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**BEYOND PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES
The Symbolic Construction of Chinatown**

Val M. Morrison

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Sociology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

August 1992

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ABSTRACT

Transcending Physical Boundaries The Symbolic Construction of Chinatown

Val M. Morrison

The object of this thesis is Chinatown in Montreal. More specifically, it is an analysis of the construction of Chinatown by members of Montreal's Chinese community. From the 1960s into the 1980s, Montreal's Chinatown was the site of extensive urban renewal projects. Because of the physical encroachment on the boundaries of Chinatown, the Chinese community of the province was said to be undergoing a transitional crisis (Chan, 1986: 76). This claim is taken to task by questioning the theoretical approach of Chan as it corresponds with the dominant theoretical approaches to ethnic relations in Canadian sociology.

The argument presented here foregrounds the symbolic construction of community. Using Chinatown as a central symbol of Chinese-Canadian identity in Montreal, this position will be elaborated.

The data presented here was data gained through 20 questionnaires and 10 interviews. This paper elaborates an argument which is meant to convince the reader that a complete understanding of ethnicity and identity must take into account not only demographic aspects, but symbolic questions of identity and meaning.

By questioning assumptions about the primacy of structural features of ethnicity, and examining a community which has had its structural boundaries encroached upon, I hope to contribute to theoretical arguments which propose that ethnic communities are not dependent on objective, structural characteristics such as locale, but are bound by a complex set of symbols with which the boundaries of their ethnicity are constructed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
|-------------------|---|

CHAPTER TWO

| | |
|---|----------|
| The Chinese and Chinatowns in Canada and Montreal..... | 9 |
| The History of Chinese Immigration to Canada..... | 10 |
| The Period of Free Entry | |
| The Period of Restricted Entry | |
| The Period of Exclusion | |
| The Period of Selective Entry | |
| Canadian Chinatowns: The Stage Model..... | 24 |
| The Budding Stage | |
| The Blooming Stage | |
| The Withering Stage | |
| The Reviving Stage | |
| Montreal's Chinatown..... | 28 |
| History and Functions | |
| Urban Renewal | |

CHAPTER THREE

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Ethnic Relations in Canadian Sociology..... | 32 |
| The Chicago School Influence | |
| Institutional Completeness | |
| Chan - Impending Doom In Chinatown | |

CHAPTER THREE (con't)

Beyond the Chicago School - The Survival of Ethnic Groups
Ethnic Identity - The Manipulation of Meaning
Signs and Symbols - Conceptual Definitions
The Symbolic Construction of Community

CHAPTER FOUR

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Methodology..... | 57 |
| Qualitative Research..... | 58 |
| Advantages of the Approach | |
| Methodological Limitations | |
| The Research..... | 60 |
| The Questionnaires - The Interviews..... | 63 |
| Section A - Demographic | |
| Section B - Ethnic Identity and Community | |
| Participation | |
| Section C - Chinatown in Montreal | |
| Analysis of Results..... | 66 |

CHAPTER FIVE

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Description and Analysis of Results..... | 68 |
| Demographic Profile of Respondents | |
| Ethnic Identity and Community Participation | |
| Chinatown in Montreal | |
| Summary | |

CHAPTER FIVE (con't)

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Analysis and Interpretation..... | 82 |
| The Material and the Symbolic - Operationalization | |
| The Material | |
| The Symbolic | |
| Chinatown - The Various Interpretations..... | 87 |
| Chinatown and the Chinese Community - An Obvious | |
| Relationship | |
| Personal Importance of Chinatown | |
| Standing Up to Comparison | |
| What Urban Renewal?..... | 93 |
| The Future of Chinatown..... | 98 |

CHAPTER SIX

| | |
|---|------------|
| Conclusion - The Symbolic Construction of Chinatown..... | 102 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 106 |
| APPENDIX A - Interview Schedule..... | 114 |
| APPENDIX B - Questionnaire..... | 116 |

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Less than five years ago, Montreal's Chinatown and the larger Chinese population of the province were said to be undergoing a "transitional crisis." (Chan, 1986: 76). This crisis was a result of the extensive urban renewal in Chinatown. It is with this crisis that the research project detailed herein is concerned.

The Chinese began arriving in Canada in 1858 in response to the opportunity promised by the Frazer Valley gold rush. Although initially received with indifference, the Chinese were soon to become the immigrant group most subject to official racism in Canada. The tone of newspaper articles, the presence of anti-Chinese organizations, and the Vancouver race riots in 1887 and 1907 all attest to the discrimination faced by Chinese-Canadians in western Canada. By 1885, only four years after British Columbia entered confederation, the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act which required every immigrant of Chinese origin to pay a head tax of 50\$ upon arrival in the country. By 1904, the head tax had risen to 500\$ per immigrant. A new Chinese Immigration Act was passed in 1923 which replaced the old one. Under the new act, Chinese immigration to Canada was prohibited outright.

That the Chinese in Canada chose to remain residentially

segregated as a result of the treatment they received both by the people and the government of Canada is well documented (Chan, A., 1983; Chan, K., 1986; Chuenyan Lai, 1988; Li, 1988). The Chinese formed what have come to be known as **Chinatowns**: urban ethnic enclaves (McGahan, 1986: 165) which, depending on the particular Chinatown, are often cultural resource centres for the community they serve. That is to say, Chinatowns have come to be crucial to Chinese communities all over North America (Chan, 1986). Montreal's Chinatown, although relatively small in geographic terms, is the organizational heartland of Quebec's Chinese community, containing upwards of 60 voluntary associations and agencies whose functions range from representing the Chinese-Canadian community to the larger society to settling local disputes among Chinatown residents (ibid.: 69). From the 1960s into the 1980s, Montreal's Chinatown was the site of extensive urban renewal projects. In the process of this renewal, which included street widenings and the construction of several government complexes, much of what was Chinatown disappeared. The extensive urban renewal in Montreal's Chinatown has threatened the continued existence of Chinatown. Hence, the "transitional crisis" referred to earlier. I will argue that the resolution of this crisis, if indeed such a crisis existed, is to be found in the symbolic construction of Chinatown by Chinese community members.

This project deals with several theoretical/sociological issues which intersect empirically with the notion of Chinatown. That is, both Chinatown and the Chinese community are objects of this study. More specifically, it is the relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community which is regarded here. This relationship is examined in an attempt to understand how a community deals with the physical encroachment upon the boundaries of one of the most tangible and long-standing symbols of their existence in Canada.

It is my intention to explicitly challenge notions of ethnicity which have permeated sociological studies in Canada since the beginning of this decade. That is, Canadian ethnic studies have continued to assume, in the Chicago School tradition, that ethnicity is a throwback to the old world which will be shed along the road to assimilation. Unlike the classic approaches which use census data and broad social surveys as their basis then, I will present findings which are gained through unstructured interviews and questionnaires conducted with members of Montreal's Chinese community.

Theoretically, the object of this project sits at the intersection of sociological notions of urban ethnicity, and the related issues of innercity communities ethnic residential concentration, and urban renewal. It is my contention that in order to convincingly examine these notions, a symbolic

conceptualization of community (Cohen, 1985) is in order. By examining the symbolic construction of Chinatown by the Chinese community, particularly as this is evidenced by the urban renewal and the ensuing crisis experienced there, the complexity of the relationship between the two can be detailed. By contrasting this approach to a more structural one (cf. Breton, 1964) it is possible to understand why Chan could only find the results he did. That is, if the structures of Chinatown are given priority over the meaning of Chinatown as a symbol of Canadian-Chinese identity, then the disappearance of many of these structures could do little else than throw the community into crisis. If however, a more dynamic approach to ethnic relations is embraced, other possibilities emerge.

The symbolic view of community, be the community based on locale, common-interest, or ethnicity, is one which sees community as invested with meaning by individuals who share a symbolic interpretation of their commonality. What the community has in common then, is not necessarily objective characteristics such as language, national origin, or religious affiliation, but a symbolic frame of reference which binds them to each other. The symbols of their commonality are almost certainly not uniformly invested with the same meaning by all community members. It is the symbols and not the interpretations which they share.

In accordance with the adoption of a framework which considers the opinions of community members to be the telling factor in the construction of community, active Chinese community members were asked to express their opinions on the nature of Chinatown and its role in the larger community as well as to comment on the changes which have occurred in Chinatown in the last 15 or so years, and those foreseen for the coming years. The individuals' views of Chinatown are thus the driving force behind the research questions: what is the role of Chinatown in Montreal's Chinese community? and how has the community dealt with the threat to Chinatown posed by extensive urban renewal there?

The research project detailed here is an indepth study of the changing role of Chinatown in the Chinese community with specific reference to the threat posed by urban renewal there. The theoretical framework adopted is one of symbolic boundary maintenance and thus directly challenges more structural approaches to community and ethnicity. The methodological approach allows for research which is presented from the perspective of the subject group and as such, fits comfortably with the theoretical approach.

The project proposes a tactic for furthering the understanding of boundary maintenance strategies. By quest oning assumptions about the primacy of structural features of

ethnicity, and examining a community which has had its structural boundaries encroached upon, I hope to have contributed to theoretical arguments which propose that ethnic communities are not dependent on objective, structural characteristics such as locale, but are bound by a complex set of symbols with which the boundaries of their community are constructed.

The remainder of this report is divided into six chapters. The second chapter is a detailed history of the Chinese and Chinatowns in Canada. In order to understand the contemporary role the Chinatown in the various Chinese communities in Canada, it is essential to understand the conditions under which they were formed.

Chapter Three provides a discussion and critique of Canadian ethnic relations scholarship. It is argued in this section that the poverty of scholarship, which I contend goes on from an outmoded theoretical approach, has contributed to a long standing ghettoization of ethnic relations studies in Canada. I argue for the inclusion of theoretical approaches which view ethnicity and community as responsive to contemporary situations. Moreover, in this chapter, I provide a discussion of the symbolic approach to community which I feel would serve the case of Chinatown in Montreal, if not ethnic relations in Canada more generally, well.

In Chapter Four, I outline and justify the methodological approach to this study. It is my contention that to have a more complete understanding of the relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community in Montreal, a qualitative approach to research is in order.

Following this, a summary of responses to 20 questionnaires and ten interviews are presented. This section is presented with little comment as a way of allowing the reader to extract their own conclusions before I go on to elaborate some of mine.

The second section of Chapter Five does just that. Based on analysis of the responses, I elaborate what I view as the symbolic construction of Chinatown by the respondents. I will show in this chapter that indeed, members of the Chinese community are involved in debates which are contemporary and dynamic. This analysis will demonstrate that Chinatown is viewed as much more than a stagnant construct. The people I spoke to are in the process of working out issues of ownership and control of a territory which they appear to view as much more than a physical space.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will suggest further questions which have emerged from this research and present the case that I hope to have shown valid. That is, it is not

sufficient to count ethnic institutions and rely on statistical data in attempting to come to terms with contemporary ethnic groups. This approach must be combined with one which questions issues of meaning and individual construction of community. In short, with the symbolic construction of community.

CHAPTER TWO

The Chinese and Chinatowns in Canada and Montreal

While this project focuses on Chinatown in Montreal, this Chinatown is only one of many Chinatowns in the country with a similar history of formation and development. The first Chinatown in Canada was formed in Victoria, British Columbia at the end of the 1850s, and wherever Chinese-Canadians have moved in significant numbers since then, they have formed what have come to be known as **Chinatowns**. Chinatowns, in this country, and it has been argued, in the United States and Australia as well (Anderson, 1991) were the result of several factors, social, cultural and political in nature. The Chinese initially chose to remain residentially segregated for two main reasons: their desire to reside in closeness with people of the same ethnic origins (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988:17); and as a protection from the hostility of the host society and discrimination, both official and not, suffered by them in Canada (Chan, 1986;Chuenyan-Lai, 1988; Li, 1988).

Upon arrival in a new city, Chinese immigrants commonly took up residence at the cross-section of two streets or along a small stretch of a single street which they referred to as **Tangren Jie**, or **Chinese Street** (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 3). These Chinese residential areas were referred to soon after as **Chinatowns**, and have been so called ever since. In order to understand the nature of the Chinese experience in Canada, it is imperative to outline the main features of both immigration

from China, and the formation of Canadian Chinatowns.

The History of Chinese Immigration to Canada

The Chinese began arriving in Canada in 1858 in response to poverty in China and opportunity in North America. Until the end of the Frazer Valley gold rush in the late 1860s, Chinese were permitted free entry into Canada and were largely left alone. The economic recession at the end of the gold rush however, saw the beginning of a history of discrimination toward Chinese-Canadians which continued officially and systematically until 1947. Indeed, the history of the Chinese in Canada is a history of institutional discrimination against Chinese-Canadians.

Chinese immigration to Canada can be divided into four main phases: **The Period of Free Entry**, from 1858 to 1884; **The Period of Restricted Entry**, from 1885 to 1923; **The Period of Exclusion**, from 1924 to 1947; and **The Period of Selective Entry**, from 1948 to the present (Cheunyan-Lai, 1988: 8). These periods of immigration provide account of the official discrimination faced by the Chinese in Canada. The Chinese were singled out as the subjects of a very specific policy of immigration which would remain in place, through various modifications, for nearly 100 years. Largely spawned by popular demand, and undoubtedly by theories of racial

superiority in vogue at the time (Ward, 1978), several attempts were made to curtail Chinese immigration to Canada, culminating in the federal governments' outright prohibition of Chinese immigration to the country in 1923. The four periods referred to above and discussed in depth below clearly illustrate how an ethnic or racial group can be affected by institutional discrimination.

The Period of Free Entry (1858-1884)

When the first 2,500 Chinese began arriving in British Columbia, they were left largely to their own devices. At the end of the Frazer Valley gold rush however, anti-Chinese sentiment began to arise. The Chinese in Canada were scapegoated for the high rate of unemployment, among other things (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 15). Demands for the restricted entry of immigrants from China grew and were soon satisfied after British Columbia entered confederation in 1871. In 1875, the British Columbia government passed legislation which disenfranchised the Chinese and in 1876, further legislation prohibited the hiring of Chinese to work on government projects (Li, 1988: 23).

Although anti-Chinese sentiment was widespread during the period of free entry, labourers were needed to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the federal

government was thus reluctant to pass legislation which would hinder the hiring of (cheap) Chinese labourers. Between 1880 and 1884, another influx of Chinese arrived in Canada, many brought here by business contractors hiring labourers to build the B.C. portion of the railway. In 1882, of the 9 000 men employed in the railway construction, 6 500 of them were of Chinese origin (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 32). In an attempt to ensure that the Chinese labourers did not remain in Canada after the railway was completed, B.C. attempted to impose a head tax on Chinese residents of the province. The Chinese Tax Act required that every Chinese resident of British Columbia over the age of 12 pay ten dollars every three months in order to take out a licence to reside in British Columbia (ibid.: 30). The Act however, was soon after declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

Although it had long been evident that in British Columbia, the issue of Chinese immigration was one of major importance (in 1881, of the 4 350 Chinese in Canada, 4 383 of them lived in B.C. <ibid.:33>), in 1885, the federal government was convinced to attempt to bring an end to the problem related to their presence.

The Period of Restricted Entry (1885-1923)

In 1885, the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration

Act requiring every person of Chinese origin immigrating to Canada to pay a head tax of 50\$. In 1903, the head tax rose to 500\$ and remained there until its repeal in 1923. For two reasons however, the head tax did not have the desired effect.

Firstly, in 1882, the United States passed the Chinese Exclusion Act which stated that if not resident in the United States before August 1882, Chinese immigrants could not get the identification cards required in order to remain in the country. Chinese-Americans who had come to British Columbia to work on the CPR then, could not return to the United States and many of them chose to remain in Canada.

Secondly, the Chinese-Canadian population during this period was a **married-bachelor society**. (Li, 1988: 56). That is, since most of the Chinese who arrived in Canada during the second half of the nineteenth century came to work either during the gold rushes or on the construction of the CPR, they were mostly married men with intentions of sending for their wives and children once they could afford to do so. The Chinese Immigration Act created a Chinese-Canadian community composed of young married (but without their wives in Canada) men. Since Chinese immigration to the United States was a foregone option, many Chinese continued to come to Canada. Most of these immigrants were the wives and dependent children of men who had arrived earlier.

Four years after British Columbia entered confederation, the federal government had been persuaded to conduct a study of the Chinese problem. In 1884, the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration was established. Concurrently, organized labour in British Columbia was founding anti-Chinese movements. Among these groups was the Knights of Labour and the Provincial Federated Labour Congress both of whom demanded the exclusion of Chinese immigrants (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 53). Also during this period, the infamous race riots of 1887 and 1907 in Vancouver occurred. Wanton crowds sought to intimidate Chinese-Canadians by destroying their property in protest against what they perceived as Chinese competition for jobs. (Li, 1988: 31).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, reports from the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration began to appear. The xenophobia evident throughout North America was also apparent here:

They come from Southern China...with habits and modes of life fixed and unalterable, resulting from an ancient and effete civilization. They form, on their arrival, a community within a community, separate and apart, a foreign substance within but not of our body politic, with no love for our laws or institutions; a people that cannot assimilate and become an integral part of our race and nation.
(Anderson, Kay J., 1987: 580, as quoted by).

The report further concluded that the Chinese were

"undesirable and non-assimilable immigrants because of many alleged cultural and social peculiarities." (Li, 1988: 25).

It is thus not surprising that the Chinese were treated with such discrimination. If the tone of the above excerpt from the Royal Commission is indicative of the official attitude toward the Chinese, it is no wonder that in 1923, the federal government took further measures to ensure that Chinese immigration to Canada would come to an end.

The Period of Exclusion (1924-1947)

In 1923, the federal government replaced the head tax with a new Chinese Immigration Act. The new Act prohibited people of Chinese origin from entering the country except for those in exempted classes: consular officials, children born in Canada, students, and merchants. The 1923 Chinese Immigration Act occurred after several failed attempts by Canadian minister of labour (MacKenzie King) to convince Chinese officials to restrict emigration from China by limiting the number of passports issued. When this failed, the 1923 Act successfully halted immigration to Canada. During the period of exclusion, which lasted until after the second World War, only 12 Chinese immigrants were admitted to Canada, ten of them belonged to the exempted classes (Cheunyan-Lai, 1988: 58).

Besides prohibiting immigration, the Chinese Immigration Act also required that all Chinese in Canada regardless of citizenship status register with the government and obtain a certificate of this registration (Li, 1988: 31). Furthermore, any person of Chinese origin leaving the country without registering to do so was to be treated as a new immigrant upon his/her return. Those who registered to leave would only be allowed to return within two years of their departure.

During the period of exclusion, several factors contributed to the shrinking of the Chinese-Canadian population other than the obvious lack of immigration. Firstly, since the hope of reuniting families in Canada perished, more than 60 000 Chinese-Canadians left the country. Secondly, because of the imbalanced sex ratio, the birth rate among the Chinese was very low. Finally, the depression years were not without effect on the Chinese-Canadian population; many Chinese-Canadians died of starvation and malnutrition.

Also during this period, a move eastward of Chinese-Canadians accelerated. While in 1881, 99,2% of Canadians of Chinese origin lived in British Columbia, by 1921, that number had dropped to 59,4% with the majority of the remaining Chinese population making Ontario (14,2%) and the Prairie provinces (19,0%) their home (Chuenyan-Lai, 1989: 61). Significantly though, because of the discrimination they had faced in the

west, and the federal governments' obvious approval of the treatment, the Chinese reacted by forming ethnic enclaves, Chinatowns, wherever they settled in relatively large numbers (Chan, 1983: 68). Although prior to 1971, the Chinese never represented more than 1% of the total Canadian population, the discrimination they faced in Canada is evidenced in every major metropolitan city by the presence of Chinatowns. That is, as previously mentioned, Chinatowns developed in response to the discrimination they faced in Canada and since there was no guarantee that they would not receive similar treatment outside of British Columbia, Chinatowns continued to serve as a protective shield for Chinese-Canadians, most of whom during these earlier years lived within the bounds of Chinatown(s) (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988).

Since China and Canada were allies in the Second World War, and in the face of world horror over the Nazi holocaust, in 1947, the government repealed the Chinese Immigration act ending the period of exclusion, and followed in 1949 by enfranchizing the first Chinese-Canadians.

The Period of Selective Entry (1948 to the present)

With the repealing of the Chinese Immigration Act, legislation restricting the rights of Chinese-Canadians began slowly to rescind, marking the beginning of the period of selective

entry. The first Chinese to become eligible to immigrate to Canada were the wives and dependent children of those already here. As time progressed the age of dependent children allowed to come to Canada was raised to 25, and elderly parents were also allowed to apply. The racist attitude though, was still entrenched in Canada. Consider then Prime Minister W.L. MacKenzie King's words:

The People of Canada do not wish, as a result of mass immigration, to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large scale immigration from the Orient would change that fundamental composition of the Canadian population.
(ibid.: 102, as quoted by).

The discrimination faced by potential Chinese immigrants then would not end until the introduction of the point system of immigration in 1967. Until these changes, White Europeans were still explicitly favoured as immigrants to Canada. The repealing of the Chinese Immigration Act however, was the first step in ending the official racist treatment of Chinese-Canadians.

After 1967 the nature of Chinese immigration changed significantly. Among the most significant of these changes, particularly with regards to Chinatown, was the socio-economic status of post 1967 Chinese immigrants to Canada. Most of the Chinese-Canadians who now make up 1.65% of the Canadian population have come to Canada since the 1960s, and these immigrants differ significantly from their 19th century

counterparts. Whereas most of the earlier Chinese immigrants came from rural Southern China, between 1967 and 1979, fully 85% came from (urban) Hong Kong, 9% from Taiwan, and only 5% from China (Thompson, 1989:152-3). The creation of the entrepreneurial category of immigration has contributed to the significant presence of Chinese businessmen from Hong Kong investing in Canada and contributing to the recent economic revival of many Canadian Chinatowns. In Montreal, several development projects originating within the Chinese community have recently been completed, or are in the planning stages. Among these are the return of the Chinese hospital to Chinatown, the construction of a \$2.3 million cultural centre and a \$2 million community centre. While some of the cost of these community projects will be defrayed by the three levels of government, the Chinese community was successful in raising a total of \$3.9 million (Cheunyan-Lai, 1988:154). Other private sector investment in Montreal's Chinatown has included the opening of several businesses; hotels, restaurants, and various shops. This development seems to have curbed the feelings of impending doom reported as characteristic of the Chinese community towards the future of Chinatown in the mid-1980s (cf. Chan, 1986).

The discrimination encountered by the Chinese in Canada cannot be put down to acts of individual prejudice. The racism they suffered was institutionalized. Institutional racism involves

"both a racist theory and a social practice that are entrenched in institutions, and by which subordinate members are barred from equal participation." (Li, 1988: 33). This was certainly the case with the Chinese in Canada. Until 1947, explicit systematic and legal systems of exploitation regulated their movement, their labour, their immigration, and indirectly, their residence patterns and family structures. Indeed, Chinatowns can be viewed as the result of racial theories and a process of racialization (Anderson, 1991). That is, while the residential patterns of the early Chinese in Canada were partially by choice, the entrenchment of the term "chinatown" and continued discrimination were significantly contributed to by the host society (ibid.).

The effects of institutional discrimination against the Chinese were many. For the host society (Canada) the benefits were both ideological and economic. The disenfranchisement and legal discrimination against the Chinese was both a consequence of and a rationale for an ideology of White superiority (Li, 1988: 33). Economically, the legal and systematic discrimination against the Chinese benefited Canada. Firstly, the Canadian government collected a total of 23 million dollars from the head tax imposed during the period of restricted entry (ibid.: 38). Secondly, the regulation of Chinese labour ensured that the Chinese would not be in a position to compete with White labourers, and that the Chinese

would remain in a state of economic instability. The Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration claimed that:

"the average Chinese labourer could earn only \$225 a year. After deducting \$130 for food and clothing, twenty-four dollars for rent, and twenty-eight dollars for road taxes, medicine, and other expenses, he (sic) could save only forty-three dollars a year."
(Cheunyan-Lai, 1988: 53).

After paying the original 50\$ head tax the average Chinese labourer was destitute and this assured the host society that the subordinate Chinese labourer stayed poor while the government collected millions of dollars in discriminatory taxes.

The effects of institutionalized discrimination on the Chinese-Canadian population were many and have been alluded to earlier. Briefly, the discrimination faced by the Chinese in Canada before World War Two affected them demographically, residentially, economically, and culturally. When Chinese immigration was curtailed and eventually prohibited, the resulting **married bachelor society**¹ culminated in, among other things, a high proportion of opium consumption as an "alternative to madness." (Chan, 1983: 75). Besides the opium trade, Chinatowns at the beginning of the century were

¹. Consider for example that in 1901, the proportion of Chinese men to Chinese women in Montreal was 258:1 (Helly, 1987: 122).

reportedly sites of gambling, drunkenness, prostitution, and general criminal activity. This of course, was blamed on the culture of the immigrants (ibid.: 80) rather than admittedly an effect of separating the Chinese immigrants from their families, confining them to menial jobs and denying them citizenship rights.

In addition to the cultural and economic ramifications these policies had on the composition of the Chinese-Canadian population, the size of the Chinese-Canadian population was further affected by the institutional racism they suffered. Between 1921 and 1940 (encompassing most of the period of exclusion), the net migration of the Chinese-population alone reached -57 525 (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 59). In 1921, people of Chinese origin represented .45% of the Canadian population and during the period of exclusion, that figure dropped to .23% in 1951 (ibid.: 60).

The residential segregation of the Chinese has already been referred to. Although it is not uncommon for new immigrants to congregate in a small area of the city (Driedger, 1989: 98), the Chinese remained in almost complete residential isolation during the first several decades after their arrival. It has been repeatedly claimed that the Chinese chose this residential pattern as a defense against racism (Chan, A., 1983; Chan, K., 1986; Chuenyan-Lai, 1988; Li, 1988) but the

choice here was further sanctioned, not to say imposed, for the Chinese. Kay Anderson (1988), claims that the residential segregation of the Chinese was a key factor in the racial categorization of the Chinese in early Vancouver. She claims,

While residential segregation of the Chinese was not a direct product of government fiat, there was a whole officially sanctioned race-definition process in Vancouver that decisively influenced the social organization of that city's territory. (Anderson, 1988:354)

Chinatowns then, were also the creation of White Canada, as a means of racially categorizing the Chinese. Chinatown may thus be "a story, which, in disclosing the categories and consequences of white European cultural hegemony, reveals more the insider than it does the outsider." (Anderson, 1987: 594).

Although Chinatown then is at least in part a White cultural construct, it never the less remains an important feature of the Chinese-Canadian population. From its original role as defense against racial hostility, Chinatowns have evolved to become centres of Chinese business operations and cultural loci, as well as providing services to the Chinese community in cities where there is one.

Canadian Chinatowns: The Stage Model

Patterns of development of Canadian Chinatowns have been observed to be more or less uniform, particularly as refers to older Chinatowns (i.e. those formed before the period of restricted entry). According to David Chuenyan-Lai, there are four stages in the development of old Canadian Chinatowns: **The Budding Stage, The Blooming Stage, The Withering Stage, and the Reviving Stage** (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 5). These four stages correspond with stages of Chinese immigration to China, and have been observed and applied to Vancouver's Chinatown by Kay Anderson (1991). Although she does not use Cheunyan-Lai's terms, the stages he describes correspond with his general analysis of Canadian Chinatown development, and his more indepth study of Victoria's Chinatown.

The Budding Stage

During the budding stage, Chinatown is synonymous with the Chinese community (ibid.: 5). Chinatown usually has but a few Chinese residents, predominantly male who represent nearly the entire Chinese population of the city in question. A few businesses, operated by a handful of Chinese merchants are present in the budding stage. Characterized by either a single section of a street, or a cross-section between two streets, the budding Chinatown usually is composed of a row of wooden shacks which to the larger society characterizes a slum district. The budding stage was characteristic of Chinese

residential areas during the first few years of their immigration to Canada, or of Chinese interprovincial migration. Montreal's Chinatown for instance, went through the budding stage at the beginning of the twentieth century when several Chinese-Canadians moved eastward.

The Blooming Stage

The blooming stage begins when the Chinese population increases rapidly through immigration (ibid.: 5). Although many Chinese still live in Chinatown, it is no longer synonymous with the Chinese community. A merchant class begins to emerge in the blooming stage, and the economy becomes more diversified and prosperous. In order to accommodate a bachelor society, Chinatowns in the blooming stage characteristically contain brothels, gambling dens, and prior to 1910, opium dens as well. During this stage, a series of institutions begin to emerge: churches, schools, and various types of Chinese associations. Chinatown grows physically and economically during the blooming stage and an increasing number of businesses and residential buildings are owned by Chinese organizations or individuals. Most Canadian Chinatowns entered the blooming stage during the period of restricted entry and the very beginning of the period of exclusion.

The Withering Stage

An old Chinatown enters the withering stage when the population declines, Chinese ownership diminishes, and the economy declines (ibid.: 7). Both formal and informal organizational participation decreases and the earlier Chinese businesses are replaced by pornographic bookstores, second-hand shops and low-class bars, characteristically owned by non-Chinese. The only indigenous residents left are the poor and the single elderly. During the withering stage, urban renewal projects often diminish the size of Chinatowns, making them historical sites first and cultural centres second. Most major Canadian Chinatowns experienced the withering stage during the period of exclusion when the lack of new immigrants arriving, high emigration and low Chinese birth rates diminished the Chinese population in Canada. From the withering stage, an old Chinatown has two possible destinies: extinction or revival. Extinction is just that, if the larger society has other plans for the area encompassing Chinatown and if the Chinese community is incapable of blocking such destruction, the Chinatown will disappear. In this case, it is the Chinatown, and not the Chinese community which disappears. A new Chinatown may well appear elsewhere in the city.

The Reviving Stage

The Reviving stage occurs when urban renewal revitalizes and revives an old Chinatown. Chuenyan-Lai claims that new buildings will be erected which include care and cultural centres for the indigenous population (ibid.: 8). This, from urban renewal funds provided by municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government. Chinatown however, changes as a result of this reviving:

The image of Chinatown then varies, as it is simultaneously considered a tourist attraction, a vibrant inner-city neighbourhood, a historic district, and emblem of Chinese heritage, and/or the root of Chinese Canadians in the multi-ethnic society of Canada. (ibid.).

Chinatowns then particularly in this case, in Canada, but also in the United States and it has been suggested, Australia (Anderson, 1991), undergo a series of changes which alter not only their appearance, but their functioning as well. From ethnic enclaves to tourist attractions and symbols of a multi-ethnic Canada, Chinatowns through the reviving stage take on new meaning for both the host, white Canadian society, and for the Chinese community they were originally intended to serve. The urban renewal phase in Canadian Chinatowns threatens the continued significance of Chinatowns for the Chinese-Canadian population. Consider Montreal's Chinatown as an example.

Montreal's Chinatown

The first public reference to a Chinatown ("quartier chinois") in Montreal was made in the Montreal daily newspaper La Presse in 1902 (Helly, 1987: 213) soon after the first Chinese immigrants migrated to Montreal from the west coast of Canada. Thus, Montreal's Chinatown emerged at the beginning of the period of restricted entry (1885) and continues to be an important source of Chinese identity and services today (Chan, 1986).

History and Functions

Chinatowns, I have shown earlier, were formed as a result of the institutional racism suffered by the Chinese in Canada. They became safe havens for Chinese-Canadians. Montreal's Chinatown is no exception to this. Kwok Chan reports from a survey of Chinese community leaders (Chan, 1986: 70, as cited in), that Chinatown has and continues to fulfil important functions for the Chinese in Montreal:

Chinatown provides a territory, a Chinese urban space, where the Chinese can perpetuate and nurture a sense of ethno-cultural identification and pride, which in turn enables the Chinese as members of a visible minority to cope with external, discriminatory treatment. Second, the institutional infrastructure of Chinatown functions to safeguard the continuity of Chinese values,

beliefs and symbols, and to transmit them with dignity and pride to the new generation. (ibid.).

The importance of Chinatown then, can hardly be questioned. "In coping with prejudice and discrimination, the Chinese in Montreal, for more than a century, have been turning to Chinatown for support and comfort, as well as for cultural continuity..." (ibid.: 75). As the site of more than 60 Chinese associations, ranging in function from helping new immigrants to adjust to the host society to settling disputes among Chinese factions (ibid.: 73), the future of the Chinese community may be at least partially dependent on the future of Chinatown.

Urban Renewal

During the 1950s and 60s, often referred to as the Golden Decade in Montreal (Melamed et al., 1984: 29), the city undertook vast programs of urban renewal. This period, marked by many street widenings, the building of expressways and public transportation systems marked the beginning of the urban renewal encroachment on Chinatown. The street widenings alone destroyed, besides about 20 residential units, two Chinese Churches, a Chinese school, several Chinese grocery shops, and a food processing plant (Chan, 1986: 70). In

short, the street widenings devastated cultural institutions as well as economic ones.

Further urban development in the 1970s and 1980s included the construction of several government complexes and more street widenings. Where the earlier projects had razed much of what used to be Chinatown, these new projects successfully delimited the boundaries of Chinatown in all directions. By the most generous estimates, today's Chinatown extends east-west from de Bleury to Hotel de Ville, and north-south from René Levesque to Viger (ibid.: 67). Recent development projects inhibit any geographic growth. Bounded to the south by the Ville Marie expressway; to the west by Complexe Guy Favreau and Palais des Congrès; by Place du Quartier, Complexe Desjardins and the Hydro Quebec building to the north. Chinatown could only hope to develop to the east. As if to add insult to injury however, in 1984, the municipal government adopted bylaw 6513 which zoned La Gauchetière Street east of St Laurent Boulevard residential, thus completely eliminating the possibility of commercial geographic expansion for Chinatown. In 1985, in a gesture of bending to pressure from Chinese business associations, the Bylaw was amended to allow commercial development west of St. Dominique Street, leaving Chinatown one half of a city block in which to expand! Recently, the Doré administration unveiled a plan which would zone the area in question as "le

reseau d'ambiance" (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 154). The bylaw however, has yet to be repealed and the future of Chinatown expansion remains uncertain. Although the development in and around Chinatown was successful from the city's point of view, the new buildings were said to "loom like giant tombstones over Chinatown." (Peritz, 1984: 8). The residents of Chinatown expropriated as a result of the renewal could never afford the rents charged in the newly constructed buildings (Chan, 1986: 70) and were forced to move outside the area leaving Chinatown to become a retirement community for single elderly Chinese women (ibid.: 72)

As mentioned earlier, the influx of immigrants from Hong Kong, as well as the more general characteristics of post World War Two Chinese immigrants, has contributed to some growth in Montreal's Chinatown. Although the buildings erected in the 1970s and 1980s remain restrictions to Chinatown's geographic expansion, some of the changes which have served to modernize the district are characterized by the respondents in this project as growth, and the feeling of impending doom reported as characteristic of the community by Chan less than 10 years ago appear to have been replaced by a symbolic (re)construction of Chinatown.

CHAPTER THREE

Ethnic Relations in Canadian Sociology

The sociology of ethnic relations in Canada is a relatively recent field of inquiry. It was not until the 1950s and 60s that the majority of Canadian universities founded autonomous sociology departments and at these universities, ethnic relations quickly became a primary focus (Juteau, 1991). I will argue below that although ethnic relations have been a mainstay of Canadian sociology, the discipline has been somewhat ghettoized theoretically. The earliest studies in the field (Hughes, 1943; Wade, 1960) were clearly influenced by the Chicago School (where Hughes for one, was a student) perspective combined with a preoccupation with the specificity of Canadian ethnic dualism. While it is not surprising that the Chicago influence spilled over into Canada, what is unfortunate is that it appears that while studies in the United States and Europe have moved considerably beyond the assertions of the Chicago School, Canadian ethnic studies have, for the most part, continued to embrace the main theoretical tenets of this perspective.

The Chicago School Influence

The first department of sociology in North America, as well as the most influential and pervasive theoretical school of ethnic relations on this continent was founded at the

University of Chicago at the turn of this century. Although he was not alone, Robert Park became far and away the most influential scholar of ethnic relations in North America. Intrigued by the rapid influx of immigrants from Europe as well as Blacks from the deep south, Park began a series of studies in the Chicago area which would be carried out by his students until well into the 1970s. Park prophesized a stage model of ethnic and racial relations which would eventually culminate in the complete assimilation of the minority group. The cycle was four fold: initial social **contact**, **competition** for resources, **accommodation**, and finally, **assimilation**. This eventual complete assimilation was viewed by Park as an inevitable consequence of continued contact in an urban industrial context (Park, 1950).

The Chicago perspective was originally brought to Canada by Everett and Helen Hughes (of McGill and Laval respectively), and continues to be of major influence today. At the heart of Canadian ethnic relations is the assumption, whether lauded or deplored that increased contact eventually leads to the assimilation of immigrant groups. In the guise of studies of economic mobility, control of ethnic institutions, language maintenance, endogamy, etc., the underlying assumption in the majority of Canadian ethnic relations studies has been that increased contact between ethnic groups leads to the dissolution of distinct ethnicity. While not all of the

studies have examined the process of immigrant reception and adaptation to urban environments in a new country (as the Chicago School did), all of them move on from the underlying assumptions of the Chicago School and as such, ignore important developments in the area, including refinements of the Chicago paradigm by some of its students.

At the beginning of the 1960s and on into the 1970s, the sociology of ethnic relations, and social theory more generally witnessed a rise of what has been called "creative sociology" (Ritzer, 1988: 65). Against the background of the structural determinism of mid-century social theory, sociologists began to consider such things as individual motivation and action as a key to understanding social interaction. This general move spilled into ethnic relations scholarship and led to, among other things, a reexamination of ethnicity as a contemporary phenomenon. That is, at the beginning of the 1960s, refinements to the Chicago School perspective found that ethnicity is not an anachronism to 'the old world,' but is expressed in response to contemporary situations (cf. Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Barth, 1969). Almost as though ignorant of these advances however, Canadian ethnic relations scholars continue to assume that distinct ethnicity is merely a stop-gap on the road to assimilation.

Examples of some of the most well known and accepted

approaches to ethnicity will illustrate how pervasive this focus continues to be in Canada. Many studies of ethnic groups in Canada, going on from the political economic approach to Canadian society, have focused on economic stratification. This approach is epitomized by John Porter's classic study, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto, 1965) in which he argued that Canadian society is economically stratified according to ethnic group. That is, ethnic origin is a reliable predictor of economic status. What Porter showed through this work, was that Canadian society, for all its rhetoric about cultural pluralism and tolerance, was economically structured along ethnic lines. He further argued that the assimilation process had failed, for as long as Canada continued to be economically stratified along ethnic group lines, the country could not claim to be a true liberal democracy. Indeed, "Ethnic and cultural differences are a fraud perpetrated by the British upon all other Canadians in order to keep them in their place." (Anderson and Frideres, 1981: 321, as quoted by). Thus, according to Porter, if ethnic groups continued to be distinctly identifiable, at least economically, then it was the fault of the host society, for not adequately providing the vehicles for assimilation. In a later article, Porter further develops this idea (Porter, 1980), where he claims that multiculturalism, as an official ideology in Canada, is more a tool to ensure ethnic subordination than a policy celebrating cultural difference.

Although some contemporary ethnic relations scholars have criticized Porter for failing to consider the very real differences between ethnic groups in Canada (Anderson and Frideres, 1981), his influence was none-the-less monumental, for along with another mid-century political economists, Porter founded what has been called The Carleton School of sociology (Bodemann, 1984: 218).

In addition to Porter's work, other Canadian scholars, working during the same period as those in the United States and Europe who were developing what has been called a dynamic approach to ethnic relations (cf. Glazer and Moynihan, 1963; Barth, 1969), were continuing to examine the economic fare of Canada's founding nations and immigrant groups (Clement, 1974; Pineo, 1976; Richmond, 1964; Reitz, 1980, to name but a few). The underlying assumptions of this approach is undeniably connected to the Chicago legacy. As long as immigrant groups retained the status of minority, they would remain on the lower rungs of Canada's system of economic stratification.

One of the distinctive features of Canadian ethnic relations studies is its attention to language and multiculturalism. Since any theoretical approach in the social sciences must be ultimately tied to the society which gave birth to it, it is not surprising to find a preoccupation with language groups in Canada (Juteau, 1991). This concern for Canada's "charter

groups" (Porter, 1965), was established with the very first studies of ethnic relations in Canada (Hughes, 1943; Wade, 1960) and continues to flourish today. In the mid 1960s, the first reports of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Canada set up to study the problem of French-English relations in the country particularly the grievances of French-Canadians in Quebec (Driedger, 1989) began to emerge. The redefinition of Canada as bilingual and multicultural which emerged from this study came only after vociferous protest by ethnic minority groups who claimed their place in the definition of Canadian society. This only made official what had long been Canada's claim to be a tolerant and multicultural country where there would be unity in diversity which was to be contrasted with the melting pot ideology of the United States.

Studies which emerged after the "Bi and Bi Commission's" (Herberg, 1989: 14) fourth volume (on Canada's "other" ethnic groups) continued to examine economic and structural issues, but began also to look at multiculturalism as an ideology not of tolerance, but of domination (O'Connor, 1973; Panitch, 1977; Porter, 1980), of a method of state control (cf. Anderson and Frideres, 1981: 321-2). It is surprising, if not unfathomable that with all of the official attention and emphasis on multiculturalism in Canada that sociologists of ethnic relations continued to perform crude demographic

analysis of the maintenance of ethnicity. With few exceptions (notably, Anderson and Frideres, 1981; and Elliot and Fleras, 1992) multiculturalism as a reality, rather than as a political rhetoric has received scant sociological attention. The assumption continues to be that after a few generations, ethnic minorities will be assimilated into Canadian society. And this, as a result of the loss of ethnic language and religious affirmation, among others. Here again, there are few Canadian sociologists (Anderson and Frideres as exceptions) who recognize what in other contexts has become accepted almost a priori. Language retention, religious affirmation, and residential concentration DO NOT equal ethnic identity. Rather, once again, what appears to operate in the maintenance of ethnicity is what is socially meaningful, what, in response to contemporary situations, is significant to individuals as they negotiate their own identities. The importance of ethnic identity and the relative ignorance of this subject in Canadian scholarship will be elaborated later.

The final approach to ethnic relations, which further entrenched the notion of the inevitability of assimilation in Canadian ethnic studies, to be discussed here, was first elaborated by Raymond Breton in 1964.

Institutional Completeness

Breton's goal was to study ethnic group cohesion and the factors which affected it. He contended that the more institutions controlled by a group, and the more diversified these institutions were, the more likely the group would survive. The assumption was that a group could theoretically score from none to totality on a scale of institutional completeness with totality equalling the possibility that group members could fulfil all of their needs without ever having to go outside the group. That is, the functions performed by the ethnic group paralleled and thus rendered redundant the function of the larger society (Reitz, 1980:218).

Since Breton's postulate of **institutional completeness** many scholars of ethnic relations in Canada (Reitz, 1980; Kalbach, 1981; Herberg, 1988) have spent a considerable degree of research time and energy counting institutions controlled by groups and concluding on the basis of such structural features as whether or not members of the community speak the ethnic language, practice the ethnic religion, etc., that they are more or less likely to survive as a group, or, failing that, more or less likely to be assimilated into the larger Canadian society.

While the following quotation from one contemporary scholar of ethnic relations in Canada is rather lengthy, it captures the essence of the assumptions made about the importance of the structural features of ethnicity within the institutional approach:

As well as being a significant instrument for adults to use and preserve their heritage, ethnic institutions are also important in developing ethnic cohesion among the young, who are much more susceptible to a tendency to reject their parents' culture or to be assimilated away from it. As Reitz (1980:223) has inferred, parental participation in ethnic organizations would serve as a socialization model for the young. Language retention would be encouraged, along with participation in the ethnic religion. And also, perhaps, ethnic group members would be encouraged to reside close to the sites of multiple ethnic organizations (or these institutions would spring up in proximity to residential concentrations of ethnic group members). High institutional completeness in an ethnic community, therefore, can create the context within which the ethnoculture becomes relevant in all facets of life...the formal organizations collectively should be considered as having the most important influence on the cultural survival of ethnic groups in every part of Canada. (Herberg, 1989: 214).

It appears then, that the framework originally designed by Breton in 1964 is more than marginally accepted today. The more than slightly disturbing aspect of this approach to ethnic relations is the method of data gathering it implies. Scholars who embrace this approach rely heavily on the Canadian census and broad social surveys for their data. Such information says nothing of the meaning of ethnicity, of the personal importance of maintaining ethnic ties between members of ethnic groups. Herberg further, in an attempt to elaborate the deterministic quality of institutional control, goes on to

devise a grid for the systematic study of the institutional completeness of ethnic groups which will reliably predict the survival potential of those communities (ibid.: 222).

Kwok Chan's work (1986; 1990) on the Chinese community in Montreal, and on Chinatown specifically sits comfortably with the dominant approaches to ethnic relations in Canada. It is not surprising, in fact, it could scarcely be otherwise, that Chan finds evidence of the impending disappearance of the Chinese community in Montreal. The community is threatened, he contends, because the structures of Chinatown are in peril.

Chan - Impending Doom in Chinatown

In an article written some six years ago, and reprinted almost in its entirety in a recent book (Chinese University Press, 1991) Kwok Chan convincingly traces the historical importance of Chinatown(s) generally, and Chinatown in Montreal specifically. He is not unlike others who have discussed the historical, functional, and cultural significance of Chinatowns in North America (Chow, 1976; Chau, 1981; Wong, 1982; Chan, 1983; Helly, 1987; Chuenyan-Lai, 1988; Li, 1988; Thompson, 1989) and claimed that Chinatowns arose as a result of intense discrimination against the Chinese at the end of the 19th century and continue to be a safe haven for Chinese-North Americans. While this certainly appears to be the case,

the claim Chan makes that the Chinese community is in crisis over the urban renewal appears less obvious, and it is my contention that this claim is applied much more readily to the "official" Chinese community than to any actual cultural community.

Chan's argument rests on the same assumption which has guided ethnic relations scholars in Canada since the dawn of the area of specialization. That is, Chan appears to assume that because some of the structures and institutions of Chinatown have been destroyed, that the very survival of the Chinese community is at stake. Certainly, the destruction in Chinatown was devastating, particularly to those who were physically displaced by the renewal projects. But minority communities throughout this century have shown themselves to be much more dynamic and responsive to change than the perspective adhered to by Chan and others allows for. Research into ethnicity and community in the 1960s in Europe and America challenged both the primacy of structural and institutional features of ethnicity, and these arguments prove particularly useful when examining the Chinese community in Montreal. As a community, in many ways, and almost by its very definition, it flies in the face of the institutional approach to the maintenance of ethnicity.

The Chinese in Montreal are distinct from each other in many

ways we commonly assume as contradictory to community, even ethnic community, and these differences certainly pose a problem within the institutional framework. Within the Chinese community, several distinct languages are spoken, various religious affiliations represented, national origins diverse, and political affiliations opposing.

Where Chan's research may be insightful is when these internal differences are overlooked. That is, when Chinese-Canadian identity is communicated along the group boundary (i.e. to outsiders), it is so in the form of the community of limited liability (cf. Suttles, 1972). That is, one may regard the Chinese community as actually encompassing several communities, or levels of community. What Chan presents as **the** community's crisis may well be a more accurate description of the formal community's crisis. That is, bureaucratic structures demand that communities act as cohesive groups so that at times, externally defined community may exist, particularly if an attempt to mobilize against outside forces is made (Suttles, 1972). Such was the case when the city of Montreal, the Quebec government and the Canadian government were proposing to demolish buildings in Chinatown. The community mobilized in such a way that it may have appeared that there was homogeneity of opinion in Chinatown. It is more likely however, in my opinion, that this was a clear case of communication along the boundary. The official, or formal

Chinese community was voicing its opposition to the renewal in a unified way demanded by bureaucratic structures which have little to do with the everyday expressions of community made by individuals.

Chan's and others (cf. Hyung-chan and Lai, 1982) research, structuralist in orientation, nevertheless implicitly suggests that members of the respective communities they study construct Chinatown(s) not in terms of the number and functions of institutions, but symbolically. Chinatown, according to Chan, is variously viewed by members of the community as a space which is distinctly Chinese, a protection from discrimination and prejudice, a place which fosters Chinese ethnocultural identification and pride, and a safeguard for ensuring the continuity of Chinese culture (Chan, 1986: 70). I will argue later that it is specifically because members of the community construct Chinatown symbolically and differently that the Chinese-Canadian (or the Chinese-Montrealer) community will help ensure its survival.

The research I have conducted leads to two possible conclusions with respect to Chan's claim that the entire community is in crisis. Either the crisis has been resolved by individual members of the community, or there never was a crisis. It is easier to grasp the reasons for this if one pays more attention to research mentioned earlier which

successfully challenged the approach of the Chicago School and its followers and their assumption of impending doom for urban ethnic group survival.

Beyond the Chicago School - The Survival of Ethnic Groups

The 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in the study of ethnicity and community in the United States which led among other things, to direct challenges being made to Park et al. of the Chicago School. On the one hand, Glazer and Moynihan (M.I.T. Press, 1963) studied five ethnic communities in New York city and found that even after several generations contact with other groups, these communities continued to see themselves, and to be perceived by others, as distinct communities. As a direct challenge to the institutional approach discussed above, Glazer and Moynihan make the following telling observation:

It is true that language and culture are very largely lost in the first and second generations, and this makes the dream of "cultural pluralism" - of a new Italy or Germany or Ireland in America, a League of Nations established in the New World - as unlikely as the hope of a "melting pot." But as the groups were transformed by influences in American society, stripped of their original attributes, **they were created as something new, but still as identifiable groups** (my emphasis). Concretely, persons think of themselves as members of that group, with that name; they are thought of by others as members of that group, with that name; and most significantly, they are linked to other members of the group by new attributes that the original immigrants would never have recognized as identifying their group, but which nevertheless serve to mark them off, by more than simply name and association, in the third generation and even beyond.

(Glazer and Moynihan, 1963: 13).

Thus, Glazer and Moynihan were able to make the observation and claim that while ethnic groups were not unaffected by a new country and an urban environment, they did not, as Park had claimed, cease identifying along primary lines in favour of more utilitarian, individualistic patterns of interaction (Park, 1950:24).

Several decades after the Chicago heyday, researchers returned to the local areas originally studied in the early years of this century. Again, they found that the communities which should by then have dispersed into the wider urban environment and ceased to have primary relationships as their most meaningful ones, were still bound by local and ethnic ties and presented complex sets of social interaction (Suttles, 1968; Hunter, 1974). Moreover, in Boston, Gans' study of the West End Italian community further dispelled the myth of inevitable assimilation when he found that even when faced with the possibility of social anonymity, the Italians he studied preferred to form relationships and a community with other Italians, even when several generations removed from immigration (Gans, 1962).

Frederik Barth (1969) further contributed to this post-Chicago enlightenment by asserting that groups' existed at their boundaries, in contrast and interaction with other groups, and

that they would continue to do so as long as it was socially meaningful (or effective to use his terms) to them. Thus, despite the lengths some ethnic groups must go to in order to maintain interaction with their communities (cf. Talai, 1989), they will do so as long as it is a meaningful part of their identity, and there is no indication that dispersal, contact with other groups, or lack of institutional completeness will stand in the way of this primary identification.

One of the ways in which community has retained its meaning for individuals is through the use and manipulation of common symbols (cf. Cohen, 1985). These symbols need not, indeed most often do not, mean the same thing to all community members, but they serve as common points of reference for community members which help bind the members to each other. It is my position that Chinatown is one such symbol of common identity of the Chinese community in Montreal and this contention will be elaborated in the analysis of the research data. Before going on to a more detailed description of the symbolic construction of community, the implications of the approaches discussed above on the importance of ethnic identity need to be elaborated.

Ethnic Identity - The Manipulation of Meaning

Canadian ethnic relations studies, as discussed above, has

remained in a theoretical vacuum for some years. This has led to an overemphasis of structure as the primary determinant of ethnic persistence, at the expense of more creative, dynamic factors involved in the maintenance of ethnicity.

The more creative approaches to ethnicity by Barth, Glazer and Moynihan, among others have emphasized individual identity as a driving force behind the maintenance of ethnicity. Barth claimed that individuals will embrace whatever identity is socially effective (Barth, 1969: 13). Moreover, what is socially effective varies not only between individuals, but within individuals as well. That is, the effectiveness of ethnic identity may and does vary from one situation to another. As Talai's study of London's Armenian community shows, members of an ethnic group need not be "Armenian" to themselves or to others 24 hours a day. The community she studied was dispersed in terms of residence, occupation, and educational establishment (Talai, 1989: 154). Their ethnic anonymity during work and school hours then, was complimented during leisure time by the manifestation of ethnic identity, of ethnic community. In her revealing words, "To be an Armenian in London is not a full-time affair." (ibid.: 77). This particular example illustrates well that ethnic identity, as with other kinds of identity, is brought into play when it is meaningful and when it is meaningful will vary from one situation, and one individual, to another.

Canadian ethnic relations scholars have not totally ignored the issue of ethnic identity, but when it is given attention, it too is regarded more in terms of objective, material characteristics. Consider for example that when Anderson and Frideres discuss ethnic identity, they do so under the rubric, "Ethnicity: Objective Criteria" (Anderson and Frideres, 1981: 36-51). Or more tellingly, Driedger breaks down ethnic identity along what he calls a structural-symbolic continuum (Driedger, 1989: 143), with territory, institutions and culture comprising the structural qualities; history, ideology and leadership forming the symbolic realm. What his analysis fails to recognise is that it is not the factors used in identification which are structural or symbolic, but the individual's definition of these factors. Ethnic identity is not a stagnant attachment to a "thing." Rather, it is dynamic and responsive to situations. Consider again, the example of the Armenian community studied by Talai. The community identified itself in part, with a geographic territory. Not a territory rigidly defined by physical boundaries, but by everything this territory symbolized to Armenians (persecution, genocide, exile, the uncertain future...). Thus, it is not because a group identifies with a physical space that that space and the identity is a stagnant one as Driedger implies. Rather, it is the components of that space used by individuals in their construction of identity that are the telling factors. To view it otherwise is to perpetuate a

myth of structural determinism long outdated in ethnic relations scholarship.

To bring this in line with the present discussion, I contend that the Chinese community in Montreal (or elsewhere for that matter) does not identify with Chinatown. They identify with what Chinatown represents...with what Chinatown is a symbol of and that interpretation is subject to diachronic and synchronic variation according to individuals and situations.

In brief, ethnic identity is not the sum total of a grocery list of objective traits. It is something defined and used by individuals in the negotiation of their daily lives, manipulated and utilized by them as they see fit according to various situations. All of this is better grasped if one takes into account the symbolic dimensions of community.

Signs and Symbols - Conceptual Definitions

At a conceptual level, it is necessary here to define what is meant by symbols, and what by structures, or material facets of ethnicity. To do so, it is useful to look at a classical example of sociological definition of signs and symbols.

The material realm is made up of signs. Signs stand for themselves. They are the objective things of the world. In the context of this discussion, they are the objective

characteristics which make up ethnicity (language, religion, endogamy, etc). In the context of Chinatown, they are the material structures of Chinatown (its buildings, its boundaries, its institutions) in and of themselves. Signs are distinguished from symbols in that "people respond to signs unthinkingly, they respond to symbols in a thoughtful manner." (Ritzer, 1988: 183). The social environment then, is made up of both signs and symbols, but to subordinate symbols to signs, or content to form, is to miss an essential component of the constitution of social interaction. It is to conflate structure and culture. Consider the words of Marshall Sahlins:

This does not imply that we are forced to adopt an idealist alternative, conceiving culture as walking about on the thin air of symbols. It is not that the material forces and constraints are left out of account, or that they have no real effects on cultural order. **It is that the nature of the effects cannot be read from the nature of the forces** (my emphasis), for the material force is determined by its integration in the cultural system. The force may then be significant - **but significance, precisely, is a symbolic quality** (my emphasis). (Sahlins, 1976: 206.).

Symbols, in contrast to signs, stand for something which they are not. Precisely because symbols are manipulated and defined by individuals, they are subject to varying interpretation, people do not respond passively to symbols, but actively create and recreate the world they live in. (Ritzer, 1988: 183). Because they are not stagnant, symbols often outlive the sign they once were. "The use of symbols allows actors to

transcend time and space." (ibid.). It is here that Chinatown may be viewed not as a series of buildings, a geographic fact, a sign, but as a symbol. A symbol to which members of the Chinese community impute meaning.

It is my contention in this report, that to examine the maintenance of ethnicity exclusively through demographic and structural calculations goes on from a basic misunderstanding of the way that ethnicity operates. Structural and demographic elements operate to be sure, but they are not the only forces which determine the maintenance and survival of ethnic groups. In order to grasp the complexity of ethnic group survival, it is essential to add to the structural understanding, an examination of the symbolic construction of community by the members of various ethnic groups.

The Symbolic Construction of Community

Recent work by Anthony Cohen (Tavistock, 1985) has convincingly argued that it is specifically because individuals interpret the symbols of their commonality differently that they are able to survive as a group. In direct confrontation with the structural approach, this perspective emphasizes questions of meaning; and interpretation, and challenges the primacy of structural aspects of commonality. What goes along with the structural

construction of community is an assumption of conformity, or of a single-minded mass which acts as unified whole. Indeed, this may at times be true, as in cases of the presentation of a community position to outsiders. This has been the case in several resistance movements to urban renewal in Chinese communities (Hyung-chan and Lai, 1982; Chuenyan-Lai, 1988). As stated earlier however, this illustrates a case of a community of limited liability communicating its unified wishes out of necessity to a society which demands such a presentation of positions (Suttles, 1972). This type of community, or level of community in a "hierarchy of communities" (Hunter, 1974), is usually no more than an artificial and temporary construction called upon when needed. The confusion here, according to Cohen, is one between form and substance, the former being an expression of structure, while the latter pertains to the realm of culture, to the realm of symbols. And it is in this realm that community is constructed as meaningful by its members. Just as it is an exercise in futility to examine the content of community without regard to its structure, so is it useless to merely examine the form of community (the dominant method of investigation in Canadian ethnic studies) without taking into account the everyday experience of community.

By examining community as a symbolic construct, questions of meaning, of culture, are given centrality over structural

imperatives. In the words of Anthony Cohen, "community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact'" (Cohen, 1985: 98). In the context of this project, adding fuel to the argument against a strictly structural approach is the reality that members of the Chinese community in Montreal diverge on many structural features of community. That is, the Chinese, as mentioned above differ from each other in terms of language, national origins, religious and political affiliations, etc. It is the symbols, in this case Chinatown, which they share and specifically because the symbol and not the meaning is what they have in common, the various interpretations of Chinatown need not be logically consistent with the geographic or sociographic 'facts.'

The Chinese community's perception of the period of urban renewal in Chinatown provides an interesting substantiation of Cohen's argument that when a group's structural boundaries are threatened, the group will increase its symbolic activity to ensure that the boundaries are reconstituted (ibid.: 70). By examining the period of urban renewal in Chinatown questions pertaining to the primacy of structural features of community are thrown into doubt. Although much of the urban renewal which threatened Chinatown impinged on structural features of the area, the apparent effect of this renewal (the crisis), as well as its possible resolution is constructed in

symbolic terms. An understanding of the role of Chinatown in the Chinese community as seen through the eyes of community members, contributes to a better understanding of the processes involved in community boundary maintenance; by constructing Chinatown symbolically rather than merely enumerating its structural qualities, the Chinese community in Montreal is involved in the reconstitution of boundaries mentioned by Cohen, and hence, in helping to ensure the survival of Chinatown.

The transitional crisis illuminated by Chan revolves around the issue of urban renewal and the threat to Chinatown. This threat he concludes, is felt at the community level. The pronouncements of impending doom made by Chan and the newspaper articles he cites (Chan, 1991: 293-4) seem at the very least, to have subsided, at most, to have never been the threat they were made out to be. That is, it is questionable that the crisis went beyond the formal Chinese community; the community represented by committees and organizations set up to oppose the urban renewal projects.

What follows is a presentation of a methodology designed in such a way as to present the opportunity to understand the processes involved in the conceptualization of Chinatown by Chinese community members. By asking members of that group to describe Chinatown and the changes which occurred during the

period of urban renewal, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the body of work which has attempted to come to terms with the way that communities operate and ultimately, survive. What is more, this is presented as a direct challenge to the dominant approaches to ethnic relations in Canada which have chosen to ignore the more dynamic and responsive approaches to ethnicity in favour of what I contend are crude demographic and structural approaches to community.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

The theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapter demands a very specific approach to research. I am interested in understanding the importance of Chinatown and the urban renewal which occurred there to Chinese community members. The only way to soundly obtain this information is to speak to people to whom Chinatown is important. As previously detailed, the symbolic approach to community asserts that it is precisely because the interpretation of symbols is individualized that community may survive. In this context, Chinatown may be seen not so much as a geographical location, but as a symbol subject to various interpretations by Chinese community members. Anthony Cohen has further claimed that when a groups' structural boundaries are threatened, the group will increase its symbolic activity to ensure that the boundaries are reconstituted (Cohen, 1985: 70). In order to assess the impact of the redefinition from the outside of the physical boundaries of Chinatown I have chosen to embrace an approach which allows the individual respondents to provide clues as to how this encroachment has been dealt with by the community in general.

Qualitative Research

While there is certainly no limit to the number of research strategies possible in analysing a community and their response to urban renewal (cf. Gans, 1962; Chau, 1981; Hyung-Chan and Lai, 1982; Chan, 1986), it is my contention that the only sound method of understanding how a community deals with a threat to its continued existence is to speak to members of that community and from there, gain a sense of what strategies they have undertaken.

Given my preoccupation with the symbolic construction of Chinatown then, I have chosen to speak to a number of individuals who view themselves as participants in Montreal's Chinese community. Following this, I allow the data to suggest trends and inclinations as to how Chinatown is viewed by the community, and how that role has or has not been transformed by the threat posed to Chinatown by the most recent urban renewal projects undertaken by the three official levels of government over the last 20 years or so.

Advantages of the Approach

The methodological approach I have chosen to embrace allows for a number of observations which would not be possible with a more structured, or quantitative approach. Firstly, it allows for the opinion of the members of the Chinese community

to be expressed and form part of a commentary that is too often removed from the everyday experience of people. That is, a commentary made by a more formal representation of the community. Secondly, the unstructured nature of the questions asked allows for a degree of latitude in responses which I believe is crucial. For example, while this project is explicitly focused on the period of urban renewal in Chinatown, I have chosen neither to use the term urban renewal, nor suggest the development by outside forces, inside Chinatown, of new buildings, highways, etc., until first ensuring that the respondents had ample opportunity to bring the issue up of their own accord. In this way, the importance of the urban renewal is not imputed to the respondents, but they are permitted to give it the place they feel it rightly deserves. Finally, analysis will be informed by the responses. That is, because this project deals with issues of meaning and symbols, I am not interested in saying for example that 40% of Chinese community members think, or express the opinion that...but rather, in pointing toward trends in the community made explicit through answers to pointed questions. This project is not intended as a be-all-end-all explanation of the role of Chinatown in the Chinese community, nor of the effects of urban renewal there. It is rather, an attempt to outline and analyze how a the respondents views a geographic space with particular reference to a threat posed to that space.

Methodological Limitations

There are of course, limitations to any methodological approach to research, and this one is no exception. Ideally, a sample much larger would be included. Also ideally, a more lengthy time-frame would allow for a more indepth study of Chinatown, the community it serves, and the renewal suffered there. Given the goals of this project then, as well as its many constraints, it is not possible to do an exhaustive report on the subject. Rather, within a prescribed time-frame and budget, a small number of respondents are requested to answer questions which pertain to a large community. However, as mentioned above, this need not be a hinderance to an analysis which is informed by the data and discussed in terms of trends and inclinations rather than constructed as a definitive answer to one or more yes/no questions.

The Research

My original intention was to conduct indepth interviews with 30 active Chinese community members. Having encountered at times vehement resistance to this approach by several community members, I was forced to change my strategy somewhat, but not I believe, to the detriment of the research.

With the much appreciated help of a contact active in various

Chinatown projects, 20 questionnaires, (see Appendix B) based on the original interview schedule (see Appendix A) were distributed to other active community members. Several of the respondents who filled out the open-ended questionnaire agreed to a subsequent interview and these were conducted in accordance with the original schedule. Moreover, the follow-up interviews allowed me to probe where detail was omitted on the questionnaire. Besides the five follow-up interviews, five other independent interviews were conducted to verify the reliability of the questionnaires and follow-ups.

The criteria for being included in the sample were three-fold: to consider oneself as ethnically Chinese; to be active in the Chinese community; and to frequent Chinatown in Montreal. Activeness in the Chinese community was assessed in terms of participation in one or more Chinese voluntary associations which are located in Chinatown, or working in an ethnic business (the employment in which required frequent contact with other community members). I defined the criteria for inclusion based both on my desire to facilitate the possible category of respondents, as well as the desire to ensure that the respondents indeed participated in Chinatown and viewed themselves as members of the community which congregates there. I in no way tend to suggest that these criteria are necessary in order to be considered a member of Montreal's Chinese community, but merely constructed these criteria in

accordance with the scope of this project. All 30 respondents fulfilled these criteria (indeed, all were members of one or more ethnic association).

There is a word of caution which is appropriate here. The object of this study is Chinatown in Montreal. More specifically, it is an examination of the perception of Chinatown in Montreal by members of the Chinese community who actively participate in activities in Chinatown. With the possible exception of the community of limited liability discussed earlier, there is no one identifiable unified Chinese community in Montreal. Within the Chinese community as within any other community, there are several sub-communities, or levels of community. It is therefore virtually impossible, and not necessarily desirable, to judge the exact or even approximate size of the Chinese community of which I speak in this report. That is, although it is known that in 1986, 26 755 people of Chinese origins lived in the province of Quebec, over 90% of whom made Montreal their home (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 114, 116), this statistic assumes a unified mass. In the tradition of Canadian ethnic studies elaborated in the previous chapter, it might be from this population that generalizations about the maintenance of ethnicity are made, but it is my position that this statistic is little more than a number. It does not measure ethnic identity or participation in the community, and furthermore,

it overlooks those people who are of Chinese origin but come from other Indochinese countries (notably, Vietnam).

Because I have chosen to examine the role of Chinatown in the Chinese community then, the Chinese community to which I refer includes those individuals who identify themselves as Chinese (or Chinese-Canadian; or Canadian-Chinese, etc.), and actively participate in activities in Chinatown.

Since the questionnaire and the interview schedule are virtually one and the same, the discussion below unless otherwise indicated, refers to both.

The Questionnaires - The Interviews

The questions asked of respondents covered three broad areas: demographic information; ethnic identity and Chinese community participation; and Montreal's Chinatown. The questions asked on the questionnaire were uniform. That is, all 20 respondents were given identical forms. In the case of the interviews, the form varied (demographic questions were asked either at the very beginning or the very end of the interview for instance) and since the response to one question often either partially or completely covered another, flexibility in the order and extent of probes was possible. In the case of the follow-up interviews, they consisted mostly of probes

after the respondents were reminded of their answers on the original questionnaire. All of the interviews were conducted between January and June 1992.

Section A - Demographic

This section was intended as a measure of demographic information. Nine questions ranging from age to area of residents were asked of all respondents. This section was used to verify certain information gained in the review of the literature (the Chinese community in Montreal is residentially scattered; language retention is low in second generation Chinese-Canadians; various religious affiliations are represented in the community; etc.) as well as to ensure a reasonable demographic spread (age, sex, etc.).

Section B - Ethnic Identity and Community Participation

The questions in Section B are designed to measure participation in the community and ethnic identity of the respondents. The two questions on ethnic identity were intended mainly to verify that the respondents did indeed fit my definition of whom to include as subjects, but also to measure to what degree those who participate in the community are active in voluntary associations, what proportion of their contacts are with people of similar backgrounds, whether or

not they frequent Chinatown in Montreal, and how they personally described their ethnic identity. In this last question, there was a difference between the interview and the questionnaire in that the interviewees were left to provide their own characterization while those who responded to the questionnaire were supplied with a list of possible choices. Most of the interview respondents however, look somewhat dumbfounded with the general question and I supplied the list none-the-less.

Section C - Chinatown in Montreal

Finally, the last section regards Chinatown specifically and as such, zeros in on the research questions. That is, my intention was to first examine what language is used to describe Chinatown (structural versus symbolic, concrete versus abstract, etc.), how its role is perceived in the community (if indeed it is seen as an integral part of the community), and whether this role is a structural/organizational one, or a symbolic one. Finally, and most importantly, I was interested in ascertaining how the respondents viewed the period of urban renewal and prospects for the future of Chinatown.

Because of the less direct questions on the nature of the role of Chinatown to both the individual and the community, these

two questions (C - 1 & 2 on the interview schedule) were omitted in the questionnaires. However, many people commented directly on this issue when asked to describe Chinatown making the observation of trends less limited by the number of interviews versus questionnaires conducted.

Analysis of Results

As with any research project, the method of drawing conclusions from the data will in many ways affect what emerges from the study. Since my intention is to examine how members of the Chinese community construct Chinatown, and following this, how they have dealt with the renewal there, I am inclined to let the answers suggest themselves from the research. That is, my approach to the data is a grounded one (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Concepts used for example to distinguish between material and symbolic definitions of Chinatown emerged from the answers provided, and not a priori, from the research design. As will be shown in the analysis section of this report, an approach that allows the informants to supply the concepts and categories permits surprises and unexpected results that can be adequately dealt with and understood.

To sum up then, the approach favoured here is a qualitative one. Moreover, it is one which makes the respondents and

their opinions the paramount ingredient in understanding the role of Chinatown in the Chinese community, and the way that this community has dealt with the threat posed to Chinatown by urban renewal in the area.

In the section which follows, I will outline the broad category of responses to both the questionnaires and interviews. Following this, a more detailed analysis of the way members of the community construct Chinatown and the development there will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

Description and Analysis of Results

This chapter is divided into two parts: a description of the responses, and the subsequent analysis. The first section provides an overview of the respondents and their answers to both the questionnaires and the interviews. This section is intended to give the reader a general picture of the scope and diversity of responses, and no analysis is made of the responses. The overview is divided into three sections in accordance with the sections on the questionnaires and interviews as described in the previous chapter. Since there is no qualitative difference in the responses, the responses to the questionnaires and interviews are not separated, although indication is given in the analysis section as to whether the response is quoted from a questionnaire or an interview.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The first section asked nine straightforward demographic questions: age, sex, mother tongue, home language, occupation, religious affiliation, country of birth (and period of immigration if applicable), and district of residence. With a few exceptions, all of those who responded were in their late 20s or 30s (the others being in their 40s or 50s). This should be noted since it surely affects the responses. There

is no attempt to generalize the responses to the community however, and for this reason, the lack of representation of age categories need not affect the analysis.

An equal proportion of men and women responded, although there was one more man interviewed. With the exception of 6 people, all of the respondents were born in Canada. The remainder were born in: New York; Indonesia; Taiwan; Vietnam; and Hong Kong. The vast majority of the respondents immigrated to Canada (themselves or their families) in the 1950s (one in the 1960s, one in the 1970s, two others in the 1910s). All but three have Chinese as their mother tongue and most now use English, or Chinese and English at home. Five respondents first learned Chinese (or Cantonese or Hokkian or Mandarin or Toishanese) and still speak it at home.

Of those who claimed a religious affiliation, the majority identified themselves as Christian (mostly Catholic) and two who responded to interviews offered Bhuddist as their religious affiliation.

Occupations listed included credit manager, housewife, engineer, computer analyst, merchant, secretary, restaurant worker. In brief, most of the respondents either own (themselves or their families) Chinese restaurants, or are professionals. Two are housewives.

Many of the respondents live on Montreal's West Island, although as far apart as Dollard des Ormeaux and Ile Bizard, while others make the downtown area, the South Shore, or Ville St-Laurent their home. One interview respondent does not live in Montreal, but operates a Chinese restaurant north of the city which makes frequent trips to Chinatown necessary.

The sample then, without being representative of the entire Chinese population of Montreal does include a wide range of demographic characteristics. The two notable exceptions to this are in terms of age and area of residence. While the respondents are quite dispersed residentially, none live in Chinatown and this has a direct impact when examining the issue of urban renewal and this will be further elaborated in the concluding phrases of this section.

Ethnic Identity and Community Participation

The second set of questions asked about ethnic identity and participation in the community. All four of these questions were closed-ended for questionnaire respondents: which of the following best characterizes your ethnic identity? Chinese, Chinese-Canadian, Canadian-Chinese, Canadian, Other (what); Are you a member of any Chinese associations, organizations, or groups? If so, how many?; What proportion of your friends are of Chinese origins?; finally, Besides personal friends,

what proportion of your daily contacts (at work, leisure) are of Chinese origins? The same questions were asked during interviews, but the respondents were not given options to choose from.

Most of those who chose to categorize their ethnic identity chose either "Chinese-Canadian" or "Canadian-Chinese" with a few choosing "Chinese." Interestingly, many of those who first chose "Chinese-Canadian" (it occurred first in order) later changed their answer to "Canadian-Chinese". This is one area which I had intended to explore in follow up interviews since while it is interesting to note that not a single respondent chose "Canadian", etc., it is not possible to know why the respondents chose the answer that they did, or why, for example, many changed their answers after reading the complete list. However, as previously mentioned, the question on ethnic identity asked of those who were interviewed frequently inspired dumbfounded looks, or at best, I was asked what I meant. In most cases, I began to enumerate the same options given on the questionnaire and was stopped when they agreed with a response. In one case, the respondent seemed offended that I couldn't decide for myself and answered, "Well of course I'm Chinese-Canadian." Although it is still interesting that the simple "Canadian" option was absent in all cases, the impression I was left with after asking this question a number of times was that ethnic identity appears

much more important to social scientists than to my respondents at least.

Most of those who answered the question about membership in Chinese organizations (9 chose not to) answered that they participate in one to five of such associations. Two respondents said that they were not members of any such organization. During the interviews, the respondents were asked which associations they belonged to, and these ranged from membership in a relatively unstructured friendship groups and churches to many more formal Chinese associations.

None of the respondents said that they had no Chinese friends, nor that all of their friends were Chinese. The responses were equally divided between "some" and "most". Some of those interviewed distinguished between their activities. They may play volleyball with Chinese friends one night a week, but see only non-Chinese friends for the remainder of their leisure time. Responses about contacts besides personal friends ran the gamut, each of the four categories in the questionnaire: 0-25%; 25-50%; 50-75%; 75-100% received nearly proportional responses. When probed during interviews it appeared that this varied according to their work. Those who work in Chinese restaurants are much more likely to have frequent contacts with Chinese individuals who are not personal friends during the working day, while those whose work does not involve direct contact with Chinese people are more likely to

have contact with individuals other than friends if they are, for example, shopping in Chinatown.

Chinatown in Montreal

The final section centres specifically on Chinatown. Five questions asked include: How often do you go to Chinatown?; In a sentence or two, please describe Chinatown?; How would you say Chinatown in Montreal compares to other Chinatowns in North America?; Has Chinatown in Montreal changed much over the last 10-15 years? If so, how?; and What do you think Chinatown in Montreal will look like in 10 or 15 years from now?

In addition to these four questions, interview respondents were also asked about the nature of the relationship between the Chinese community and Chinatown as well as whether they felt Chinatown was important to them personally and why.

All of the respondents frequent Chinatown. 12 go once or several times per week, four 2 or 3 times each month, seven once per month, and four go 2 or 3 times each year (3 people did not respond to this question). While the interview schedule asked this as an open-ended question with the probe, "why" or "what do you do when you go to Chinatown" the questionnaire did not. In the interviews however, it appeared

that most respondents go to Chinatown for similar reasons: to get together with friends and family; to attend church and other associations; to shop; to do business. Most respondents offered a combination of these reasons for visiting the area.

The final four questions were all open-ended. When asked to describe Chinatown, many people answered that it was a place to meet friends, shop for Chinese products, that it is

"a melting pot of many cultures"

"a small, comfortable place which is nice to visit"

"an area where Chinese can meet/buy using their own language without getting into problems communicating"

"attractive"

"modern".

In the interviews, many of the respondents asked what I meant. I answered that they were to feel free to describe it in any terms they felt were appropriate. One person gave the following description,

"It's a little isolated community which is representative of my culture - a bastion against Western culture - a way of standing up against the onslaught against our culture."

Others described it in utilitarian terms,

"a place to go pick up all my Chinese groceries, and to be

with friends."

Others still described its characteristics,

"it's quaint."

Many respondent pointed out the presence of Chinese of Vietnamese origins:

"large Vietnamese population"

"is called Vietnamesetown".

Restaurants, businesses, and grocery stores were consistently mentioned, as was the opportunity to be with people from a similar cultural background. Whatever terms used to describe Chinatown, no one chose to do so in structural or geographical terms.

When asked how Chinatown in Montreal compares to others in North America, two elements were common to most responses: Montreal's is much smaller (especially given the size of the Chinese population in Montreal), and cleaner. Other responses included that it is,

"closer knit"

"politically calm"

"peaceful"

"different communities survive quite well together."

Many expressed that they had been to other Chinatowns in North America and were split as to which they preferred. Some respondents preferred the "better organization" and larger size of Toronto's Chinatown for example, while others referred to the advantages of the lack of criminal activity and cleanliness of Montreal's district. Others still commented that Montreal's Chinatown is less of a cultural centre and more of a business district. It is worth noting here however, that just as some made this claim, others said the exact opposite. That is,

"Toronto's Chinatown is huge and just another part of downtown. Montreal's really is there for the community, it's a place where we (Chinese people) go to be with people from the same culture."

There is thus, except for general areas of discussion, little consensus as to how Montreal's Chinatown compares with its North American counter parts.

The answers to the question about the relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community asked exclusively during the interviews reflected the descriptions of Chinatown. All of the respondents exclaimed that of course there was a relationship, and in most cases, this was identified as a

cultural one.

"It's a cultural centre where people are all alike"

"It's very important. Without it, how would the children learn their culture?"

In fact, fully half of those asked mentioned the importance of Chinatown for children and added that they had spent a great deal of time there as children.

The second question asked during the interviews, but not on the questionnaire concerned the personal importance of Chinatown. Interestingly two of the respondents (both of whom had much to say about the general importance of Chinatown, and both of whom are also frequent visitors to the area) answered that it is of no real personal importance. The others all confirmed that Chinatown is of personal importance, one going so far as to say,

"a Chinese person without a Chinatown is kinda lost,"

Answers to the question about changes in Montreal's Chinatown in the last 10-20 years were varied. All but one of the respondents perceived changes, most of these in terms of territorial and economic development,

"it has expanded"

"more modern"

"More investment from richer Hong Kong immigrants"

"it has grown alot."

Ethnic composition was consistently brought up,

"many immigrants...different nationalities such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc."

"Vietnamese are taking over"

"Different Asian backgrounds"

"more open to non-orientals"

In the interviews, this question appeared to require thought, then the answer was invariably yes. One respondent went on at considerable length to comment that the politics of language in Quebec had affected an exodus of Chinese from Montreal and thus contributed to the demise of Chinatown (which was related to the influx of Vietnamese (who speak French) in Montreal). While the presence of Vietnamese was almost universally mentioned, only in this case was it a footnote or effect of the greater problem of the language debate in Quebec - other respondents only mentioned the common French second language of the Vietnamese when probed as to why their presence had augmented so noticeably in Montreal.

The final question, which asked respondents to foresee the

development of Chinatown in the next 10-20 years received answers which expanded on those given to the preceding question. That is, respondents felt that Chinatown would continue to develop economically,

"will be renovated and more modern"

"will continue to grow"

"more modern buildings"

and the ethnic composition will continue to alter:

"the Vietnamese will own our Chinatown"

"Consisting of different Asian backgrounds and languages"

"Chinese of Vietnam will take over."

A few respondents foreshadowed few or no changes, and some others mentioned obstacles to geographic expansion:

"expansion is greatly impeded by govt buildings...there is very little room to grow"

"hopefully bigger and better...with some government subsidies can be improved,"

Most people thus foresaw growth or at least growth within limitations for Chinatown. One person interviewed changed his response in mid-course:

"What future? (you don't think it will be there in 10 or 20 years?) Well, yes, but it ain't gonna grow...it'll still be there when Montreal gets blown off the face of the earth, it'll always be there, but it will be a ghetto. It already is a ghetto. There's a Holiday Inn though that some Chinese businessmen bought, that'll be the community centre, on St.Urbain and Viger, and there's some dirt parking lots on that side...I don't think much will change though."

Summary

From the above description, it is clear that many different people of Chinese origin are represented. People of different religious affiliations, national origins, residential districts, and occupations were questioned. If there is one non-representative demographic category, it is age. Unfortunately, most of the respondents fall in the 26-40 age range and this may affect their personal opinion as to changes in Chinatown over the last two decades. However, given the constraints of the research, this was a barrier which I was unable to overcome. Furthermore, since I do not intend to make broad generalizations to the Chinese community based on my respondents answers, this age concentration is not a barrier to the discussion which follows.

Another point worth mentioning before going on to analyze the responses is that none of the respondents live or lived in Chinatown. But it is imperative that the reader know that

this project does not deal with those displaced by or immediately affected by the urban renewal projects. The objective of the study was to ascertain way that Chinatown is constructed by my respondents. The results of this study do not deal with the effects of forced residential or commercial displacement on those who had no choice but to make their home elsewhere. Previous research has shown this type of displacement to be devastating (Gans, 1962; Fried, 1973) and I will not contend that the case of Chinatown contradicts this trend.

What the analysis which follows will attempt to show however, is that the questionnaires and interviews conducted with this segment of the Chinese community provide a somewhat surprising conclusion given Chan's work, as well as the tone of more colloquial newspapers of a few short years ago. This I will argue is due in part to a limitation in theoretical perspective toward the construction and functioning of community.

Analysis and Interpretation

Implicit in Kwok Chan's prediction of doom in Chinatown, is a construction of the Chinese community as one unified mass which shares not only a perspective towards the meaning and importance of Chinatown, but corollarily, towards the meaning of the development and future of Chinatown. This perspective, epitomized by Chan's discussion of the renewal in Chinatown, but also reminiscent of Breton's work and more generally, of the somewhat retarded theoretical approach to ethnic relations in Canada, is taken to task in my analysis.

The research conducted in the course of this project suggests that Chinatown is not viewed in the same way by all members of the community, and more to the point, that if there was a crisis in the community caused by the urban renewal there (and this is not without doubt), that crisis has largely been resolved, if not forgotten.

The analysis below is based on four of the questions asked on the questionnaire: In a sentence or two, please describe Chinatown; How would you say Chinatown in Montreal compares with other Chinatowns in North America?; Has Chinatown in Montreal changed much over the last 10 or 20 years ? How?; What do you think Chinatown in Montreal will look like in 10 or 20 years from now? In addition to these questions, two

others asked during the interviews: What (if any) is the nature of the relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community?; and Is Chinatown important to you personally? will also be discussed.

Two broad trends which emerged from the research will be treated as themes here. The first, which I call the symbolic construction of Chinatown is evidenced by answers to the first three questions concerning Chinatown (how often respondents go to Chinatown and why they do, description of Chinatown in Montreal and comparison with others in North America) as well as the added insight from the two asked exclusively during the interviews (relationship between Chinatown and the community and the personal importance of Chinatown). What emerged from answers to questions in this section points to the fact that members of the Chinese community see Chinatown less as a material, geographic area and more as a symbol of Chineseness which is subject to individual interpretation.

This symbolic dimension is further explored in the analysis of the final two questions which directly confront the issue of urban renewal in Chinatown. It appears from answers to these questions that the respondents are not so much concerned with the encroachment upon the area from outside forces, but are dealing with issues of ownership, control, and internal growth of Chinatown. This section presents a direct challenge to the

perspective offered by Chan. If Chinatown is constructed structurally or exclusively as a physical area, then it is reasonable to assume that a threat to its physical boundaries poses a threat to the continued existence of the community. However, as Anthony Cohen has argued, when a group has its physical boundaries threatened, the group will increase its symbolic activity in order to ensure the reconstitution of the group's boundaries (Cohen, 1985: 70). This appears to be at least a possibility with the case of Chinatown. That is, as will be shown later, there is very little mention of the urban renewal and limitations on Chinatown's physical development made by the respondents, either on the questionnaire, or in the more detailed interviews. What is suggested rather, is that the group has its own concerns, which are more immediate and involve the manipulation of meaning and composition of Chinatown in terms of who it belongs to and what its connection to Chineseness is. When physical and economic growth are mentioned, it is almost exclusively in a positive fashion. That is, Chinatown has grown and developed over the last 10 to 20 years, rather than having been threatened with complete extinction.

The Material and the Symbolic - Operationalization

Since it is the objective of this report to argue that the material, or structural approach to ethnic relations in Canada

is an incomplete one, it is necessary to apply these terms to this research. That is, it must be clear what is meant by the symbolic realm, and what by the material realm.

The Material

The material, or what I have called the objective, the physical, at times the structural includes those quantifiable, identifiable facets of ethnicity and community. These include language spoken, religion practised, nation of origin, etc. More pointedly, when discussing Chinatown, the material applies to the physical structures, the objective characteristics, the institutions of Chinatown. When a respondent describes Chinatown by delimiting its physical boundaries then, this response is said to belong to the realm of the material. The operationalized **material** has its conceptual corollary in the sign. That is, the material pertains to a tangible thing, and stands for nothing other than that which it is. The symbolic by contrast, pertains to the realm of those things which represent something other than that which they are, or appear to be.

The Symbolic

The realm of the symbolic in this context is said to be embraced when the respondent identifies traits of Chinatown

which are not tangible, physical 'facts.' That is, when a respondent describes Chinatown by enumerating what, for that individual, Chinatown represents, the response is said to be evidence of symbolic construction of Chinatown.

The two realms contrasted here are not mutually exclusive. It is entirely possible, if not inevitable that the respondents cross the somewhat artificial boundaries I have constructed in their descriptions and discussions of Chinatown. Chinatown IS a physical structure (material). Chinatown is also "a safeguard against the onslaught to our culture" (symbolic). While these two examples are easily distinguishable when taken separately, they are often offered, in varying form, as part of the same answer. It is however, the intention of this report to illuminate the symbolic, the area most often overlooked by Canadian ethnic relations scholars. For this reason, as well as my contention that the two realms are not mutually exclusive, I will not weigh one against the other. I will, by contrast, simply raise questions about the primacy of structural approaches to ethnicity by illustrating the common occurrence of responses to questions about Chinatown which I contend fall outside of the quantifiable, identifiable, material sphere.

Describing Chinatown - Varying Interpretations

The first question which deals with the way the respondents view Chinatown asked them how often they go to Chinatown, and in the interviews, why they do so. As mentioned in the previous section, most of the respondents go to Chinatown at the very least once per month. The reasons given for going to Chinatown can be divided into two broad categories: functional and symbolic. Those categorized as functional answered that they went to Chinatown to do something concrete and pertaining to the realm of the material. They include reasons such as going to Chinatown to do business or to shop. Those categorized as symbolic include going to Chinatown to meet with friends, or,

"I am involved with the Bhuddist temple being built, getting it off the ground. I go every weekend, to see friends, you know, just to be there." (I-4).²

The answers to this first question provide the first clues as to what Chinatown means to members of the Chinese community. The next question, asking the respondents to describe Chinatown is even more pointed. The answers to this question are divided into the same two broad categories, but these are

². In this section, responses in quotation marks are followed by notation regarding whether they are taken from a questionnaire or an interview and the number assigned to each. i.e. (Q-3) refers to Questionnaire number 3 while (I-8) refers to Interview number 8.

further subdivided. Those answers categorized as giving a functional description of Chinatown are divided into economically functional and culturally functional.

Economically functional describes those responses which describe Chinatown as a place to shop. Culturally functional covers those responses which specify that Chinatown is a place to buy Chinese products, to shop in an area where the majority of shop owners and patrons alike are from similar cultural backgrounds:

"Chinatown is an area where Chinese can meet/buy using their own language without getting into problems communicating." (Q-1).

Of those responses categorized as economically functional, not a single one is exclusively so. That is, those respondents who said that Chinatown is a place to shop also added responses which are otherwise categorized.

The other broad category, symbolic, is also subdivided. While some respondents use aesthetic descriptors of Chinatown,

"quaint, comfortable, and generally tranquil and nice to visit." (Q-6);

"more modern" (Q-7),

others define Chinatown on cultural terms,

"Chinatown is the only place that provides Chinese products and it gives a sense of familiarity to both Chinese-Canadians and Chinese born in the orient." (Q-3),

or more explicitly,

"(Chinatown is)...a little isolated community which is representative of my culture - a bastion against Western culture - a way of standing up against the onslaught against our culture." (I-1).

Nearly all of the respondents to both the questionnaires and the interviews give some descriptors of this type.

A small number of other responses, still categorized as cultural symbolic descriptions, define Chinatown in cultural terms, but less of cultural similarity than of difference and diversity,

"Chinatown is a melting pot of many cultures." (Q-8).

"It's a place where people from many backgrounds meet." (I-10);

Multi-cultured - a melting pot effect consisting of different Asian languages and backgrounds." (Q-9).

More pointedly, one respondent commented,

"To me Chinatown is called Vietnamese Town." (Q-13)

The most common category of responses to this question then, are what I have called cultural symbolic descriptors. That is, not one person gave a physical description of the territory. This might have been expected if the geographic space was the crucial definer of Chinatown as has been suggested. The community thinks of Chinatown as a place to meet, buy ethnic food and other products, and in some cases, as a area where people of Chinese origins are protected from Western culture, a place where they feel a sense of familiarity.

The most important thing to note in the context of this report is the range and diversity of responses received. If, as Chan suggested, the urban renewal threatened the continued existence of Chinatown and by extension, the Chinese community, it is more likely that the responses would enumerate the physical qualities and size of Chinatown. As it is, the responses tend to provide support for the argument of Anthony Cohen, that individuals construct community symbolically. This is able to account for the strength of descriptors which I have called symbolic as well as for the sheer diversity of responses. This position is further supported by answers to the remaining questions on Chinatown.

Chinatown and the Chinese Community - An Obvious Relationship

As mentioned earlier, only those who were interviewed were asked to comment on the relationship between the community and Chinatown. Uniformly, this was regarded by the respondents as an obvious question. Indeed, one respondent asked,

"Well, what do you think? Of course there's a relationship."
(I-10).

There were no answers to this question which were categorized other than symbolic. Each of the nine responses categorized (the tenth, quoted above, was not elaborated on and thus not

included in the analysis of this question), were symbolic. That is, responses included:

"(Chinatown) gives the people in the community something which is similar to where they used to call home." (I-9);

"Especially for kids. When I was young, we used to go to Scouts in Chinatown. It was alot of fun...Everyone goes there to get together and find out what's going on." (I-2);

"(Chinatown is) very important. It's a place to go to keep the culture." (I-4);

"A Chinese person without a Chinatown is kinda lost. It reaffirms the culture, the attachment to the culture." (I-1).

The relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community then, is constructed symbolically. Chinatown helps give members of the community a sense of familiarity, maintain and reaffirm their attachment to the culture, etc. Chinatown stands for cultural continuity, for the next generation, for sociability, for the reaffirmation of identity...

Personal Importance of Chinatown

The final question asked exclusively during the interviews deals with how important respondents feel Chinatown is to them personally. Two categories emerge here. Interestingly, many of the same people who had earlier lauded Chinatown and its role in the community, who said they visited the area frequently, also said that Chinatown wasn't really important to them as individuals:

"No, I wouldn't really miss it if it wasn't there. My girlfriend is really involved, so I go mostly every weekend with her." (I-2).

The individuals who claimed that Chinatown was of personal significance once again, did so on symbolic terms:

"Chinatown, even though it isn't huge, has everything. I don't know when I would see all my friends if I didn't go to Chinatown every weekend!" (I-8);

"You can't understand. For you, Chinatown is shopping and eating, for me, I enter a culture, a new way of thinking. It reaffirms my culture. It's a pick me up." (I-1).

Once again, Chinatown is painted in symbolic terms by the respondents. When describing why Chinatown is important to them, they cite culture and community as the main reasons.

Standing up to Comparison

This is the first question asked where the responses do not clearly lean toward the symbolic construction of Chinatown. That is, almost across the board, the small size of Chinatown in Montreal is mentioned. The symbolic dimension was not absent though. A few people only mentioned the size, and compared that to other Chinatowns they had visited in New York, Toronto, Vancouver, and San Francisco. One respondent noted that though Montreal's Chinatown is smaller than these,

"it is still larger than Ottawa's or Halifax's" ((Q-9).

The fact that Montreal's is cleaner was mentioned almost as often as its smaller size. Adding to the structural dimension, several respondents added that given the size of the oriental population in Montreal, Chinatown seemed even smaller. Not to lose out though, many respondents described Chinatown not only as cleaner, but more symbolically,

"It is politically calmer. Different communities survive quite well together." (Q-12);

"There have been more problems with crime in other Chinatowns, so maybe good it's good that ours is so small." (1-5).

In sum, both the symbolic and the material categories of responses are present, but material descriptors are more frequent. With the exception of a very few however, the smallness of Montreal's Chinatown is not seen as either negative or positive, just there. Chinatown in Montreal is small compared to others, and to overlook this fact would be to be completely blind to reality.

What Urban Renewal?

The final two questions foreground the period of urban renewal discussed earlier and thus allow a glimpse of how a part of the Chinese community which participates in Chinatown is dealing with and has dealt with the transitional crisis referred to earlier. The two questions allow a consideration of the perception of the physical destruction of many

buildings in Chinatown in the 1970s, and how this has changed since Chan's research in 1986. Moreover, while Chan suggested that this urban development had resulted in throwing the community into crisis, the tendencies identified through this preliminary research suggest that those who responded to my questionnaires and interviews have rather selectively remembered the destruction and may well have thus resolved much of the crisis, if indeed, such a crisis existed at the level of community.

The period of urban renewal which so worried Chan, is constructed by my respondents as a period of internal growth. What is not known is whether this represents an overcoming of the crisis by reconstructing the period, or a more radical ignorance of the destruction suffered in Chinatown. What ever the reason, Chinatown is (re)constructed by the respondents in such a way as to foreground the internal (both economic and geographic) development of Chinatown which began at the end of the 1980s and continues today (cf. Chuenyan-Lai, 1988: 154).

It is interesting to note that neither of Chan's discussions of development in Chinatown (1986; 1991) contain any mention this internal development, which includes the return of the Chinese hospital to Chinatown, the construction of a Chinese Catholic Community Centre; a Bhuddist Temple; a 2.3 million dollar Cultural Centre as well as several private sector

developments. It is clear in this research project that these developments are on the mind of the Chinese community when asked about the changes in Chinatown over the last two decades.

The future suggested for Chinatown by Chan and in several newspaper articles and editorials in the early and mid 1980s was bleak at best. It appears either that optimism has begun to replace this earlier feeling of doom in the community, or that the feelings of doom were confined to the official Chinese community.

The responses to the both of the questions concerning changes in Chinatown over the last 10-20 years and those likely in the next 10-20 years can be divided into 3 categories: Change in terms of ethnic composition; change in terms of economic development; and little or no change. Only one person claimed that Chinatown had not changed much, and did not elaborate further. In terms of future development, only two respondents to the questionnaire and one from the interviews foresee little change, and one portends that Chinatown will not exist,

"if we let everyone buy\sell out land." (Q-18).

The answers which claimed that the ethnic composition of

Chinatown had changed can be divided into 3 types of claims. Firstly, a handful of respondents mentioned the increased presence of non-Chinese (White) visitors, or tourists to Chinatown. Secondly, several respondents commented on the increasing diversity of Chinese-Canadians who frequent Chinatown, saying variously that Chinatown had become more multicultural, that there was a greater presence of Asians from different backgrounds. Thirdly, nearly half of those who responded to the question remarked on the increased presence of Vietnamese-Chinese. Comments on the increased presence of Vietnamese people in Chinatown ranged from casual mention to more hostile reaction,

"Vietnamese are taking over Chinatown." (Q-1).

In terms of how the respondents see Chinatown in the future, the changing ethnic composition of Chinatown is again mentioned. Respondents foresee an increased presence of Asians of different backgrounds,

"a melting pot effect."

All but one of the several who comment on this mention a perceived threat to Chinatown by the increasing presence of Vietnamese, saying variously that Chinatown will be Vietnamtown, that Chinese of Vietnamese descent will take over

most of Chinatown.

The final main category of responses speaks directly to the issue of urban development. An ever-present tendency of those who responded remarked on expansion, development, modernization, and growth of Chinatown:

"more upgraded...new buildings expanding to other streets" (Q-10);

"many new buildings and renovations" (Q-15);

"it has grown alot" (Q-19);

"more variety in Chinatown" (Q-9);

"It has expanded alot. There are new language schools and grocery stores all over Montreal, and even though they are not in Chinatown, they are still sort of a part of it." (I-6).

In short, while the question aimed to foreground the urban renewal which up until a few short years ago appeared to threaten the very existence of Chinatown in Montreal, the responses suggest that a selective view of development in Chinatown is operating, that the only development mentioned is the internal development which has taken place in the last 7 or 8 years. Not one of the respondents mentioned the urban renewal which had destroyed among other things, two Chinese churches, a school, several stores, and about 20 dwellings (Chan, 1986:70). And this, even when prompted in the interviews, was not viewed with much disdain, and certainly made no mention of crisis. In fact, mentions of the renewal

were usually followed with examples of internal development:

"Oh, ya, obviously those buildings limit the growth of Chinatown. There's Hydro-Québec and Complexe Desjardins, and the hospital and Place Ville Marie, Highway 20 and the Congrès Place and Guy Favreau so there won't be any growth. At least not in a physical sense, but look at all the stuff being built inside. The Holiday Inn, the community centre, new restaurants..." (I-1).

Thus, even though the respondents are knowledgeable as to which buildings limit the growth of Chinatown, they certainly do not appear to be in crisis. Even when asked specifically about the period during which the physical boundaries of Chinatown were encroached upon and redefined by outside forces, the respondents managed to site growth as the primary activity during this period.

The Future of Chinatown

The responses which suggest further development for Chinatown in the future can be subdivided into two groups: unqualified growth and qualified growth. Those who foreshadow unqualified growth comment that Chinatown will

"continue to grow" (Q-19);

"will be larger" (Q-5),

or will contain more modern buildings. Some respondents also

anticipate further investment on the part of Hong Kong immigrants.

The responses categorized as prophesizing qualified growth represent the first unsolicited mention of the urban renewal and restrictions of the geographic expansion of Chinatown. In conjunction with hopeful mention of further growth, several respondents pointed out that this may be difficult

"since it is not allowed to expand beyond certain zones." (Q-15).

Others suggested that government subsidies would help ensure that Chinatown flourishes in the future. Of the few who mentioned the restrictions, most added that what remained of Chinatown would be modernized and upgraded.

The biggest concern over changes in Chinatown in Montreal in the recent past and immediate future which emerges from this research is concern over the increased, and increasing presence of Vietnamese. Indeed, the tone of many of the responses which cited this suggests that if the Chinese community feels threatened, it feels pressure from the ethnic diversification of Chinatown, and no longer, it would appear, from the possibility that in a few years the physical destruction of Chinatown will be complete.

Overall, in terms of the economic development of Chinatown, the picture which emerges from the answers to these two questions is a hopeful and positive one. Not only is the urban renewal which a few short years ago threatened the very existence of Chinatown not mentioned when respondents were asked about changes over the last 10-20 years, but when it is, in conjunction with the future development of the area, it is couched by the belief that Chinatown will survive and continue to develop within its restrictive geographic boundaries.

This might be constructed as proof that the urban renewal in Montreal's Chinatown was never a threat to the community since less than a decade later, the renewal appears to be forgotten. This however is not what I propose. Firstly, several community organizations in Chinatown have been involved in lobbying the municipal government to amend the bylaw which prohibits commercial expansion of Chinatown as well as in the projects aimed at modernization and development within the existing physical boundaries of Chinatown (Chuenyan-Lai, 1988:152-154). Concern for the physical development of Chinatown has not disappeared then, but is being carried out by several community organizations. It remains unclear whether it is only the official or limited liability community which was ever concerned with the development of Chinatown, or whether the community has simply reconstructed Chinatown in a way which has allowed them to overcome the crisis. What

emerges from the responses, in either case, is the community's symbolic construction of Chinatown. From the descriptions of Chinatown to the projections for its future, the respondents agree neither with each other, nor with the general trend exemplified by Chan in his prediction of doom. This may be not so much because Chan was in error, but more because his analysis went on from an incomplete and effete approach to ethnic relations. In the concluding chapter, I will summarize the findings of this project and point out questions which have been raised.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion - The Symbolic Construction of Chinatown

The objective of this project has been to analyze how the Chinese community in Montreal has dealt with the urban renewal which encroached upon the boundaries of Chinatown in the 1970s and 1980s. The goal of the analysis is twofold. Firstly, I attempted to analyze the claim made by Kwok Chan that the urban renewal threw the entire Chinese community into a transitional crisis (Chan, 1986) by threatening its continued existence. In order to do this, I felt it necessary to challenge existing theoretical paradigms in Canadian ethnic relations scholarship. It was and remains my contention that by continuing to uphold structural approaches to ethnicity, epitomized by Raymond Breton's concept of **institutional completeness**, Canadian ethnic relations studies have been in something of a theoretical vacuum. By embracing a more dynamic and responsive approach to ethnicity and community, it is possible to see that even in the face of enormous structural adversity, communities, particularly ethnic communities can adapt to change, redefine their boundaries, and survive. And this, I have argued is largely due to the fact that communities are constructed symbolically.

Chinatown is viewed in this text as a symbol. A strong, historical symbol subject to varying interpretation by individual members of the Chinese community. Moving away from

the structural approach to Chinatown embraced by Chan's analysis, it is not so surprising that the respondents to my questionnaire and interview seemed to have moved beyond the phase of urban renewal and the crisis described by Chan. From the description of Chinatown to the concerns for the future, members of the Chinese community encountered in the course of this research appear to be involved in the constant manipulation of Chinatown as a symbol. A symbol which they will continue to define because, in the words of Anthony Cohen, "community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic 'fact'." (Cohen, 1985: 98). The Chinese community continues to struggle with the definition of one of their central symbols, but it would appear that they have moved beyond the crisis of urban renewal and are now more concerned with issues such as ownership and control of Chinatown as they deal with the more contemporary issue of the influx of Indochinese immigrants.

For reasons identified earlier, Chinatown, and Chinatowns more generally, have a firm and meaningful history. While it has never been of pressing concern, other researchers have often, albeit implicitly, suggested that Chinatown is symbolically constructed by Chinese community members (Hyung-Chan and Lai, 1982; Chan, 1986).

The members of the Chinese community in Montreal I spoke to, continue to be concerned for the future of Chinatown, although the more recent concern is posed in terms of ethnicity and not territoriality. Cohen claims that, "people assert community, whether in the form of ethnicity or of locality, when they recognize in it the most adequate medium for the expression of their whole selves," (Cohen, 1985: 107). The physical future of Chinatown appears for the time being, secure. Chinatown is small, minuscule even, but the Chinese community has reaffirmed its status as a central symbol of their identity by continuing to symbolically reconstruct it in a dynamic and responsive way, by moving beyond the renewal of the recent past and the new buildings earlier referred to as "giant tombstones over Chinatown" (Peritz, 1981: 8) and appears to be emphasizing a new potential threat to Chinatown perceived in the presence of Chinese of Vietnamese origins. And this, to be sure will not likely be the final test to the survival of the Chinese community.

I hope to have shown with this project, that the processes involved in the maintenance of community and the survival of ethnic groups is much more complex than the paradigm of institutional completeness so faithfully embraced by Canadian ethnic scholars has suggested. Only by recognising the very changing and adaptive nature of community can we hope to understand the processes involved in boundary maintenance and

community survival.

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Appendix A - Interview Schedule

Section A - Demographic

- 1) Age
- 2) Sex
- 3) Occupation
- 4) Place of birth
- 5) (period of family's immigration)
- 6) Area of residence
- 7) Mother Tongue
- 8) Home Language
- 9) Religious Affiliation

Section B - Chinese Community Participation

- 1) Do you participate in the Chinese community? How (voluntary associations, contacts with Chinese/non-Chinese, etc.)
- 2) How would you characterize your ethnic identity?
- 3) How often do you go to Chinatown? Why?

Section C - Chinatown

- 1) Can you describe Chinatown to me?
- 2) Is there a relationship between Chinatown and the Chinese community?
What is the nature of this relationship?
- 3) Is Chinatown important to you personally?

4) How would you say Montreal's Chinatown compares to other Chinatowns in North America?

5) Has Chinatown changed much over the last 10-20 years?
How?

7) Can you tell me what you think Chinatown will look like in 10-20 years?

Appendix B - Questionnaire*

Section A - Background questions

- 1) Age
- 2) Sex
- 3) Occupation
- 4) Place of Birth?
- 5) Period of family's immigration to Canada?
- 6) If you live in Montreal, in which district?
- 7) First language learned in childhood?
- 8) Language which you use most at home?
- 9) Religious affiliation

Section B - Ethnic Identity & Participation

- 1) Which of the following best characterizes your ethnic identity?
a) Chinese b) Chinese-Canadian c) Canadian d) Canadian-Chinese e) other
- 2) Are you a member of any Chinese organizations (Church, groups, etc.)?
If yes, how many? a) 1-5 b) 5-10 c) 10 or more
- 3) What proportion of your friends would you say are of Chinese origin?
a) none b) not many c) some d) most e) all
- 4) Besides personal friends, what percentage of your daily contacts (at work, leisure) are with other people of Chinese origins?
a) 0-25% b) 25-50% c) 50-75% d) 75-100%

- 5) How often would you say you go to Chinatown in Montreal?
- a) 2-3 times per week b) 1 time per week c) 2-3 times per month d) 1 time per month e) 2-3 times per year f) less than once per year.

Section C - Chinatown in Montreal

- 1) In a sentence or two, please describe Chinatown.
- 2) How would you say Chinatown in Montreal compares to other Chinatowns in North America?
- 3) Has Chinatown in Montreal changed much over the last 10-20 years? If so, how?
- 4) What do you think Chinatown in Montreal will look like in 10 or 20 years from now?

* I have deleted from this Appendix: the introduction ensuring confidentiality and explaining the nature of the research, a question which asked for a telephone number if the respondent agreed to a follow-up interview, as well as blank spaces intended for responses to open-ended questions.

Note also that the demographic questions originally appeared at the end of the questionnaire, they have been placed at the beginning here in order to simplify discussion in accordance with the interview schedule.