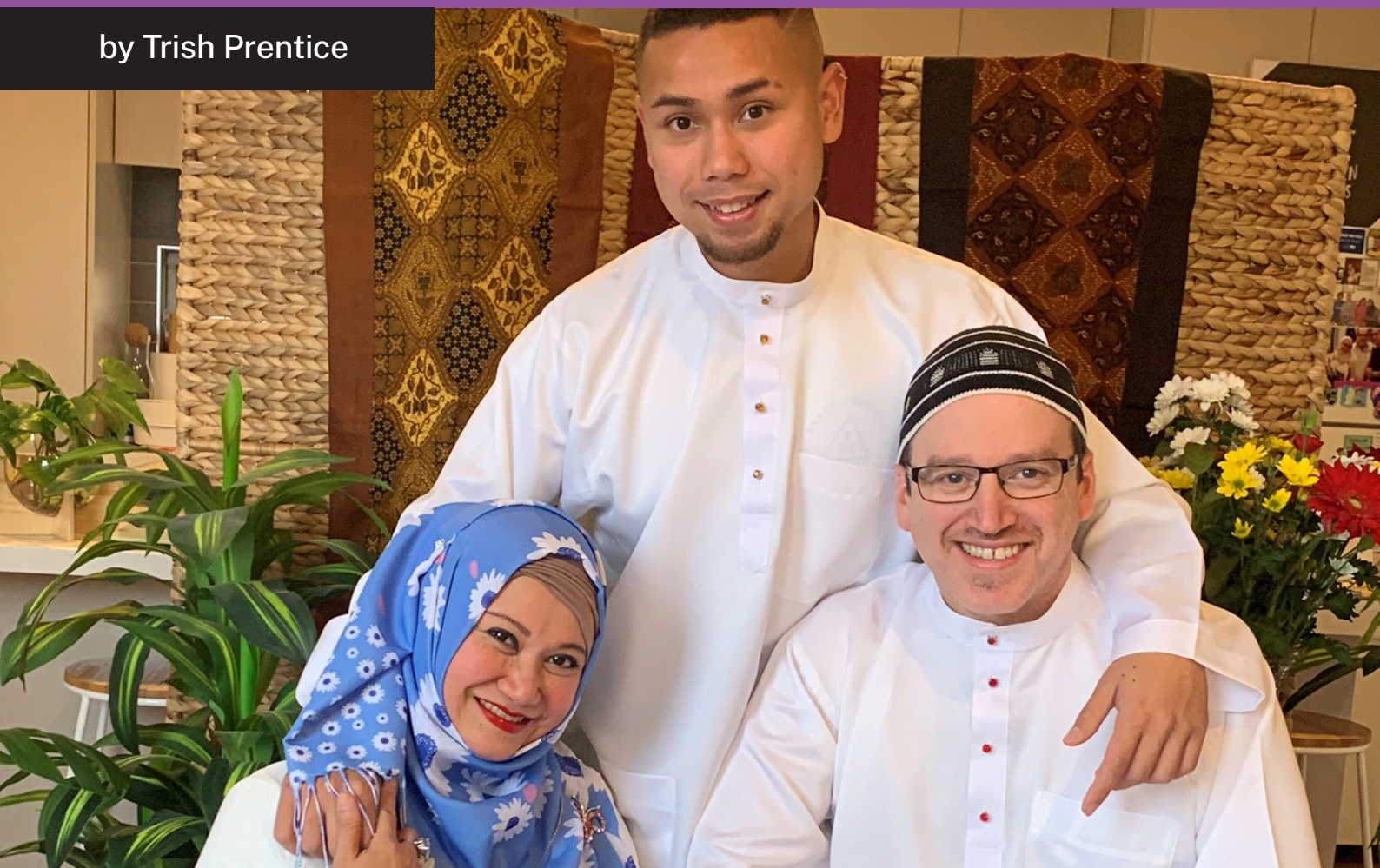
SCANLON FOUNDATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ESSAY – EDITION 2

Intercultural marriage and the changing face of Australian families

by Trish Prentice



The author

Trish Prentice is a researcher with a particular interest in social cohesion and religious communities. She has worked in Australia and overseas in the government, academic and not-for profit sectors, including in Cairo, Egypt, working for an organisation specialising in Arab-West Understanding and in Geneva, Switzerland for a human rights advocacy group. Trish has managed research projects in Indonesia, Singapore and Pakistan and written on various topics, including Islamophobia and Australian values from an Islamic perspective. Trish joined the Scanlon Foundation Research Institute in 2020.

Acknowledgements

The Scanlon Foundation Research Institute would like to thank the 11 participants in this study who were interviewed during August 2020 by the author and consented to share their experiences and family photographs through this essay. The aim of the essay is to provide insights into what it is like to grow up in an intermarried family in Australia through the eyes of the interviewees. As intermarried families are all different, it does not assume that these experiences will hold true for every intermarried family, except where trends identified by larger academic studies are explicitly cited. The author would like to extend special thanks also to Dharmalingam Arunachalam who provided external review of this essay.

The running joke in Toni's family is that her dad, Scottish by birth, with his red hair and pale skin, picked up her mum and threw her over his shoulder, whisking her away from the idyllic coconut farm where she grew up with the whispered promise of all kinds of wonderful things if she'd come to Australia with him.

The less embellished version of the story, the one that actually happened, is that they met in Papua New Guinea while he was working there. He was on a government posting and she was working as a secretary. They fell in love, were married a few years later and, after Toni and her brother were born, the family moved back to Australia.

Growing up, Toni didn't see her family as any different to anyone else's. Mum was Mum and Dad was Dad. Dad was a little more reserved by nature, whereas Mum was warm and loving, always smiling. They spoke English at home. They celebrated Christmas. They grew up with a love of tropical fruit, but that's not unusual in Australia.

It wasn't until primary school, after a boy directed a racial comment at her mum, that she realised her family was not the same as others' in her school. Her mother is a person of colour.[i] Toni remembers struggling with her mother's racial identity afterwards, asking her father to go to school report nights instead of her mum, trying to keep her family background hidden. She thinks her mum probably sensed her embarrassment, but they didn't talk about it.

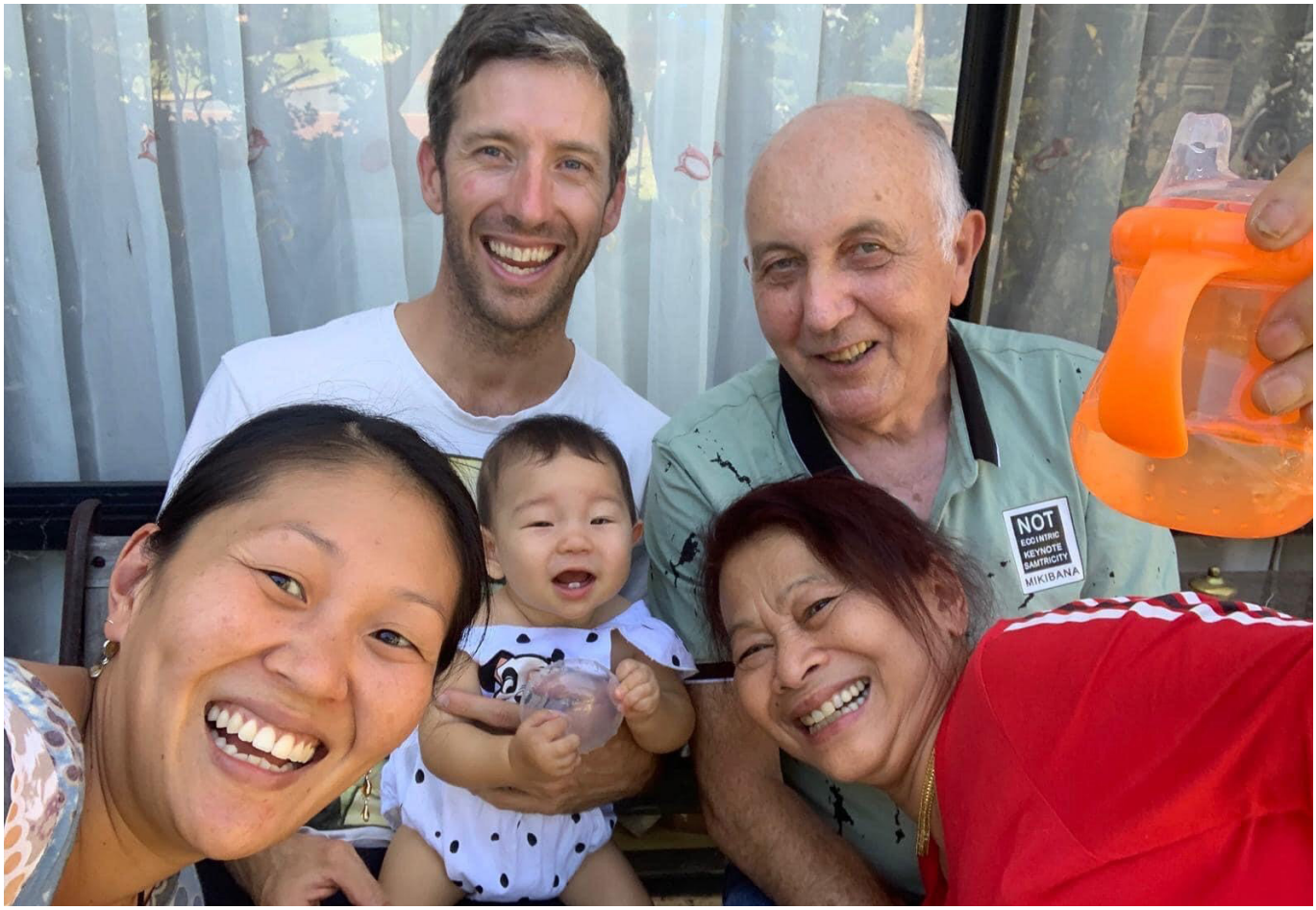
Toni is one of an increasing number of children growing up in intermarried families in Australia. While several decades ago intermarried families—families where one or both parents are from different cultural, ethnic, racial, religious or social backgrounds[ii] —were relatively uncommon, today about one in three registered marriages in Australia are intermarriages[iii]. Intermarriages provide insight into one sphere of intercultural and interreligious relations in Australia. While these relationships develop at an individual level and seemingly reflect only a couple's choice of who they want to share their life with, they actually play a larger role in Australia's social cohesion. This essay therefore explores what it is like to grow up in an intermarried family in Australia and how these families are changing the cultural worldview of the next generation of Australians.[iv]

Negotiating cultural and religious traditions

For many intercultural families, getting married and creating a home life involves the negotiation of different cultural traditions. What the family will eat, the special occasions they will celebrate, the religious upbringing of children and the values the family will adopt all involve an extra layer of navigation because they require "adopting, or at least adapting to, elements of a different culture".[v] This process can sometimes be fraught. Our cultural background provides us with "a set of expectations about how things work in the world" that we accept as truth.[vi] Negotiating different elements of this worldview can cut to the core of how we see the world. To do this successfully requires understanding and acceptance, and often compromise.

Dom and her twin sister Gen grew up with a blending of their mum and dad's cultural traditions. Their mum is of European/Dutch heritage and their dad is Indian, but he grew up in Singapore and Malaysia. As a family they celebrated Christmas and Deepavali. Christmas, Dom says, involved "pretty normal Western things". They had a roast lunch and presents. Afterwards, they would go and play backyard cricket. Gen says they also celebrated Deepavali or Diwali, as it is sometimes called, with a family meal and a prayer. They had sparklers too because it's the Festival of Light. On birthdays they ate Prasad, an Indian sweet. "That was a birthday thing we did," Dom said. But she doesn't recall her parents struggling with cultural differences. "I think they are both pretty similar. For them, it was more the pressure from my grandma [Dad's mum]. They didn't want us to be forced into any particular area. They wanted us to see everything so we could pick and choose what we wanted from each culture."

Suzie says her mum, who was born in Indonesia and brought up Muslim, enthusiastically embraces the celebrations of her father's British Australian cultural background. "We do Christmas and Easter. She loves Halloween. She loves all our holidays. I think it's something to celebrate and it's different for her so she just loves it. She has this giant Christmas tree. It's way too big, it has way too many fairy lights on it. There are way too many presents and so much food." Suzie says Christmas is always extravagant. Her mum grew up in a village in Indonesia and they weren't very wealthy so she goes over the top now. They also celebrate Indonesian New Year each year in Indonesia with her mum's family. Suzie says it's a bit like Christmas. All the family gets together and they share food. Instead of presents the children receive money. Her dad loves Indonesian culture. He feels very comfortable there, she says.



Chloe and Matt had to navigate their different cultural heritages in the planning of their wedding, eventually bringing together Chloe's Chinese and Matt's Italian/Catholic backgrounds in a way that they and both families were happy with. The couple wanted a 'Western style' service in a church, although Chloe's mum was uncomfortable with that and suggested she was favoring the 'Western' side of the family, so they included the traditional Chinese tea ceremony in the reception.

Usually it would be something that took place on the morning of the wedding with just family members and maybe the bridal party present, but the couple decided to do it publicly at the wedding reception instead. Chloe says when she spoke to guests afterwards, they had loved it. They had never seen something like that before, they found it so interesting. For each of these families, the process of give and take while bringing together different cultural practices has enabled them to creating a blending of traditions that recognises the different heritages the two families have brought together.

In many intermarried families, the merging of cultural traditions happens most vividly around the dinner table. Eliza remembers lots of stories about cooking when she was growing up. Her mum, from Trinidad and Tobago, still makes traditional food for their family. At Christmas, instead of roast ham for lunch they would have it for breakfast.

She would cut it up with tomatoes and lots of traditional spices. Mum would always try to get them to eat more spices, Eliza admits. "She's got this jar of spicy sauce or something and it's like way too spicy for the rest of us. She puts it on her food and she asks us if we want some too. We're like no no no no! So she'd say to us, 'you're not proper black children.' She's like, 'it's your white side coming out'," Eliza laughs. She says her dad is of British heritage.

Chloe and Matt see food as something that brings them together. Its actually a value they share, despite their cultural differences.

She reflects, "When I think about it there are very similar values between the Chinese and Italian cultures. Celebrations are all about food. So, I think of the similarities [between us] more than the differences."

Proudly, Chloe says their children have very international palates as a result, "we'll have Chinese food, we'll have Italian food, they'll pretty much eat anything."

For some intermarried couples, negotiation needs to occur not over cultural differences but around religious belief and practice. Khyle's Australian stepdad converted to Islam after marrying his mum, a Singaporean Muslim. From what he knows of their history, his stepdad fell deeply in love with his mum and they got married. At the time she was somewhat religious, but about two years into their marriage his stepdad began to feel a deep connection with Islam and decided to convert. All these years later they still both practice Islam and pray together at home. But, Khyle says, his mum has had to make some compromises. "My stepdad is an Aussie and he was brought up in Aussie ways. But Mum gave him the freedom to have his culture. He drinks alcohol. Mum doesn't like it but she gave him that freedom. Mum has learned to accept it."

Sajed says his Filipino mum sneakily got them baptised when they were children. From what he's heard his Palestinian Father didn't like it. He wanted his children raised Muslim. "But that was it from there," Sajed says with a smile. Sajed, now a practicing Christian, says the family are very mindful of his father's beliefs. "We don't eat pork in the house out of respect."

While navigating cultural or religious differences in family life can be challenging[vii] and is not always successful[viii], several factors are common in successful intermarriages. One is shared values; another is a common faith.[ix] Openness towards difference and the ability to compromise are also important.[x]

Opposition and acceptance

While intermarriages are more common today, this was not always the case. In fact, for a long time, intermarriages were unacceptable in many parts of the world, including in Australia. It was only recently that individuals were accepted as having the right to choose a marriage partner "without racial barriers or other social restrictions".[xi]

Looking back on Australian history, periods when there was an influx of new migrants often led to a push back against intermarriage from the local population. During the 19th century the gold rush brought many Chinese miners to the eastern states of Australia, hoping to find their fortunes with the promise of gold.[xii] Many of these migrants stayed on and created a new life in Australia and they intermarried with women of European background. In the 1850s, approximately 2,000 marriages between 'white' women and Chinese men were recorded; however less than 30 years later that number had fallen to around 180 marriages. This was largely due to social opposition that culminated in protests against mixed marriages, led by men who saw such unions as a "threat to the white race."[xiii]

Almost a century later, with the stationing of American soldiers in Australia in 1942, many women seized the opportunity to meet and socialise with the new arrivals. Connections developed, romance ensued and by the end of the war, approximately 15,000 marriages had been registered.[xiv] While many Australian men felt threatened by these relationships, it was those between African-American servicemen and Australian women that caused the greatest amount of discomfort, leading to intervention by both the American and Australian authorities.[xv] To prevent socialising, which could lead to marriage, African-American soldiers were sent to remote locations, far away from populated areas. If they were stationed in towns, they were segregated from the local townspeople and prevented from socialising with them. While relationships between African-Americans and Australians did occur, they could only marry if permission was granted by officials. During World War II only 50 marriages were approved.[xvi]

Intermarriages have long been the product of both personal choices and societal forces.[xvii] While these historical snapshots show how far Australia has come in terms of acceptance, tolerance and social cohesion, many intermarried families still face subtle barriers or forms of exclusion from society, from pointed looks while out in public to rejection from family members.[xviii]

Looking back, Niki thinks she must have been four or five years old when she started noticing people staring at her family when they were out in public.

It was only recently that individuals were accepted as having the right to choose a marriage partner "without racial barriers or other social restrictions".

Her mum is from Singapore and her dad is Fijian (but ethnically Indian) and she remembers noticing people looking at them when they were in restaurants or walking down the street. Niki says it was one of the first times she realised her family is different.

Eliza remembers her dad saying that when he and her mum, from Trinidad and Tobago, were out walking together, he'd notice other 'black' guys looking at him like, "Oh, so you think you can date one of us do you?" She remembers her mum had no idea about it. She'd replied, "I didn't know you were experiencing that. I didn't know that happened." Toni recalls the looks her Papuan mother often attracted while walking her younger brother down the street in the pram. With her brother's blonde hair and blue eyes, clearly taking after her Scottish father's side of the family, passersby concluded her mum must have been the nanny.

Harry, who is ethnically Chinese, believes his father would have struggled to accept the idea of a 'white' girlfriend years ago. He married his wife Sal, of European heritage, later in life. Harry remembers one of his cousins being threatened with disinheritance over a similar relationship when he was younger. But he says his dad has changed now. He has come to realise that being culturally or ethnically similar doesn't necessary mean harmony in a marriage.

For Harry and Sal, they work well together and have similar values, even though their cultural backgrounds are different. Chloe says they always joke about the first time her parents met Matt. She tells the story, "We went out for Yum Cha and my dad pretty much sat there with the newspaper in front of his face the whole time. I don't think he even acknowledged Matt, not even once. My mum is usually the one who is more forthcoming with disapproval but I think in this instance she felt she just had to be a counter to my dad's rudeness."

Guinier and Torres (2003) use the analogy of a miner's canary to explain how intermarried families often encounter subtle social undercurrents of disapproval from broader society.

Just as the bird was used to indicate unseen levels of toxic gas in a mine, intermarriages can bring to the surface societies' underlying "racisms, tensions, and fractures".[xix]

Working out where to fit in

For children growing up in intermarried families, the journey towards establishing their cultural or religious identity is a lot more complex than for other children. Faced with a greater set of choices, these children need to "actively" choose their identity.[xx]

How do children from intermarried families come to a religious or cultural identity? Studies suggest these children are "less likely to identify as belonging to a single ethnic group."[xxi] Some will tend to see themselves as part of the minority culture,[xxii] others will struggle to identify with any cultural group[xxiii], or alternately, they will pick and choose "the best of both cultures."[xxiv] Still, others will embrace a "double identity" and seek out relationships with other people from mixed cultural backgrounds.[xxv] Many factors play a role in the process of identity building for these children, including their social experiences,[xxvi] physical appearance and family upbringing.[xxvii] What is clear is they face "different concerns and issues… because of how others see and respond to them."[xxviii]

Suzie says she always gets asked where she is from because of her Asian appearance. "It's kind of irritating but I guess it's a form of curiosity." She explains it in this way. "I start off by saying I was born in Korea but I grew up in Australia because that's true. But I identify as Indonesian and Australian, not Korean. I have no cultural experience of Korea. I feel Indonesian but I can't say that because it's not quite correct either. It all takes a bit of explaining." Niki says she just says the whole thing now.

"I'm half Fijian Indian and half Singaporean Chinese and I've grown up here in Australia." She reflects, "I think I look different so people are expecting some kind of mixed answer anyway".

For Eliza, the question of where she's from changes depending on where she is. "If I'm in Australia and someone asks me, I'd say I'm from the UK [where she was born]. But if I'm in the UK I'd say from Australia." "I think I'd say I'm Australian," she clarifies, "because I've done the majority of my schooling and growing up here". Sajed's answer is also geographically contingent. "If someone asked me where I'm from, I'd say the Philippines.

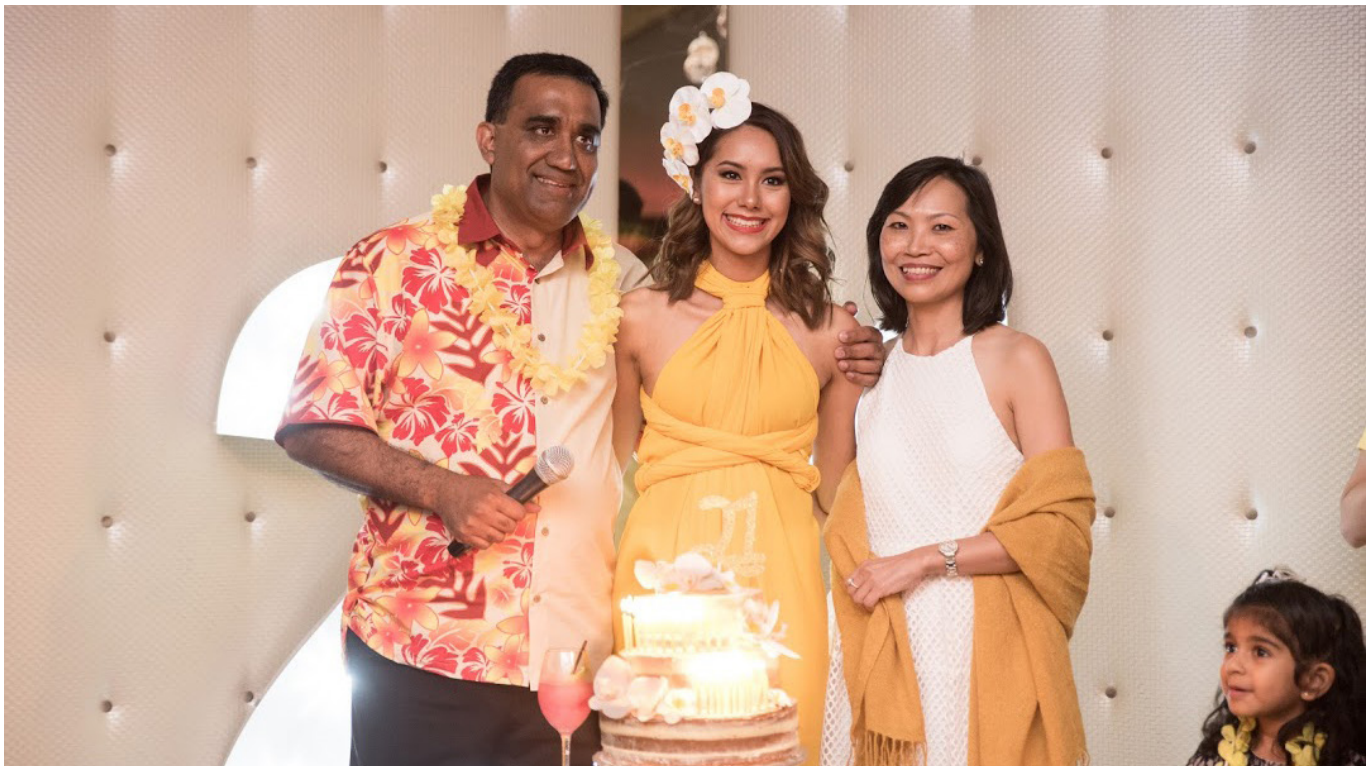
That's where I'm from and I can speak the language and I'm comfortable with it. But I always mention that I'm half Arab as well, because I don't look Filipino. But when I'm overseas I always say I'm Australian. My accent seems to be more predominant when I'm overseas." "I sound like Crocodile Dundee," he says with a laugh.

Gen isn't sure how to describe her identity. "If people ask me, ethnically I'd say I am half Indian and half European, as a general overview. But I guess it's a hard question because I don't even know if I'd call myself Australian."

Technically I'm Australian because I was born here. I guess I'd say I'm Australian with Indian heritage...but I'm a bit different to the typical Aussie. I'm a bit different to what you'd traditionally think of."

Many children of intermarried families feel very different to their Australian peers, even if they were born in Australia or spent most of their time growing up here. One reason could be because they are not seen as part of the majority, especially if a parent "belongs to a visible minority group."[xxix]

Other studies indicate some children from intermarried families experience tension because "they identify themselves as 'native' or 'white,' while the outside world regards and treats them as 'black' or 'Asian'".[xxx]



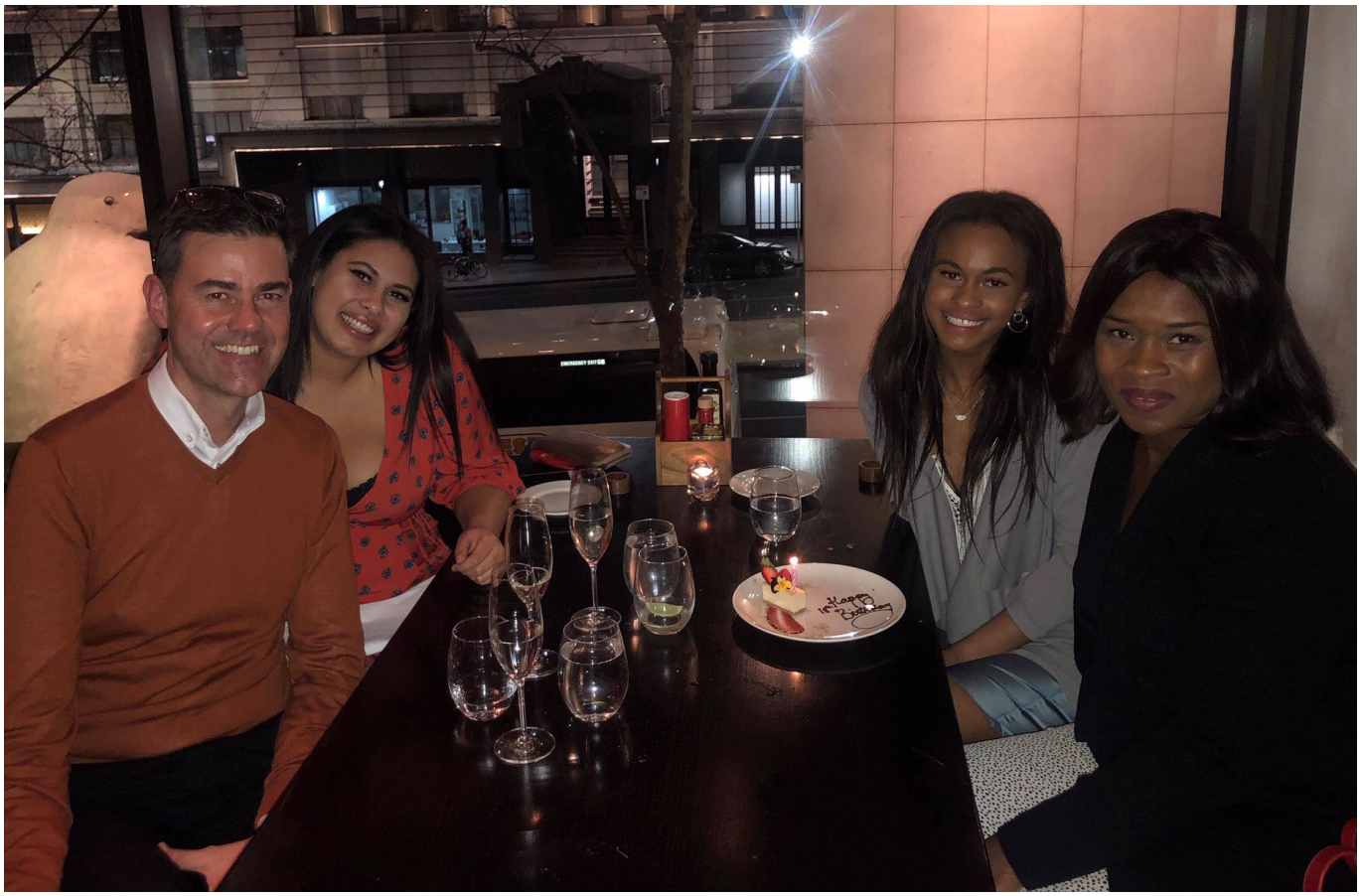
Khyle can relate to the experience of being treated differently to the majority both in Singapore where he was born and in Australia where he grew up with his Singaporean mum and Australian stepdad. “While I was growing up in Singapore I was classified as white. But in Australia I’m seen as black. The kids at high school used to call me Black Zac. But I embraced the black identity at school. In high school I didn’t feel Australian but I’ve learned more with time. I’ve been hunting, I’ve been to the bush.”

Suzie says she definitely had people questioning her identity as she was growing up. “They’d hear me speaking [with my Australian accent] and then see me and it just throws them… All my life it’s been a little like that. When I go to Indonesia everyone questions it as well because I look more Chinese. The villagers look very Indonesian and my mum looks Indonesian so saying I’m Indonesian gets questioned a lot, everywhere I go. But they are just curious.” She says that was painful at the beginning but she’s more at peace with it now.

Niki says it wasn’t explaining her cultural background that was difficult while she was growing up but how people responded to her explanation. She says it was essentially romanticised. “I think back and I just cringe because that is the kind of response you get. ‘Wow, you are going to have such pretty babies…’ ‘You look so exotic’. I shudder now. I think it stems from the way I look, from what is considered stereotypically attractive. A light skinned person of colour who speaks like an Australian. I felt a little bit like I fitted in but also like I was a little bit different, a little bit spicy.”

Pasquale, whose parents are of Italian and French heritage, says he didn’t feel Australian at all as a child, even though he was actually born here, because he was singled out at school for his Italian appearance.

Eliza feels like she stood out at school too, although she was distinguished in a positive way.



"I didn't realise it at the time, but I think growing up and reflecting back on it, my sister and I were the only people of colour at our school. But in terms of that, the school always used to pick us to do the photoshoots and promotional advertising.

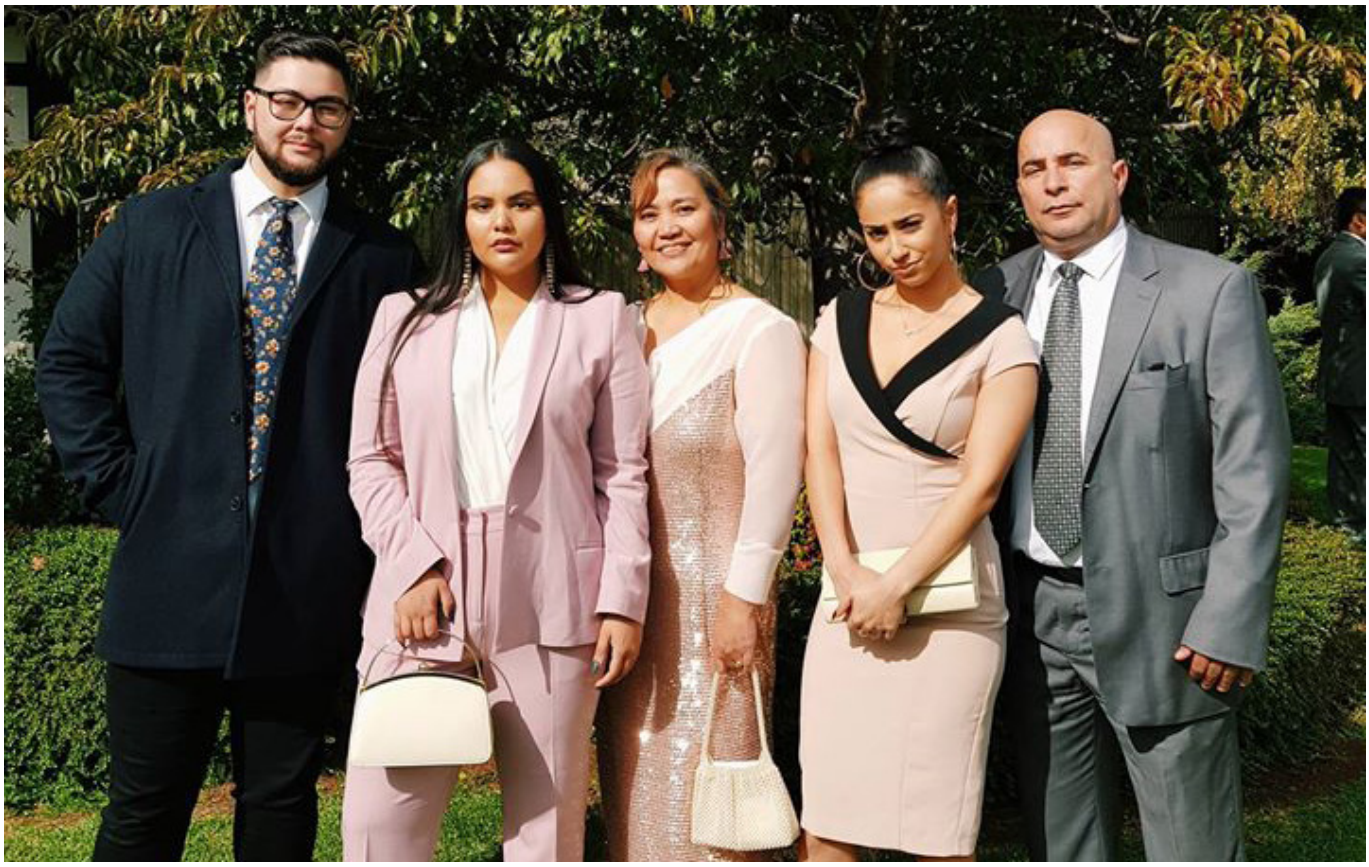
I remember a friend saying to me, 'they've only picked you because you are not white' and stuff like that, and I was like 'oh, I thought they picked me because I was beautiful.'"

She says that uncertainty around whether she is being chosen for who she is or for her minority identity is still something she thinks about. "I'd never really thought about it before but now I wonder whether I was picked for my job because I was the right fit or because I am a statistic. You never really know."

Sajed also had the experience of standing out. "I'm Filipino but I look Arab and I've got a beard. I'm 6 foot 1 which is not too tall but it's like being a giant in terms of Filipino standards. I definitely stood out when I was in the Philippines. I always felt Filipino but I was always that Filipino who was the Arab.

I remember when I was a kid and when I was walking past people, they would call out 'What's up Joe'. And it wasn't just a one-time thing in one place or one city. I'd always cop a random 'what's up Joe'. I think that's got to do with because I'm white." He recalls the experience of feeling different in Australia too. "I remember when I was in primary school, I was always the odd one out because I had one of those plastic containers [Tupperware] with rice and hot dog and egg and things like that. Whereas other kids would have a sandwich. People quickly realised 'that guy is foreign'. My first friends in primary school were the Italians. The kids who weren't Aussie, the other minorities."

Sajed's gravitation towards kids from other cultures continued as he got older. "In our year level we were friends with everyone but we were the multicultural kids. There was me, another guy who was Filipino Vietnamese, another guy who was Chilean, Faysal who was African and we had a Chinese guy. Our direct group was very multicultural. We just related in a way that felt comfortable to each other."



One of the things that brought them together was their shared values. “I think values was a big thing. I remember times when Faysal and I would look at each other and say ‘we’d never get away with that’, the way other kids talked to their parents.”

Gen has also found a sense of belonging around people who share a similar mixed background to her. “At my school there are a lot of people who are half European and half another race. I mean a lot. I’m now around people who are a lot more similar to me.”

For Niki, her Asian background led her to develop friendships with other Asian children. “I found I could get along with other kids from Asian backgrounds, whether they were brown, yellow or whatever. Whatever race, I could blend in with them. I already knew I was different to white Australians, so I wondered who am I the most similar to next, which was some sort of Asian. But even within that group I realized I still don’t understand fully what it means to be Indian or what it means to be Chinese.”

Niki recalls that working through her cultural identity was a big part of growing up. “I think growing up I was always lost. I think everyone goes through the ‘who am I’ moment, but there’s an extra sense of ‘lost’ for me. In terms of my culture, I feel washed out. It’s like I have little bits of different things, kind of like if you made a curry and then rinsed it. The basics are there but it’s not quite the same.”

Developing an intercultural worldview

While many children of intermarriages struggle with their identity and working out where they fit in the different cultural and religious spaces they inhabit, many see their ‘mixed’ background as something that is ultimately positive.

Harry says living in an intercultural family means “you learn to see people for who they are, not for their colour or race.” Chloe agrees. She says her children are learning that there are no differences between people. “That’s what they’ve grown up with. That’s my mum and that’s my dad, not a Chinese person and an Italian person.”

“For me, the biggest thing is the people I’ve gotten to meet along the way. I wouldn’t have gotten to meet them if I didn’t have this exposure to different cultures. I live in Australia and I have exposure to the Australian culture as well. Whereas some Australians might not feel comfortable with the Filipino culture, I get the best of both worlds.”

Gen believes her cultural background has given her a much broader worldview than her peers. “When I was 14 or 15 a lot of conversations were happening about global issues but a lot of the people around me weren’t aware of them. Conversations like those that are happening at the moment about race and about Black Lives Matter. I feel like I was definitely more aware of them back then.” Her twin sister Dom says she notices the causal distinctions people make about others. “I sort of notice casual racism, I guess you would call it. One time at work my boss was imitating some Indian workers who were dropping off something. I thought, that’s interesting. I guess things like that I pick up on. Other people don’t see it as an issue.”

For Sajed, his mixed cultural background has opened up relationships. He has discovered things in common with people he perhaps wouldn’t have met otherwise.

Eliza recalls a conversation she had with one of her close friends overseas, who works in the industry she wants to work in. It's a very 'white' sector, mostly white and female. But her friend encouraged her to apply, saying she would be perfect because she has a 'white' name but she is a person of colour. Her friend said "it would look good for the company", especially since many businesses are looking at how they can be different by employing more diversely.

Eliza says she wasn't sure how to take those comments. She remembers talking to her dad about it and concluding, "I'm not going to take that as racism. I'm going to take that as my step up—that someone might pick me because I'm a minority. I'm going to look at the glass half full rather than the glass half empty."

The growth of intermarriage in Australia

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the number of marriages between two people born in Australia is decreasing. While in 2006 approximately 72 percent of marriages were between Australian born couples, that number decreased to around 54 percent in 2016. On the other hand, marriages in Australia between couples born in different countries increased from 18 percent in 2006 to 31.6 percent in 2016.[xxxi]

Why are intermarriages growing in Australia and in many parts of the world?[xxxii] Some commentators point to the influence of globalisation. As people move more easily and frequently and migration increases, people from different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds are being brought into closer contact with each other.[xxxiii]

Communication technologies and social media are no doubt playing a role, bridging physical barriers and traditional social networks and bringing together people in new ways in virtual space. Studies of intermarried relationships in the United States also suggest a 'Tinder effect', with intermarriages rising sharply after new online dating apps were released.[xxxiv] One of the biggest increases in mixed marriages occurred there in 2014, shortly after Tinder was launched.[xxxv]

In Australia, intermarriage between Australians and those born overseas tends to occur more frequently in migrant communities that have been here longer,[xxxvi] although patterns can vary.[xxxvii] Intermarriage is also influenced by the size of the migrant group. For smaller migrant communities, especially if there is a gender imbalance, a shortage of marriable partners can lead to men or women marrying outside their ethnic, cultural or racial group.[xxxviii]

Communication technologies and social media are no doubt playing a role, bridging physical barriers and traditional social networks and bringing together people in new ways in virtual space.

It is clear that intermarriage in Australia is more common among second generation migrants.[xxxix] For instance, "significant increases" in intermarriage have been recorded among second generation Asian, Middle Eastern and Southern European migrants.[xl]

It is even more so among third generations.[xli] Among those of Western European ancestry, a long established migrant group in Australia, almost 90 percent of the third generation are intermarried.[xlii]

The same is true for other migrant groups, such as those from Polish, Russian or Serbian backgrounds: by the third generation almost all individuals had intermarried.[xliii] This seems to be because the next generations have established wider social relations, well beyond their own ethnic group.[xliv]

Intermarriage, integration and social cohesion

For Australia this is a good sign. Social cohesion between migrants and the general Australian population is increasing with each generation[xlv] as when members of different communities marry each other they "accept each other as equals".[xlvi] In the context of these intimate relationships, intermarriage suggests "there is no prejudice between members of the host/mainstream and migrant/minority communities".[xlvii]

Many researchers therefore view intermarriage as an important measure of integration[xlviii] and of strong social relationships between different groups in the community.[xlix] According to Price (1982) "intermarriage is still the best measure of ethnic intermixture because it breaks down ethnic exclusiveness and mixes the various ethnic populations more effectively than any other social process".[l] The growing number of intermarriages in Australia also means people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have opportunities in Australia to intermingle and build social relationships.[li]

Intermarriage is not only indicative of integration and social cohesion but contributes to these processes.[lii] When a couple gets married, they bring together their social and familial networks, leading to new connections between different groups. These new relationships lead to cross cultural understanding and the breaking down of social and cultural barriers.[liii]

Even the dynamics within intermarried families themselves can have a positive impact on society, as families develop and practice "values and aspirations" that are conducive to social cohesion,[liv] such as negotiation, acceptance and tolerance of others. Intermarriage therefore has great potential for "transformative value."[lv]

For policy makers, intermarried families are a "micro-laboratory of intercultural relations" that can assist them to understand and reflect on "processes of sociocultural adaptation, intercultural dynamics of conflict and negotiation, and integration processes".[lvi]

Social cohesion between migrants and the general Australian population is increasing with each generation because when members of different communities marry each other they "accept each other as equals".

Intermarriage is also transformational for future generations as well, as intermarried children grow up with broader identities and less prejudice towards the cultural groups they have been exposed to.[lvii]

The children develop a unique worldview, having experienced the lived reality of cultural or religious negotiation and what it means to put aside difference and come to a point of tolerance and acceptance. They also have cultural literacy in a way that other Australian children may not have, such as intimate knowledge of other languages, celebrations or cultural traditions. These are strengths that can only benefit Australia, contributing to its richness, diversity and social cohesion.

Postscript

Looking back, Toni wishes she had told someone about what the boy had said about her mother, which triggered her struggle with her culture, because prior to that moment she had never thought she or her family were any different to anyone else. However, with determination, age and confidence, she has achieved a level of peace with her culture.

"I feel like I may have outgrown caring what other people think about my background. With determination, age and confidence, I stopped needing other people's approval. I grew to appreciate and be proud of the kind, loving, family orientated ways that traditionally, islanders have about them. My mother's side always seemed to be smiling, happy, laughing… They loved to play music, have sing-alongs and have big gatherings, sharing meals. There was a free spirited, un-inhibited way about them which I loved.

The only thing that matters now are the words that I tell myself.

I am proud of who I am."

Notes

i ‘Person of colour’ or POC is a contested term. Originating in UN discourses in the 1970s, it has predominately been used in the United States, although its usage is gaining currency in Australia. See Luke Pearson, “Who Identifies as a Person of Colour in Australia” (2017) Available https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-01/who-identifies-as-poc-in-australia/9200288 (last accessed 31 August 2020) It is used in the essay only when interviewees themselves refer to the term.

ii Dictionary.com, ‘Intermarriage’ (undated). Available https://www.dictionary.com/browse/intermarriage (last accessed 31 August 2020).

iii Christina Zhou, “Australian Couples Share the Pros and Cons of Intercultural Relationships” (2018) Available https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-11/intercultural-relationships-pros-and-cons/9181434 (last accessed 31 August 2020).

iv The SFRI would like to thank the 11 participants in this study who were interviewed during August 2020 by the author and consented to share their experiences and family photographs through this essay. The aim of the essay is to provide insights into what it is like to grow up in an intermarried family in Australia through the eyes of the interviewees. As intermarried families are all different, it does not assume that these experiences will hold true for every intermarried family, except where trends identified by larger academic studies are explicitly cited. The author would like to extend special thanks also to Dharmalingam Arunachalam who provided external review of this essay.

v Dimitria Giorgas and F.L. Jones, “Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion among First, Second and Later Generation Australians” (2002) 19(1) Journal of Population Research, 47, citing J. Penny and S. Khoo, *Intermarriage: A Study of Migration and Integration* (1996) Canberra: Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research/ Australian Government Publishing Service, 20.

vi David Ludden, “How to Make an Intercultural Marriage Work” (2019). Available https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/talking-apes/201910/how-make-intercultural-marriage-work (last accessed 31 August 2020).

vii Zhou, “Pros and Cons of Intercultural Relationships.”

viii Dan Rodríguez-García, “Introduction: Intermarriage and Integration Revisited: International Experiences and Cross-Disciplinary Approaches” (2015) 662 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 16.

ix Suleiman Alnaimi, “Decision Making Processes Within Educated Intercultural Marriages in Australia” (2018). Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for a Doctor of Philosophy, Federation University Australia. Available https://researchonline.federation.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/vital:13825;jsessionid=119027A77709BCF63B2E1C6BE32D0A45%20 (2018) (last accessed 31 August 2020).

x David Ludden, “How to Make an Intercultural Marriage Work.”

xi Rachel Stevens & Seamus O’Hanlon, “Intimate Oral Histories: Intercultural Romantic Relationships in Postwar Australia” (2018) 49 *Australian Historical Studies*, 359.

xii Culture Victoria, “Many Roads: Chinese on the Goldfields” (undated). Available https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/immigrants-and-emigrants/many-roads-chinese-on-the-goldfields (last accessed 31 August 2020).

xiii Amnesty International, “Seven times Marriage Changed and the World Didn’t End” (2017) Available https://www.amnesty.org.au/seven-times-marriage-changed (last accessed 31 August 2020).

xiv Rachel Stevens & Seamus O’Hanlon, “Intimate Oral Histories”, 364.

xv Ibid.

xvi Ibid.

xvii Ibid 359.

xviii Ginger Gorman, “Mixed Race Couples Still Face Racism in Australia” (2016) Available https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/marriage/mixed-race-couples-still-face-racism-in-australia/news-story/d80a95bbb4c6127414bf510850ea8cd2 (last accessed 31 August 2020).

xix Erica Chito Childs, “Mixed matters in Australia” (2019) 25(3) Social Identities, 426 with reference to L. Guinier and G. Torres, *The Miner’s Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting power, Transforming Power* (2003) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

xx Matthijs Kalmijn, “The Children of Intermarriage in Four European Countries: Implications for School Achievement, Social Contacts, and Cultural Values” (2015) 662 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 248 citing Mary Waters, *Ethnic options: Choosing identities in America* (1990) Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

xxi Lyndon James Walker and Genevieve Margaret Heard, ‘Interethnic Partnering: Patterns by Birthplace, Ancestry and Indigenous Status’ in Genevieve Heard, Dharmalingam Arunachalam (eds). *Family formation in 21st century Australia* (2015). Dordrecht: Springer, 56 citing C. W. Stephan and W. G. Stephan, “After Intermarriage: Ethnic Identity among Mixed-Heritage Japanese-Americans and Hispanics.” (1989) 51 *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 507–519.

xxii Matthijs Kalmijn, “The Children of Intermarriage”, 248 citing Yu Xie and Kimberly Goyette. “The Racial Identification of Biracial Children with One Asian Parent: Evidence from the 1990 Census” (1997) 76(2) *Social Forces*, 547-70.

xxiii Ibid 248.

xxiv Siew-Ean Khoo, ‘Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism: A Demographic Perspective’ in Michael Clyne and James Jupp (eds) *Multiculturalism and Integration: A Harmonious Relationship* (2011). Canberra: ANU Press, 116.

xxv Matthijs Kalmijn, "The Children of Intermarriage", 248 citing various studies, including Raya Muttarak, "Generation, Ethnic and Religious diversity in Friendship Choice: Exploring Interethnic Close Ties in Britain" (2014) 37(1) *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 71-98 and Dan Rodriguez-Garcia, M. Solana Solana, M. J. Lubbers, and V. de Miguel Luken, " Limits, Constraints, and Transgressions around Mixed Unions in Catalonia" (2014) In *Periferias, fronteras y didlogos. Adas del XIII Congreso de Antropologia de la FAAEE*, 827-43. Tarragon: URV.

xxvi Parimal Roy and Ian Hamilton, "Interethnic Marriage: Identifying the Second Generation in Australia" (1997) 31(1) *The International Migration Review*, 130.

xxvii Siew-Ean Khoo, 'Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism", 116.

xxviii Ibid.

xxix Matthijs Kalmijn, "The Children of Intermarriage", 247.

xxx Ibid citing various studies, including Dan Rodriguez-Garcia, M. Solana Solana, M. J. Lubbers, and V. de Miguel Luken, "Limits, Constraints, and Transgressions around Mixed Unions in Catalonia" (2014) In *Periferias, fronteras y didlogos. Adas del XIII Congreso de Antropologia de la FAAEE*, 827-43. Tarragon: URV and Miri Song and Peter Aspinall, 'Mixed-Race Young People's Differential Responses to Misrecognition in Britain.' In E. Edwards, A. Suki, C. Caballero, and M. Song (eds). *International Perspectives on Racial and Ethnic Mixing and Mixedness*, 125-41. London: Routledge.

xxxi Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Increase in Marriages for Australians Born Overseas" Media Release 28 November 2017. Available https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3310.0Media%20Release12016 (last accessed 16 September 2020).

xxxii Dan Rodríguez-García, "Intermarriage and Integration Revisited", 9.

xxxiii Ibid citing various studies, including Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gemsheim. *Distant Love: Personal Life in the Global Age*. (2014) Maiden, MA: Polity Press.

xxxiv Zhou, "Pros and Cons of Intercultural Relationships."

xxxv Ibid.

xxxvi Siew-Ean Khoo, 'Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism", 110.

xxxvii Lyndon James Walker and Genevieve Margaret Heard, 'Interethnic Partnering', 70.

xxxviii Dimitria Giorgas and F.L. Jones, "Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion", 49.

xxxix Lyndon James Walker and Genevieve Margaret Heard, 'Interethnic Partnering', 57, citing various studies, including S.E. Khoo & B. Birrell, "The Progress of Young People of Migrant Origin in Australia" (2002) 10(2) *People and Place*, 30–44 and R. Muttarak & A. Heath, "Who Intermarries in Britain? Explaining Ethnic Diversity in Intermariage Patterns" (2010) 61(2) *The British Journal of Sociology*, 275–305.

xl Siew-Ean Khoo, B. Birrell and G Heard, "Intermarriage by Birthplace and Ancestry in Australia" 17(1) *People and Place*, 19.

xli Lyndon James Walker and Genevieve Margaret Heard, 'Interethnic Partnering', 57, citing various studies, including D. Giorgas & F.L. Jones, "Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion among First, Second and Later Generation Australians" 19(1) *Journal of Population Research*, 47–64 and S.E. Khoo, B. Birrell, & G. Heard, "Intermarriage by Birthplace and Ancestry in Australia" (2009) 17(1) *People and Place*, 15–28.

xlii Siew-Ean Khoo, et al, "Intermarriage by Birthplace and Ancestry", 21.

xliii Ibid.

xliv Ibid 19

xlv Dimitria Giorgas and F.L. Jones, "Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion", 62.

xlvi Matthijs Kalmijn, "Consequences of Racial Intermarriage for Children's Social Integration" (2010) 53(2) *Sociological Perspectives*, 271 citing Rogelio Saenz, Sean-Shong Hwang, and Robert Anderson. "Persistence and Change in Asian Identity among Children of Intermarried Couples" (1995) 38(2) *Sociological Perspectives*, 175–94 and Yu Xie and Kimberly Goyette. "The Racial Identification of Biracial Children with One Asian Parent: Evidence from the 1990 Census" (1997) 76(2) *Social Forces*, 547-70.

xlvii Abe W. Ata, "Adjustment and Complications of Catholic and Inter-Faith Intermarriages" (2007) 2, *Politics and Religion*, 111.

xlviii Siew-Ean Khoo, 'Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism", 103.

xlix Lyndon James Walker and Genevieve Margaret Heard, 'Interethnic Partnering', 54 citing M. Kalmijn and H. Flap, "Assortative Meeting and Mating: Unintended Consequences of Organized Settings for Partner Choices." (2001) 79(4) *Social Forces*, 1289–1312.

l Siew-Ean Khoo et al, "Intermarriage by Birthplace and Ancestry", 15 citing C.A. Price, *The Fertility and Marriage Patterns of Australia's Ethnic Groups, Department of Demography* (1982) Canberra: ANU, 100.

li Matthijs Kalmijn, "Consequences of Racial Intermarriage", 271.

lii Ibid.

liii Matthijs Kalmijn, "The Children of Intermarriage", 247.

liv Siew-Ean Khoo, 'Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism", 101-102.

lv Dan Rodríguez-García, "Intermarriage and Integration Revisited", 26.

lvi Ibid 25.

lvii Matthijs Kalmijn, "Consequences of Racial Intermarriage", 271.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Increase in Marriages for Australians Born Overseas" Media Release 28 November 2017. Available https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/3310.0Media%20Release12016.

Alnaimi, Suleiman, "Decision Making Processes Within Educated Intercultural Marriages in Australia" (2018). Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for a Doctor of Philosophy, Federation University Australia. Available https://researchonline.federation.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/vital:13825;jsessionid=119027A77709BCF63B2E1C6BE32D0A45%20(2018).

Amnesty International, "Seven times Marriage Changed and the World Didn't End" (2017) Available https://www.amnesty.org.au/seven-times-marriage-changed.

Childs, Erica Chito, "Mixed matters in Australia" (2019) 25(3) *Social Identities*, 424-438.

Culture Victoria, "Many Roads: Chinese on the Goldfields" (undated). Available https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/immigrants-and-emigrants/many-roads-chinese-on-the-goldfields.

Dictionary.com, 'Intermarriage' (undated). Available https://www.dictionary.com/browse/intermarriage.

Giorgas, Dimitria and F.L. Jones, "Intermarriage Patterns and Social Cohesion among First, Second and Later Generation Australians" (2002) 19(1) *Journal of Population Research*, 47-64.

Gorman, Ginger, "Mixed Race Couples Still Face Racism in Australia" (2016) Available https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/relationships/marriage/mixed-race-couples-still-face-racism-in-australia/news-story/d80a95bbb4c6127414bf510850ea8cd2.

Kalmijn, Matthijs, "Consequences of Racial Intermarriage for Children's Social Integration" (2010) 53(2) *Sociological Perspectives*, 271-286.

Kalmijn, Matthijs, "The Children of Intermarriage in Four European Countries: Implications for School Achievement, Social Contacts, and Cultural Values" (2015) 662 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 246-265.

Khoo, Siew-Ean, B. Birrell and G. Heard, "Intermarriage by Birthplace and Ancestry in Australia" 17(1) *People and Place*, 15-28.

Khoo, Siew-Ean, 'Intermarriage, Integration and Multiculturalism: A Demographic Perspective' in Michael Clyne and James Jupp (eds) *Multiculturalism and Integration: A Harmonious Relationship* (2011). Canberra: ANU Press, 101-120.

Ludden, David, "How to Make an Intercultural Marriage Work" (2019). Available https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/talking-apes/201910/how-make-intercultural-marriage-work.

Rodríguez-García, Dan, "Introduction: Intermarriage and Integration Revisited: International Experiences and Cross-Disciplinary Approaches" (2015) 662 *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 7-36.

Roy, Parimal and Ian Hamilton, "Interethnic Marriage: Identifying the Second Generation in Australia" (1997) 31(1) *The International Migration Review*, 128-142.

Stevens, Rachel & Seamus O'Hanlon, "Intimate Oral Histories: Intercultural Romantic Relationships in Postwar Australia" (2018) 49 *Australian Historical Studies*, 359-377.

Walker, Lyndon James and Genevieve Margaret Heard, 'Interethnic Partnering: Patterns by Birthplace, Ancestry and Indigenous Status' in Genevieve Heard, Dharmalingam Arunachalam (eds). *Family formation in 21st century Australia* (2015). Dordrecht: Springer, 53-75.

Zhou, Christina, "Australian Couples Share the Pros and Cons of Intercultural Relationships" (2018) Available https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-11/intercultural-relationships-pros-and-cons/9181434.

SCANLON
FOUNDATION
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

Contact

info@scanloninstitute.org.au

scanloninstitute.org.au

@Scanlon_Inst