I likely to have East Asian heritage?" ("Frequently Asked Questions"). Essentially, the genetic ethnicity profiles offered by this service are not necessarily accurate or conclusive because they are only "estimates" or "predictions." For example, a 2019 investigation led by *CBC Marketplace*, in which a set of twins submitted DNA samples to five different genetic testing companies (including AncestryDNA), resulted in non-identical ethnicity estimates; most companies traced their ancestry to the same regions but by different percentages, and each company yielded different ethnicity profiles (Agro and Denne). In addition, ethnicity estimates can also be subject to change over time, as companies collect more data and refine or alter their algorithms. As an illustration of this, while working on my thesis and accessing my

aunt's AncestryDNA profile, I noticed that her ethnicity estimate underwent some notable changes from 2021 to 2022 (see figure 2).




Ethnicity Estimate 2021




Ethnicity Estimate 2022

Interestingly, my aunt revealed to me that her mother had believed that they were Dutch, and even wrote this on my aunt's birth certificate. However, there is no indication of this in her ethnicity profile from 2021, although in her 2022 profile this could be accounted for through the "5% Germanic Europe" estimate, even though 5% is much less than what her mother had believed the family's Dutch ancestry comprised in their genetic makeup. My interpretation of these discrepancies is similar to others researching this phenomenon: ethnicity estimates should not be completely relied upon as fact, and additional research must be done to verify connections before claiming each ethnic identity that shows up in the results from such companies.

In addition to such inquiries into the reliability of genetic ethnicity estimates, questions have also been raised about which consumer groups tend to subscribe to such services and why. In her work examining the relationship between whiteness and online genetic testing, Anna Robinson-Sweet documents that "White Americans make up the majority of customers for genetic genealogy tests and presumably a large percentage, if not majority, of subscribers to online genealogy services" (80). AncestryDNA has announced that with their 2022 update they have "added more samples to [their] reference panel, which expands the number and diversity of populations [they] can compare your DNA to" ("AncestryDNA precision"). Following the update, the company now identifies 114 regions in Africa, 136 in the Americas, 68 in Asia, 1501 in Europe, 8 in Oceania, and 36 in West Asia ("AncestryDNA precision"). These numbers illustrate that the vast majority of AncestryDNA's customers are white people of broadly European descent, as Europe alone accounts for just over eighty percent of the global regions that the company recognizes.

Journalist Dieter Holger indicates that one explanation for this over-representation of whiteness is that when AncestryDNA's genetic testing services were first introduced in 2012,

they were only offered to customers in the United States ("DNA testing for ancestry"). Three years later, in 2015, they became available to consumers living in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, before expanding to 29 additional (mostly European) countries in 2016 ("AncestryDNA Now Available"). Holger notes that since AncestryDNA tests were initially only sold in these countries (essentially the United Kingdom and its former settler colonies), the result was a customer base that continues to be relatively homogenous and profoundly white. This, in turn, affects the composition of the company's DNA reference panel, which also impacts both the accuracy and the way in which ethnicity estimates are calculated. AncestryDNA periodically releases "white papers" that they describe as "detailed, authoritative reports" ("AncestryDNA White Papers"); the "white papers" explain the methods behind their ethnicity estimates, communities[1], and DNA matching functions. In the "Ethnicity Estimate 2022 White Paper," Jeffrey Adrion and colleagues disclose that AncestryDNA's most recent ethnicity reference panel started with a set of approximately 180,000 candidate samples. Most samples were taken from the company's own database ("AncestryDNA precision"), while around 5,000 samples were from other datasets such as the Human Genome Diversity Project (Adrion, et al. 5). These external samples were included in order "to sample a large set of distinct population groups representing a global picture of human genetic variation" (5). Samples from the AncestryDNA database were taken from candidates who consented to participate in research, and whose family trees provided evidence that they had a lengthy family history in a specific geographic area or within a specific community (5). After putting the samples through various quality control processes, they were reduced to a collection of 68,714 samples, which then

[1] Ethnicity estimates provided by AncestryDNA contain two different types of "regions," namely ethnicities and communities. Members of the same community are people "who share a significant number of matches with each other," and presumably descend from the same group of people who either migrated to or from the same place at approximately the same time ("AncestryDNA Communities").

became the company's current DNA reference panel used to determine the ethnicity estimates that the company provides to its customers. Since the majority of AncestryDNA's consumers are of European descent, this region is the most represented in the company's reference panel, which results in a higher degree of accuracy and precision for the ethnicity estimates of people with mostly European heritage. In an article from 2017 that describes the challenges that people of colour can face while using genetic ethnicity testing services, Peter Balonon-Rosen details the experience of Michael Kim, a Korean American who took an AncestryDNA test in order to find out more information about his family's genetic history. Kim's results stated that he was 100% from Asia ("Not White?"). Although AncestryDNA's ethnicity estimates have improved within the past five years, there is still a noticeable disparity between the level of detail that AncestryDNA offers to people with European heritage and those without, a lack of precision that has also made the maternal side of my family further disinterested in taking a genetic ancestry test.

**Genetic Testing and Race**

In recent years, with the soaring popularity of genetic ancestry tests, another major criticism of AncestryDNA and its competitors is the way in which their services seemingly promote racial essentialism. W. Carson Byrd and Matthew W. Hughey, scholars whose work examines race and inequality, define racial essentialism as "the belief that certain biological traits and social behaviours [are] linked and constitute the 'essence' of a certain racial group" (10). In other words, as articulated by sociologist Ann Juanita Morning, "essentialism suggests that the members of a given group share one or more defining qualities—'essence(s)'—that are inherent, innate, or otherwise fixed . . . In the context of race, essentialism implies an inherited, immutable

physical or psychological difference between racial groups, which are believed to be 'natural kinds'" (17). In general, racial essentialists believe that human beings are split into different (typically hierarchical) racial categories based on some sort of fundamental differences that supposedly exist between them. However, as indicated by Wendy D. Roth and colleagues, social scientists have long rejected racial essentialism in favour of racial constructionism (2). A racial constructionist view contends that race is a social construct, and that the differences between racial categories that essentialists view as being inherited and innate are actually human inventions rooted in particular historical circumstances, time periods, and places (Morning 19). Charles W. Mills, a philosopher of race and politics, suggests that constructionists (or constructivists) believe "that there are no 'natural' racial divisions between human groups but rather a continuous spectrum of varying morphological traits" (47), and that the perceived boundaries between racial categories are the product of politically motivated "social decisions" aimed at creating and sustaining relationships of privilege and oppression (48).

With the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003, humans have been proven to share 99.9% of their DNA. Geneticists Lynn B. Jorde and Stephen P. Wooding convey that with a variance of only 0.1% between individuals, humans are less genetically diverse than "many other species, from fruit flies to chimpanzees" (28), and that there is overall more genetic variation between people from the same racial or ethnic group than there is between groups. However, Robinson-Sweet argues that with the advent of AncestryDNA and other such genetic ethnicity testing services, "the very notion of genetically defined ethnicities being promulgated through these testing services promotes an essentialist view of race in which there is something inherent and biological about being British, or Senegalese, or Jewish, or Chinese" (86). Roth et al. refer to this as a "genetic essentialist view of race," a view that suggests that genes are

responsible for determining race and that a group's "core essence" can be found within their genetics (2). This implies "that discrete biological races exist within the human species and that genetic difference is the root of racial differences in behaviour and outcomes" (2). As articulated by Byrd and Hughey, "once thought an ugly component of a bygone era of social Darwinism and race-based eugenics research supported by racially exclusionary and discriminatory laws, overt policies, and hostile attitudes, these modes of thinking have invaded contemporary study of genetics and genomics" (9-10).

Language and imagery that suggest an essentialist view of race can be found in AncestryDNA promotional materials, including throughout a variety of commercials. Most notable is the commercial entitled "Greatness," that began airing in February 2018 and coincided with the winter Olympics held in PyeongChang, South Korea. The video features a young woman practicing a figure skating routine while an unseen female narrator tells viewers that "greatness lives within all of us." While promoting a limited time AncestryDNA discount, she suggests that "now is the time to discover yours." As the figure skater performs various spins and jumps, a pie chart appears onscreen. The narrator announces "you can find out where you get your precision" as the pie chart shows 48% Scandinavia; "your grace," which is linked to 27% Central Asia; and "your drive," which is associated with 21% Great Britain. The video ends shortly after viewers are told that "with more than 150 ethnic regions to connect to, only AncestryDNA can put your greatness on full display" ("Greatness"). Robinson-Sweet argues that through this advertisement AncestryDNA "reinforces the primacy of biologically proven ethnicity" and makes use of ethnic tropes in order to "help Ancestry sell a product predicated on the importance of biological heritage to a person's identity and authentic self" (86). Additionally, the commercial promotes notions of genetic essentialism by suggesting that "greatness" is

something that is tangible, hereditary, and ultimately connected to a person's genetic makeup. Instead of linking qualities such as precision, grace, and drive to factors such as hard work, effort, and repeated practice, they are considered to be innate essences that are specifically attributed to certain ethnic inheritances.

Other commercials also suggest an essentialist point of view through such taglines as: "to help answer once and for all, what it is that makes you, you" ("Introducing Ancestry DNA"); "discover the story only your DNA can tell" ("Testimonial: Livie"); "now I know why I am like I am" ("Julia Ashwood"); and "find out who you really are" ("A Christmas Surprise"). These phrases all similarly imply that a person's DNA contains the core of who they are, that their DNA offers hidden insights about their true, authentic identity. According to communication studies scholars Angela L. Putman and Kristen L. Cole, these phrases are also in line with AncestryDNA's rhetorical strategy of depicting "DNA as object of discovery," in which "the subject's self-perception is implicitly characterized as merely an impression while the DNA that is lurking inside them is depicted as the confirming agent, which codifies and legitimizes identity in a seemingly objective way" (213). As such, "DNA is represented as an internal, foreign fragment—an object of knowledge that awaits discovery through scientific excavation, which supersedes all other self or other-generated knowledge about ethnic identity" (214). This idea leads to another major concern surrounding genetic ancestry tests, namely that test-takers could change the way that they racially identify due to their test results. In a study that examined the impact that genetic ancestry tests have on the ways in which consumers racially and ethnically identify, sociologists Wendy D. Roth and Biorn Ivemark discovered that, in particular, test-takers who identified as only white prior to the test were more likely to adopt "geneticized" identities, meaning ethnic and racial identities that are directly altered by genetic ancestry test results (156).

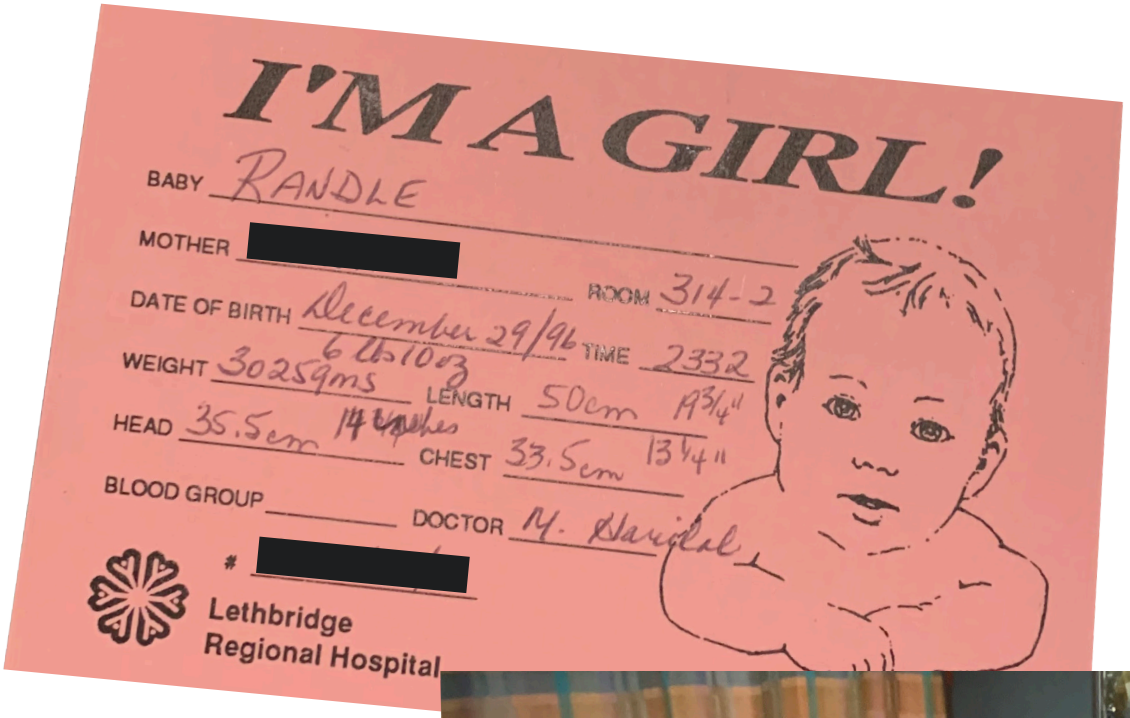
According to Roth and Ivemark, “Whites were practically the only respondents who expressed a low private regard for their pretest identities; this referred not to specific identities but to a general European or white identity” (172). Additionally, “White respondents expressed a desire for greater distinctiveness than other respondents, and many aspired to find something that would add a bit of spice to what they viewed as an otherwise boring background” (172). Roth and Ivemark suggest that this desire is fuelled by the same race-based privilege that renders whiteness invisible; and that by providing the option “to adopt symbolic racial identities, the tests promote the idea that race can be costless and exist separately from the social and structural consequences with which society has imbued it” (178). Genetic ancestry tests can serve to maintain and uphold the system of race-based privilege by allowing people who adopt geneticized identities to reap benefits from the racial identities that they adopt, without having to face the negative consequences typically associated with said identities (178). For example, Robinson-Sweet suggests that people who respond to demographic questions on official forms and applications based on their new geneticized identities could have the negative impact of diluting and misappropriating funding and programming meant to assist people of colour and their communities (86).

**My DNA Decision**

While working on my thesis, one of the options before me was to take a genetic ancestry test and explore the impact that the results might have on the way that I perceive my biracial identity. Although I was somewhat tempted to find out what information a DNA test might potentially reveal, I ultimately decided against it. In the study conducted by Roth and Ivemark, respondents reported taking genetic ancestry tests for a variety of reasons, including: to find a

sense of belonging, substantiate a suspected ancestry, discover knowledge about their ethnic or racial heritage, learn about their family history, or connect with distant relatives and add to their family trees (167-168). I already know both my ethnic heritage and my family history, through both my paternal aunt's genealogical research and my maternal aunt's collection of interviews and family stories. I do not think that taking a DNA test would tell me anything substantial that I am not already aware of. Of the reasons that Roth and Ivemark highlight, the one that sticks out to me the most is the idea of finding a sense of belonging. However, I do not think that this is something a DNA test would be able to provide me. Instead, the most likely outcome is that I would spend the entire time waiting for my test results making myself sick with anxiety and existential dread that my results might say that I am not exactly 50% Asian, or that they could confirm my childhood fear of being secretly adopted, since no one in my family looks like me. These fears highlight the fact that I am still not fully confident in my identity and do not have a stable sense of belonging. While taking a DNA test will not help me in this way, I think that the work that I am undertaking to turn inwards and reflect on myself, my heritage, and my experiences, particularly in the form of writing and artwork, will allow me to continue to move towards a greater feeling of stability, acceptance, and self-affirmation.

# Part 3


I'M A GIRL!

BABY RANDLE

MOTHER [redacted]

ROOM 314-2

DATE OF BIRTH December 29/96 TIME 2332

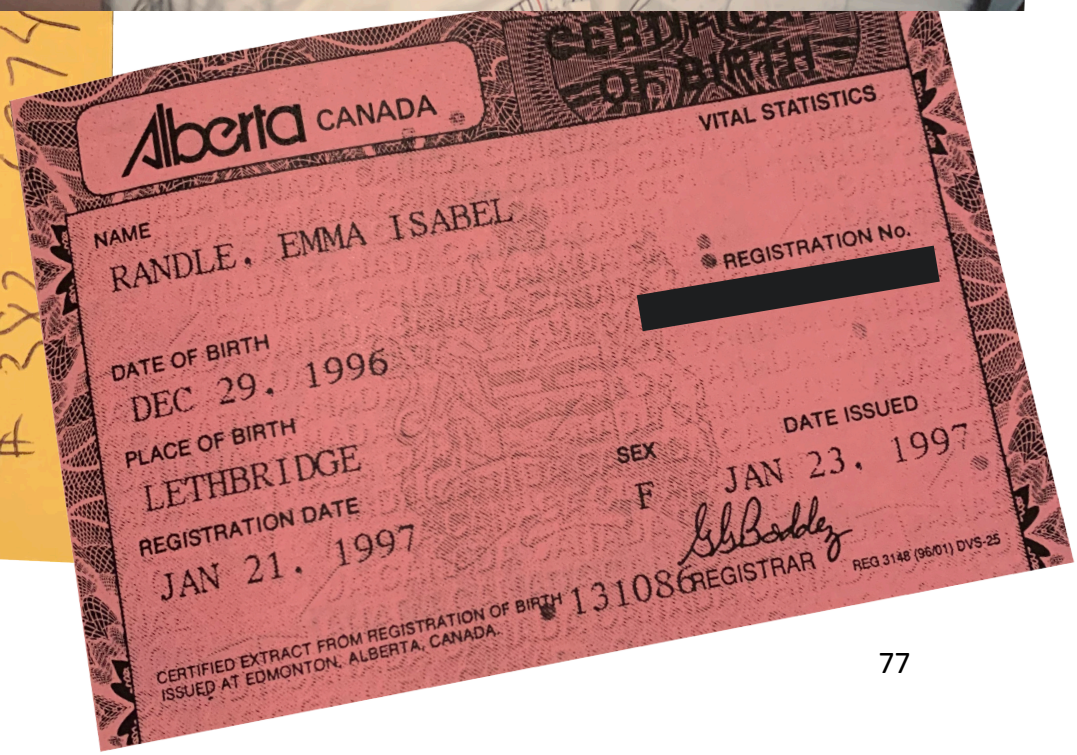
WEIGHT 3025gms 6 lbs 10 oz LENGTH 50cm 19 3/4"

HEAD 35.5cm 14 inches CHEST 33.5cm 13 1/4"

BLOOD GROUP _____ DOCTOR M. Harichal

# [redacted]

Lethbridge Regional Hospital



Alberta CANADA

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH

VITAL STATISTICS

NAME
RANDLE, EMMA ISABEL

REGISTRATION No. [redacted]

DATE OF BIRTH
DEC 29, 1996

PLACE OF BIRTH
LETHBRIDGE

REGISTRATION DATE
JAN 21, 1997

SEX
F

DATE ISSUED
JAN 23, 1997

REGISTRAR

131086

REG 3148 (96/01) DVS-25

CERTIFIED EXTRACT FROM REGISTRATION OF BIRTH
ISSUED AT EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA.

**Chopsticks #1**

The first time that I remember feeling anything about my race, ethnicity, or culture was when I was six years old, eating A&W with my mom and grandma at the local mall. They were eating food-court Chinese food, while I was given a choice and had decided to get a burger and fries. We must have just finished shopping, but I can't recall what stores we went to or what we bought. Instead, what remains in my memory is the inexplicable feeling of shame that washed over me when I realized that the girl sitting at the table beside us was eating Chinese food and using chopsticks.

She was white, with blonde hair and blue eyes, and maybe a year or two older than me. As I watched her use chopsticks with precision and ease, I was overwhelmed with regret and envy. I was embarrassed for having chosen a burger and fries over ginger beef and fried rice, and I was both jealous and mortified that a white girl could use chopsticks, when I, an actual Chinese person, could not.

Although I didn't understand these emotions at the time, this was my first experience of the feeling that I was culturally lacking, that I was somehow "not enough." This was also the day that I asked my mother to teach me how to use chopsticks.

**Grocery Store**

When I was eighteen and just finishing my first year of university, I started a part-time job as a cashier at a grocery store. I didn't really want the job, but the store was only a few blocks away from my house and none of the other places that I applied to had called me back, so I took it anyway. It was my first time working for a large company in a department with nearly fifty coworkers and in a position where I was directly interacting with the public for hours at a time. I was there for money and work experience, and I was wholly unprepared for the challenge that this job ended up presenting to my racial identity and self-perception.

After working for about two weeks, I began to get comfortable with the duties of a cashier, and the panic and anxiety that accompanies being new on the job gradually subsided. It was then that I started to notice the strange interactions that I was having with customers. While most were content to pack their groceries, pay for their order, and keep our conversation to the bare minimum, a notable subset would observe me and insist on opening up a dialogue on my ethnic heritage and background.

One memorable instance includes an older white woman looking at me and asking, "are you full Canadian?" I remember being caught off guard and unsure of how to answer. I was born in Canada, so yes, I am "full Canadian." How does one split their nationality and citizenship so that they're not "full Canadian"? But I knew that wasn't what she was asking me. So when I opened my mouth I said, "I'm half Asian and half white." She proceeded to compliment my appearance and say, "you have such a unique look… but that's not always a good thing." Left speechless once again, all I managed to reply was, "thanks have a great day," as part of me wondered what the hell she was trying to say, while another part knew exactly what she meant.

Another occasion involves a middle-aged white man who came through my till with his wife. As I was trying to focus on scanning their groceries and remembering the right produce codes, I could feel the man looking at me but did my best to ignore him. Until he made that impossible by abruptly asking me, "where are you from?" Since this wasn't the first time I had to deal with this question, I knew that "I was born here" wasn't the answer he was looking for. As I told him, "I'm half Asian and half white," he grinned triumphantly and exclaimed, "I knew you were a different flavour!" My mind raced from "ew gross," to "am I being objectified?" to "I wonder what his wife thinks about this," to "is he trying to unoriginally imply that since I'm biracial I'm like a swirled ice cream cone instead of pure vanilla?" Again, all I said was, "thanks have a great day."

These kinds of interactions took a toll on my mental health because for the first time I was confronted by the reality of my racial ambiguity. When I was in school, I was with the same classmates from grade 1 to grade 12, so everyone knew my parents and my background. At work I was fully exposed to the public, and since I was on the clock, I couldn't just avoid customers or their invasive questioning. While they seemingly demanded to know *what* I was, the foundations of my identity were shaken, and I began to question even *who* I was.

Customers were not the only people that I had uncomfortable racialized interactions with. I recall, on a slow day at work, having a conversation with two of my female coworkers who I considered to be "work friends" while we were in between customers. My Asian heritage somehow became a topic of discussion, and one of my coworkers mentioned that she thought that I was Latino rather than Asian. After a short pause, she proceeded to ask, "since you're Asian, is that why you're so short? Do you, like, eat rice every day?" My other coworker laughed

awkwardly while I stood there wondering what possessed her to say such a thing until a customer began unloading their groceries at my till, saving me from the conversation.

A separate but equally memorable conversation took place when I was talking to another "work friend" about our mutual interest in K-Pop. She told me that she was a big BTS fan, was planning to visit Korea in the future, and was even trying to learn Korean. I tried to relate to her by mentioning that I was trying to learn Cantonese because of my ethnic heritage and since it's the language that my family speaks. Upon hearing this, she immediately asked, "since you're Chinese do you eat dogs?" While contemplating the irony of her obsession with Korean culture and celebrities juxtaposed with her ignorance towards an actual Asian person, I quickly said, "ha ha no," before pretending that I needed to leave because I had important work to do.

While these instances were memorable because of the combination of audacity and absurdity that they exemplify, the most impactful interactions that I had are embodied by my relationship with Rachel.

# Ethnic Heritage Matching Game:
## Match the Heritage to the Feature

Russian
Serbian
Bosnian
Hungarian
Italian
Greek

Spanish
Mexican
Panamanian
Brazilian
Argentinian
Indigenous

Part Thai
Part Filipino
Part Indian
Part Japanese
Mixed

**Rachel**

Rachel and I became friends when she started working at the grocery store, and we realized that we were in the same accounting course at university. We grew closer while working on a group project together, and eventually began hanging out with each other outside of school and work. Both of Rachel's parents were Chinese immigrants, and part of our friendship was built on this shared ethnic heritage. In some ways, our shared culture allowed us to find a deeper understanding of each other, but from my perspective, it also acted as a seed of resentment that eventually grew to the extent that it overshadowed the entire relationship.

At some point in time, maybe a year into our friendship, I came to the realization that Rachel seemed to have something against me for being half Chinese. In hindsight, the signs were there from the beginning, but I had chosen to ignore them partially because I thought that I might just be paranoid and overthinking things, or that she might just be tactless, and also because I did not have the energy or the willpower to confront her.

While looking back on our relationship, I realized that from the moment she found out that I was half Chinese, she began to subtly mock me. Upon finding out that my family is from Hong Kong, her first response was to ask me to "prove it" by saying something in Cantonese. In the moment, I complied with her request, but in retrospect I wondered why there was anything for me to prove. Why would I lie? What could I possibly gain from doing so? Any suspicions that I was faking my race and ethnicity were later put to rest when she met my visibly Asian mother. However, the topic was brought up once again when, out of the blue, Rachel told me: "I thought you were lying about being Chinese because you have green eyes." We were at work, and I tried to casually laugh it off. Several days later, we were hanging out with her friend Kalani, who was half Japanese and half white. While waiting for Rachel to come outside, Kalani

and I were sitting in her car. She turned to me and repeated the exact same phrase: “I thought you were lying about being Chinese because you have green eyes.” At this moment, I knew that the two of them had been discussing my race and ethnicity behind my back, and until they had met my mother, likely trying to figure out if I was actually Chinese or even Asian at all. The conjecture that I was committing ethnic fraud all hinged on one physical trait, my green eyes. As if my entire culture and identity could be summed up by a Punnett square, reduced to a simple biological theory.

Once it was established that I was clearly Chinese and not some kind of pathological liar, Rachel shifted her efforts into attempting to belittle and diminish my “Chinese-ness” or, in other words, to reduce my claim to a Chinese identity. She would do so by making offhanded remarks such as, “well Chinese people don’t usually have dogs,” in response to me talking about my dog, or asking me if I had eaten “real Chinese food” when I visited my cousins in the United States. When I failed to confront her on any of these occasions, she gradually began to escalate her comments.

I remember one occasion that occurred when we were standing in the hallway at the university, waiting for a class to finish so that ours could begin. We were talking about our Chinese names, and she told me that hers meant “beautiful dragon.” I replied that mine used the characters of “love” and “orchid.” Her response was “really? Your mom named you that?” Feeling a bit defensive over her comment, I explained that, actually, it was my great-aunts who had given me the name, and they had come up with it by translating my English name into pin-yin and then into traditional characters. Upon hearing this she said, “oh, well mine’s an actual Chinese name,” as if translation could somehow undermine the validity of my name. Or was it my mixed blood that prevented anything about me from being actually Chinese?

Another instance occurred when we were sitting in the classroom and stressing out over the midterm exam that was being held the following week. As we were putting our books back into our backpacks, she looked at me and remarked, "we should go to Starbucks and study sometime." Out loud I agreed with her, but in my mind I planned on finding an excuse to get out of it because I knew I studied best by myself with no noise or distractions. She continued on by saying, "we can be like white girls! Or I guess like the white girl that you are," while laughing. This was the clearest indication that she did not view me as a "real" Asian until one day, over lunch, she looked me in the eyes and said, "you might as well be full white." Tired of her invalidating commentary, I gradually started pulling away from the friendship until there was nothing left to pull away from. I later saw on Facebook that she got married to her white boyfriend, the one that she talked about having "halfie babies" with.

Looking back on our interactions, I feel a mixture of sadness, anger, disappointment, and embarrassment over the fact that I never confronted her or called her out for her comments. I also wonder what exactly she had against me for being biracial. Her criticism never seemed to be directed towards Kalani, perhaps because she was Japanese and not Chinese. While trying to console me, the only theory that my parents could come up with was that Rachel's resentment towards me was rooted in jealousy or some other kind of internal psychological struggle that I would never be privy to. Left to my own speculations, I wondered: was she jealous that my biraciality afforded me a certain degree of white privilege while also allowing me to claim a Chinese identity? Did she think that my blood was too diluted for me to be authentically Asian? Could she tell that I was insecure about being mixed and, therefore, found entertainment in trying to provoke me? I don't think that I will ever understand Rachel's true intentions, but I

hope that her hypothetical future “halfie babies” are raised within their culture, with kindness, acceptance, and validation.


陳愛蘭
Chén Ài Lán
Emma Randle


Alberta
DRIVER'S LICENCE
[redacted]
Exp 29 DEC 2025
RANDLE, Emma Isabel
[redacted]
DOB 29 DEC 1996
Sex F Eyes Haz Hair Bro
[redacted]
[redacted]
Emma Randle
DEC 96

**Tinder Date**

In the spring of 2021, I made a Tinder account. I uploaded several pictures of myself and wrote a short bio stating that I liked reading manga, sleeping, and drinking bubble tea without the bubbles. It was my first time using an online dating site and I wasn't sure what to expect. Several of my friends reported having positive experiences with Tinder, so I took their word for it and began swiping.

One of the people that I matched with was Ty. His profile indicated that he was half Korean and half white. I was excited when he asked me to hangout because I had only ever been in interracial relationships and was curious about what it would be like to date someone with a similar background.

We met at Henderson Lake, a popular park in the middle of the city, and began walking along the lakeside paths. As we were asking questions and trying to get to know each other, I told him that I was in an MA program and that I would be writing my thesis on biracial, half Asian half white identity. This caught his interest, and he (probably jokingly) said that I could interview him. We laughed and continued to talk about what it was like being mixed. We also connected over the loneliness of feeling "in-between," the absence of a sense of belonging, and the lack of acceptance that we felt from our respective cultural communities.

As the conversation progressed, we began talking about our families, and how each of our parents met. Before telling me the details, he said, "well it's not some kind of colonizer story or anything." This resonated with me, because through my own experiences, questions about my background would often lead to questions about my parents, accompanied by certain assumptions surrounding white male and Asian female relationships.

As the sun started to set, we sat on a park bench and began talking about our experiences using Tinder. We traded phones in order to look at each other's apps to see how the experiences differed by gender. Something that we found in common was that the people who seemed to be using the app were overwhelmingly white. At this point in our date, he revealed to me that he almost exclusively pursued Asians, and stated multiple times that he actually hated white girls. He also went on to add some unsavory comments about certain Asian ethnic groups.

Up until this point, we had been getting along and seemed to share many of the same perspectives and experiences, so I was shocked and at a loss for words. Why would he say that? Did he think I would agree with him? If he liked Asians and hated whites, where would I, a half-Asian and half-white person fit into this categorization? Where exactly did he see himself fitting into his own dichotomy? Were these attitudes a product of some kind of biracial self-hatred or maybe a projection of insecurities surrounding ideas about bloodlines and blood purity? As I turned his statements over in my mind, I recalled that some of his Tinder profile pictures showed him hanging out with white male friends. Were his racial evaluations only applied to women? Only to romantic interests? And how did his comments about ethnic stereotypes factor into all of this?

While I tried to make myself comprehend what he was saying or understand where he was coming from, he noticed my silence and attempted to lessen the awkwardness by offering to share a pre-roll with me. I looked around and noticed that while I was lost in my thoughts, the sun had disappeared and it had gotten considerably darker outside. The crowd of people that had been present during the daylight had also dispersed. I declined his offer by saying that I had to drive myself home. He tried to talk me into it by nonchalantly saying that it wasn't a big deal and that I would still be able to drive. Feeling progressively more uncomfortable, I declined once and

for all and extracted myself from the situation by standing up from the park bench and stating that I should start heading home since it was already dark out. He walked me to my car, we hugged, and then never spoke again.

**Text Messages**

"I heard we're getting chow mein in the family… Don't worry, I don't mind it. Especially if she cooks. I like Chinese food."


WING'S
The constructive use of riches
is better than their possession.
2 9 14 38 45 47
WING'S
You enjoy sharing your dreams
and plans with others.
3 6 12 18 20 46
WING'S
You tend to be straightforward
and honest.
11 21 28 34 42 46

**Dim Sum**

At the end of August in 2021, my parents and I went to Thunder Bay. My aunts had reached out and said that they wanted us to be there when they spread their father's ashes. Since airfare was too expensive, we ended up driving nearly 2,000 kilometers across the country to see the paternal side of my family. During the trip I caught up with my relatives, looked through my aunt's family photo collection, learned how to make perogies, and on the final day of our visit we spread my grandfather's ashes on a trail that he cleared near Cloud Bay when he was young.

A week later, while reflecting on the trip from the comfort of my own room, I came to the sudden but enlightening realization that my dad was a picky eater. I had always known that he was particular about his food, that he refused to eat anything too creamy like yogurt, sour cream, or pasta with white sauce, and that he never came with my mother and I if we went to a Japanese, Vietnamese, or Indian restaurant, or basically anywhere that served food that he deemed to be "too exotic." These unspoken rules became all too obvious after our cross-country road trip, a trip spent catering to his palate by stopping at restaurants like Tim Hortons, McDonald's and Applebee's. My mother jokingly stated that it was our goal to stop at every Tim Hortons between Lethbridge and Thunder Bay.

The realization that my father didn't like eating "ethnic" food despite marrying and procreating with an "ethnic" woman unlocked an old childhood memory of going to a Chinese restaurant with the paternal side of my family when I was around five years old. Several relatives from Thunder Bay were sight-seeing in Alberta, and my parents and I drove to Calgary in order to meet up with them. It was somehow decided that we would meet at a Chinese restaurant for lunch, and that they would try dim sum for the first time. My mother was in charge of ordering enough food for the eight of us, and she ordered an abundance of dim sum classics, such as har

gow, siu mai, barbeque pork buns, turnip cake, rice rolls, wor tips, cocktail buns, and egg tarts. She later told me that as soon as the food arrived at our table, she could tell that my dad's family wouldn't like it just by looking at their expressions. After taking a few bites, they ended up going to the buffet and eating westernized Chinese food, while my parents and I were left with the rest of the dim sum.


BUCK'S TR.

**Dog Tricks**

Since Lethbridge doesn't have a dim sum restaurant, my mom and I drive to Calgary so that we can eat dim sum, buy groceries at T&T (an Asian supermarket), and go to the mall, sometimes accompanied by my grandma and aunt.

In 2017, on one of these occasions, the four of us were at our favourite dim sum restaurant, the Silver Dragon. We like the Silver Dragon because their food is just as good as the dim sum that's served in any of the bigger coastal cities, and they also still use the traditional cart-style serving method, where rather than ordering off a menu, servers push steam-heated carts throughout the restaurant while stopping at each table and offering dishes to customers.

As my mom and grandma ordered off the carts, my aunt was talking to me about an upcoming trip to Hong Kong that I would be going on with my mom, another aunt, and some additional family members. She gave me some generic travel advice, told me about how hot Hong Kong would be during the summer, and reminisced about growing up on the island with her siblings. She also advised me to learn some Cantonese before the trip, because otherwise people would just think that I'm gwai mui. Since I would be meeting her two half-brothers for the first time, she said, "You should make a bet with one of your uncles to see if you can say ten phrases in Cantonese. If you do, then ask him to give you a treat." This suggestion greatly annoyed me because it felt like I was being equated to some kind of mixed breed dog that has to perform tricks in order to beg for treats. I knew that my aunt probably didn't mean anything bad with her "advice," but her comments reminded me of Rachel and her constant stream of invalidation, so I felt disturbed. These feelings must have been reflected on my face because when my aunt left the table to go to the bathroom, my mother (who later claimed she didn't hear our conversation) scolded me for having a disrespectful expression while talking to my elder. For

the rest of the meal, I did my best to wear a blank face as I drank cup after cup of bitter tea that matched my emotions.

**Hong Kong**

In the summer of 2017, I visited Hong Kong for the first time. My uncle, a professor at an American university, was teaching a study abroad course in engineering while taking his students sight-seeing through China and Hong Kong, and my aunt was accompanying him so that they could visit their daughter and son-in law who had moved to Hong Kong a year earlier. My mother and I decided to join them for the two weeks that they would be in Hong Kong. I was excited to finally visit the land that my family had come from, a place that I had only previously heard about through stories. This was also happening at a time when I was still friends with Rachel, deeply struggling with my identity, and searching for some sense of belonging that a part of me was hoping a trip to the motherland could provide. Ominously, while at dim sum about a week before the trip, my grandmother said "maybe there will be a typhoon and you'll have to cancel your visit." My grandmother hadn't been back to Hong Kong since the early 90s and wasn't able to come with us on this trip, so part of me speculated that this comment had something to do with regret over certain life choices, or sadness at being unable to return to her homeland for so many years.

But there was no typhoon or any other disaster, and our travel went ahead as planned. After a gruelling 24 hours of delays, flights, and layovers, we finally landed on the island. As soon as we left the airport, I was immediately struck by how different Hong Kong was from the home that I had just left behind. Instead of rivers, sprawling prairies, and suburbs, there was an ocean, mountains, beaches lined with palm trees, and an abundance of high-rises. Even the thick and humid air felt different, yet somehow almost comforting. The hotel that my mother and I stayed in was only several blocks away from her childhood home on Des Voeux Road West.

The first week of our trip was spent touring the city with my aunt and uncle along with his students. The students were all American and mostly white. For some of them, this was their first time leaving the United States. I recall one of the students from the Midwest was an extremely picky eater who struggled to even eat hamburgers. Somehow, he challenged himself to try all different kinds of food throughout the trip, and surprisingly ended up trying and liking durian. As a group, we went to popular tourist destinations such as Victoria Peak, Ocean Park, and the Kowloon Walled City Park. At one of the restaurants that we went to, my mother overheard some of the waitresses speaking in Cantonese and talking about the guai mui at our table and how they had "such nice skin."

After the students went back to the US, we spent the remaining week meeting with family. On one of these days, my aunt took us to the columbarium where the ashes of several generations of Mok family members were being kept, and showed us how to pay our respects. After this, she took us to the Tian Tan Buddha on Lantau Island, where we lit incense and prayed. We also later met up with relatives (some of whom my mother hadn't seen since she was a teenager), and caught up over several meals. Although reuniting with family was a positive experience, it also made me more conscious of my status as an outsider and my overall lack of belonging. For example, one morning my aunt, uncle, mother, and I went out to eat jok at a small breakfast restaurant. The entire time we were there, a middle-aged man stared at me while slowly eating his porridge. The other customers all appeared to be locals, so I assumed that he was staring at me because I looked different, like a foreigner. Perhaps he was even wondering how I fit together or was acquainted with my visibly Asian relatives. On another occasion, while out for supper with a larger group of family members, my aunt, mother, and I decided to go to the restroom to wash our hands before the food arrived. Unsure of where it was located, I asked one

of the employees in Cantonese. As soon as she heard me speak in Cantonese, she smiled and clapped her hands in excitement, likely out of surprise that I could speak the language. Although I was glad that she understood what I said, her reaction still made me feel uncomfortably exotic.

Overall, going to Hong Kong was an important life experience that allowed me to grow closer to my culture, learn about my family history, and begin to feel more comfortable with my identity. I won't claim that the visit helped me to gain the sense of belonging that I was searching for, as I came to the difficult realization that in Hong Kong I was considered just as different or exotic as I was in Canada. However, perhaps more significantly, the trip helped me to recognize that instead of seeking belonging from my surroundings and the people around me, maybe what I needed this entire time was to turn inwards, and reach towards a place of self-acceptance.

**Chopsticks #2**

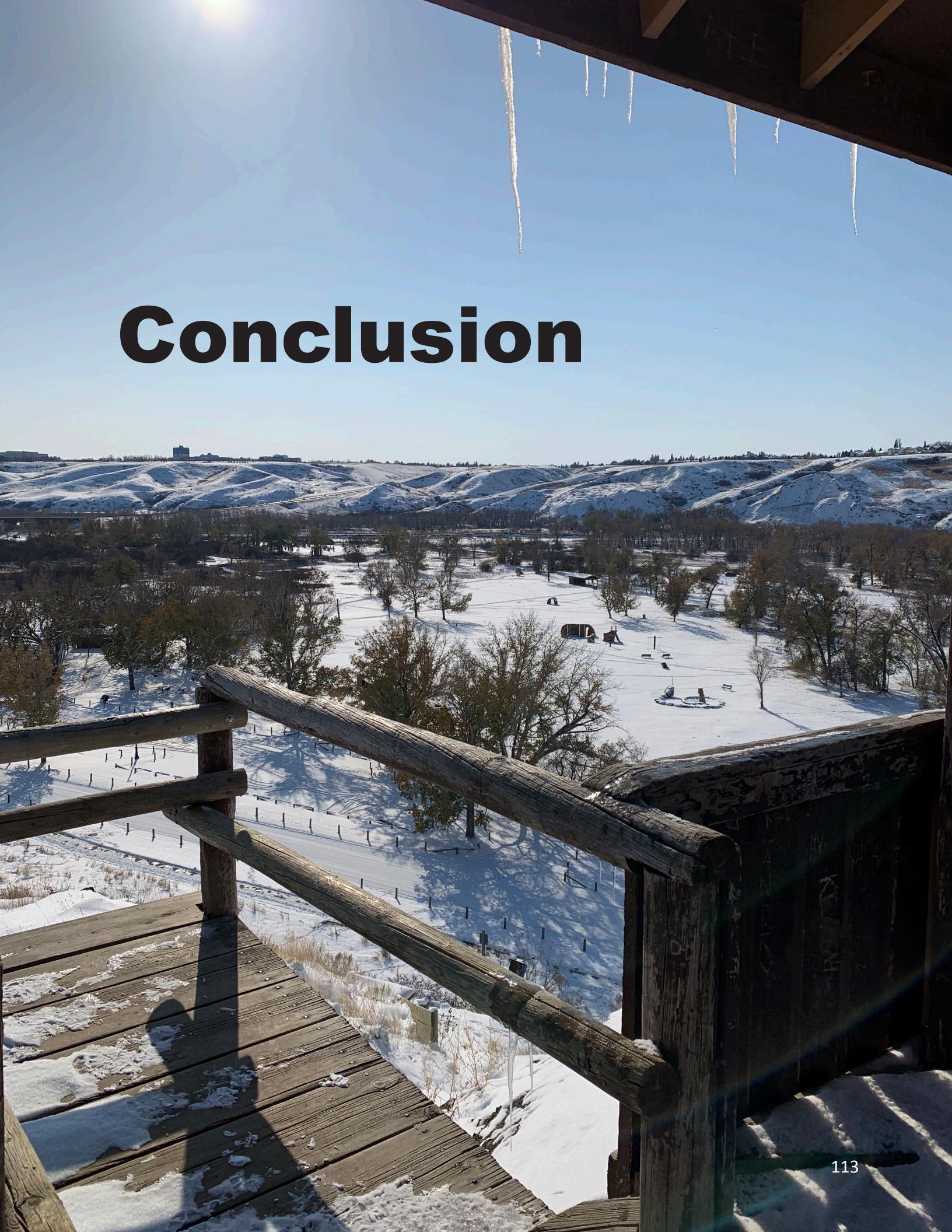
During my friendship with Rachel, one of the first things that we did together was to go out for lunch at a local Japanese restaurant. We both ordered the lunch special, which was assorted bento boxes. As we waited for our food to arrive, she asked me, "do you know how to use chopsticks?" Mildly offended, I said, "why wouldn't I?" She replied by telling me that her other half-Asian friend didn't know how to use chopsticks, so she thought that I might not either. As if biraciality or race itself had anything to do with the ability to wield a utensil. Our bento boxes came and we dropped the subject.

Around a year later, I was at a dinner with my mother and some of our relatives, as we had all traveled to the East Coast for my cousin's wedding. We were at a Chinese restaurant, and I was mindlessly eating noodles with a pair of chopsticks when my uncle exclaimed, "wow! I'm surprised you're so good at using chopsticks!" Unsure of how to take his comment, and with Rachel's various comments still fresh in my mind, I snapped, "why, because I'm white?" and instantly regretted it. Flustered, my uncle tried to explain something about the younger generations often not having strong chopstick skills. After a minute of awkwardness, someone changed the subject and the dinner went on without problem.

Every so often I think about this situation, and despite my initial defensiveness, after some reflection I've decided that I'm grateful for my uncle's compliment, because now even I can admit that I'm good at using chopsticks.


Old Dutch
Ripples
Sour Cream & Green Onion
Crème sure et oignon
Best Before/Meilleur Avant
2022 MR 11
23510195731

# Conclusion



The months spent working on this project were long and draining, yet ultimately rewarding. During my undergraduate education I took a wide variety of English courses, yet multiraciality and mixed race studies were rarely topics of discussion or study. While working on the first section of my thesis, I was finally able to satisfy my desire to examine mixed race identity from an academic, theory-based standpoint. The middle section of my thesis involved a lot of time spent reading about my family history, exploring my genealogy, going through family photo albums, and asking my relatives questions about their lives and their lived experiences. This labour gave me a clearer understanding of the people that I come from, the conditions that they endured, and the personal and societal circumstances that brought together two families from very different backgrounds. This section has also made me appreciate the work that some of my relatives have done to preserve our history, and has shown me that I need to interview my older family members and collect their stories while I still have the opportunity. The third part of this project was by far the most emotionally challenging to put together, but it was also the most creatively stimulating. I do not have much of a background in art, photography, or graphic design, so figuring out how to turn my ideas into something tangible and then determining how to operate the necessary software required a bit of a learning curve. I also do not have a lot of experience with creative, life, or autobiographical writing, and found it difficult to start writing about myself and my inner thoughts and emotions. However, at some point I realized that working on creative pieces was actually quite fun, and that writing about my experiences was kind of therapeutic. I am glad that I decided to pursue this kind of creative thesis, because I think that it helped me to explore my self and my identity in ways that a traditional thesis would not.

When I started working on this project, my goal was to work through the sense of instability that I felt regarding my identity, and to reach some kind of greater understanding of

myself and my relationship with my own biraciality. Although I do feel like I have achieved this, I also recognize that both my identity and my relationship with myself will always be an ongoing work in progress. The best way to illustrate this is through another short vignette, once again involving Rachel:

At the time of writing, it is December 2022. I still work at the same grocery store. Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, I've been wearing face masks to work. Interestingly, I no longer get interrogated by customers who are curious about my racial or ethnic background. Maybe because half of my face is covered, or maybe because a face mask signals that I'm not interested in talking. Either way, I enjoy this newfound freedom.

Several months ago, either in September or October, I ran into Rachel at the grocery store on two separate occasions. Prior to these encounters, we hadn't talked for a couple of years, and last I checked, she had deleted me from Facebook. The first situation unfolded as she was shopping by herself, and ended up coming to my till to pay for her groceries. As I rang up her transaction, we briefly caught up on each other's lives. She had gotten married to her former boyfriend, and was working at a small business in her hometown. I told her that I was still working on my Master's, and she asked me what my thesis was about. I lied and told her, "oh, you know, just some books that I read." She eventually paid for her order, and the encounter ended relatively uneventfully.

I more or less forgot about this interaction until I saw her again the following week. This time she was buying groceries with her mother. Again, they came through my till and we chatted. When I finished scanning their purchases, I told Rachel the total and out of nowhere, in a seemingly joking tone, she said, "what, English instead of Cantonese? What happened to your

Chinese heritage?" I just laughed and handed her the receipt. She left, and I haven't seen her since.

After my shift, I went home, complained to my parents, and proceeded to analyze the encounter from every possible direction. It was then I remembered that I saw her the previous week, and had blatantly lied about the topic of my thesis. I shifted my attention to this lie and wondered, why *did* I lie? Was I ashamed of my thesis? By that point in time, I had already spent months doing research, writing, and making creative pieces, and I was feeling pretty good about it. Was I ashamed of all that time? All that labour? I thought about it and couldn't come up with an answer.

Even now, months later, these encounters still weigh on my mind. I think that I lied not out of shame, but out of the desire to protect myself from her ridicule, her insults thinly veiled as jokes. Although I exposed so much of myself through this project, something that this whole learning process has taught me is that I have the agency and power to decide what I want to share, and what I want to keep to myself, not just in my writing, but also in all aspects of my life. These encounters with Rachel may have left me feeling shaken and insecure, but she's no longer part of my life, and I don't need to seek her validation or approval. I now know that I can turn to myself for stability and acceptance, and use my creative output as a channel through which I can explore my thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a way that's both healthy and fulfilling.


mixed-blood
conflict
prejudice
unsettled
character
ed blood
dual
counter-ba
ontradictory
min
dual
divided loyalty
ar
pass
in and out

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