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Interrupting the "Model Minority" Narrative: The Voices of Vietnamese Canadian Youth

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the impact of the model minority narrative on the educational and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth located in two cities in Ontario, Canada. Critical Race Theory was employed as the main framework in understanding and analyzing these students' experiences. The study draws on data from semi-structured individual interviews with 15 Vietnamese Canadian high school students. Given the unique demographics of the students, the themes that emerged from this study support the notion that Vietnamese Canadian youth are not a homogeneous group. Their range of academic abilities, achievements, and aspirations are broad. Their stories and experiences are diverse and defy the "model minority" narrative. Based on the findings, the "model minority" stereotype is still in existence and the way in which it shapes the educational and social experiences of these students is complex. The data was divided into six overarching themes. The themes raise important questions about issues of race and racism in educational settings and on racialized students' educational and social experiences in school.

Keywords

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Dedication

For my children.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background, and Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

The first chapter introduces the reader to the background and context of my study including the research problem, rationale for this research, research questions and origins of the "model minority" stereotype. I also present the history of Vietnamese Canadians and make the case for focusing on Vietnamese youth in my study. Later in the chapter, I outline the theoretical frameworks that inform my study and conclude with a summary of the key points.

Background

Research Problem

My dissertation is concerned with the "continuing significance and changing meaning of race" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 3) and the impact it has on the experiences of second-generation[1] Vietnamese Canadian youth in high school, specifically looking at their experiences with and negotiations of the "model minority" stereotype.

Rationale

What is the Model Minority Stereotype?

The term "model minority" was first coined in 1966 by William Petersen, a sociologist in the United States, in a *New York Times Magazine* article (Osajima, 2005). He praised Japanese Americans for their success and achievements and suggested that other racial groups should follow the example set by Japanese Americans (Kwon & Au, 2010; Min, 2003; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007; Lew, 2011). William Petersen and other proponents of the model minority narrative proposed that Japanese culture, family values and a strong work ethic enabled Japanese Americans to overcome racial discrimination,

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[1] Second-generation refers to students who were born in Canada but their parent(s) immigrated to Canada.

and do well in school (Osajima, 2005, p. 216), unlike other racialized groups (Min, 2003; Ng et al., 2007). The assumptions were that Japanese Americans had achieved the American dream and had successfully assimilated themselves into American society. Many scholars have argued that this portrayal of Japanese Americans as a successful minority group served a strategic political need during the civil rights movement to silence other racialized groups (Omi & Winant, 2005; Min, 2003; Ng et al., 2007). At a time when Japanese Americans were heralded as model minorities in the United States, other racialized groups were participating in civil unrest and mass political protests (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Osajima, 2005). While the model minority stereotype originated in the United States and was prolific[2] in the mid 1960s and 1980s (Osajima, 2005), it is a narrative that is still in existence today and is indiscriminately applied to not just Japanese populations but to other Asian ethnic groups, in the United States, Canada and elsewhere, despite critiques and backlashes to it (Bradbury, 2013; Cui, 2016; Gillborn, 2008; Gilmour, Bhandar, Heer, & Ma, 2012; Ho, 2014, 2015; Ngo, 2006; Pon, 2000a, 2000b; Um, 2003).

Today, the model minority stereotype is used to pit Asians against other racialized groups, both implicitly and explicitly (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Chatterjee, Mucina, & Tam, 2012; Lee, 2006; Ng et al., 2007; Pon, 2000b). It is a situation where Asians are simultaneously upheld as an example for other racialized groups as evidence that attaining "success" is possible; a group to be admired and emulated by others and yet they are still viewed as always "foreign" (Chatterjee et al., 2012; Ng et al., 2007; Omi & Winant, 1994). The danger of the model minority stereotype, Stacey Lee (1996) describes, is that it is used as a hegemonic device by the White dominant group to denigrate other racial minorities and to reinforce the status quo (Min, 2003; Ng et al., 2007). Michael Omi and Dana Takagi (1996) similarly and distinctly assert that stereotypical assumptions about Asians as a model minority is a "strategic use of race to

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[2] 'Asians', as a group, are generally heralded as "model minorities" in media, policy, popular culture, and in mainstream discourses. Lee (2006) argues, while numerous stereotypes have persisted over time, it is the model minority that is the most impactful of the stereotypes associated with Asians. Please see Min (2003), Lowe (1996) and Pang, Kiang & Pak (2003).

deflect the issue of race" where "attention has been distracted from the hegemonic position of Whites on the playing field" (p. 157). Essentially, the model minority narrative has been used to sideline racial privilege and to promote the ideas of meritocracy, individual merit, social justice, and a "colorblind" society (Omi & Takagi, 1996, p. 158). The model minority stereotype serves to desensitize the public about the deep and troubling history of race relations in the United States (Lee, 1996) and in Canada (Ho, 2015; Pon, 2000a, 2000b) and as a result, schools and educators become implicated in this process.

David Gillborn (2008) argues that the model minority image is a transient one and does not necessarily tell us anything about Asians per se. Rather, the model minority may tell us more about how the dominant group influences the unequal process of schooling. He states, the model minority image is, without difficulty, "manufactured and disposable[3]; created, mistreated, and abandoned, when it no longer serves the interests of the status quo" (p. 146). Specifically, it is a discourse evoked by the dominant group whenever the question of racism is raised in education (Gillborn, 2008).

Gillborn (2008) maintains that the education system deploys the model minority narrative, to "hide a system of racial exclusion and White oppression where the most consistent beneficiaries are White people" (p. 161). He elaborates that any evidence of minority success is purposely situated to reinforce two kinds of beliefs: meritocracy and individualism. The model minority stereotype is "used to disprove the charge of racism against any and all minoritized groups; and it is also insidiously used to make comparisons between groups so that "underachieving" groups "are cast as deficient and even dangerous" (p. 152). He goes on to argue,

It does not matter *who* provides the model so long as there is *a* model to point to. So far as popular and political discourses of education and meritocracy are

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[3] Gillborn (2008) focuses on the construction and deployment of the "model minority" stereotype, rather than on the groups themselves (i.e., Indian and Chinese students in the United Kingdom); how this popular image enables the education system to sustain its claim to fairness and impartiality, and to reject accusations of racism.

concerned, the existence of high-performing minoritized groups is a significant advantage but the position of the particular groups themselves may not be as secure as is often supposed. (p. 157)

Lee (2006) explains that Asians have not always and equally been portrayed as model minorities. Asians in North America have and also continue to be portrayed and perceived as (perpetual) foreigners, evil, gangsters, exotic, untrustworthy, and in a myriad of negative ways (Kawai, 2005; Hartlep, 2013; Pon, 2000b). These stereotypes circulate in popular culture and inform everyday interactions and expectations. However, the prominent and contemporary stereotype of Asians is the model minority (Hartlep, 2013). For Lee (1996),

The model minority stereotype is dangerous because it tells Asian Americans and other minorities how to behave. The stereotype is dangerous because it is used against other minority groups to silence claims of inequality. It is dangerous because it silences the experiences of Asian Americans who can/do not achieve model minority success. And finally, the stereotype is dangerous because some Asian Americans may use the stereotype to judge their self-worth. (p. 125)

The "model minority" stereotype thus leaves out and excludes Asians from discourses on race and inequality (Pon, 2000b). The presumption is that Asians do not face racism and have no problems as other racialized groups (Lee, 1996; Lei, 2006). It oversimplifies and overlooks their very different identities and experiences. The model minority stereotype masks any struggles and difficulties that Asian students experience in school. In particular, the model minority stereotype diverts attention from the experiences and needs of many different Asian communities, particularly Southeast Asian groups (e.g., Laotians, Hmong, Cambodians, and Vietnamese) (Lee, 1996, 2006, 2009).

Recognizing that the model minority stereotype is not an illusion, or an irregularity that we can transcend in political, popular and educational discourses today, is the basis of my decision to focus on and understand the ways in which the model minority stereotype is transformed, inhabited, destroyed, and resisted today (Omi & Winant, 2001) and the implications it has on Vietnamese students' academic and social

experiences in school. There is a need to understand how the model minority stereotype, is taken up, understood and experienced by these students. Furthermore, there is also a need to understand how these students are positioned in schools from their perspectives. For many students, schools are places where they encounter people of different racial backgrounds regularly, and often times, it is in schools that racialized students learn about their positioning in the racial order and how people of different racial and class backgrounds respond to them according to that positioning (Lei, 2006) but also how their positioning is complicated by class, gender, and sexuality (Kumashiro, 1999; McCarthy, 1990).

Context

Asians, like other racialized groups, are a diverse group and their experiences are varied and complex. The limitation of the term 'Asian'[4], as an all-encompassing or pan-ethnic category, is that it does not account for the hybridities and intersectionalities among Asians (Chatterjee et al., 2012; Espiritu, 1992; Lee, 2006; Lee, Park, & Wong, 2017; Lowe, 1996, 2005; Matthews, 2002b; Wu, 2002). The racial stereotype that labels Asians as model minorities is similarly but distinctly problematic. In the case of Asian Canadian students, popular culture, public opinion, policy, and aggregated data, combined, have at times been used, to construct these students as model minorities and to negate the vast differences among them (see Gilmour et al., 2012; Razack, 1995). These uncritical assumptions coupled with the belief that Asians, in general, have overcome inequality, are based on data and assessments of educational performance, high school attrition rates and enrollment in university (Lee, 2009). These types of data are not without their problems (see Poon & Hune, 2009; Poon, Squire, Kodama, Byrd, Chan,

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[4] The term 'Asian' (and certain other terms used in my dissertation including model minority) is/are enclosed in quotation marks to signify that it is a socially constructed term, one that is not based on biology or geography (e.g., birthplace). The term Asian is inherently problematic because it denotes homogeneity and disguises the variability and differences within and across different Asian ethnic groups. For the remainder of my dissertation, I will omit the quotation marks when using Asian, but the note remains. For further discussion about the term and panethnic label, Asian, please see Espiritu (1992) and Kibria (1998). The usage of the term Asian in my research does not refer to essential, homogenous, pre-given, identities and realities. Nor does it refer to birthplace or a distinct geographical location. I realize that, Asian can be a problematic category because it "operates to erase and homogenize differences" (Matthews, 2002b, p. 210).

Manzano, Furr, & Bishundat, 2015). These types of measures and assertions are problematic, yet, they are frequently cited in educational, political and everyday discourses (Ho, 2015; Lee, 2009; Tran & Birman, 2010).

In terms of academic achievement and performance, researchers have highlighted significant disparities among and within different Asian ethnic groups, particularly Southeast Asian groups in the United States and in Canada, showing that many of them do not do well or achieve success in school, equally or similarly, as presumed (Lee, 2006, 2009; Lee et al., 2017; Li, 2009; Maclear, 1994; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Siu, 1996; Um, 2003; Uy, 2018; Van Do, 2002; Verma, 2008; Xiong & Joubert, 2012; Yang, 2004). Furthermore, the achievement and performance measures do not take into account the impact of racism and other issues of inequality on these students' lives (Pon, 2000b; Poon et al., 2015) and have been used to justify the withdrawal of support for these students in schools (Um, 2003; Xiong & Joubert, 2012). Such measures, some argue, are limited and do not tell us whether these students have achieved success beyond formal schooling (in terms of employment, social mobility, and so forth) and/or whether they have actually overcome prejudice and discrimination (Gillborn, 2008; Lew, 2004, 2005; Matthews, 2002a, 2002b; Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007). Within education, most educators and policymakers assume that students of Asian ancestry are model minorities; have similar experiences; and/or share the same 'cultures' (Lee, 1996, 2009). By uncritically accepting these ideas, policymakers and educators ignore the varied needs and differences among Asian students (Lee, 2006; Lowe, 2005).

Much of the literature in the United States and in Canada on Asian and Vietnamese youth has focused on, what Cameron McCarthy (1988) identifies as "the issue of the educability of minorities" (p. 267). Put another way, 'underachievement'/achievement and inequities experienced by minoritized groups are explained and understood as being a result of their cultural and cognitive capacities. For example, McCarthy (1990) has found that mainstream explanations of Black 'underachievement' have tended to blame the group themselves for their 'underachievement'. In these instances, cognitive capacities, child-rearing practices, family structures and linguistic styles are often claimed as possible reasons for their

'underachievement' (p. 4). While genetic explanations of academic success and achievement among Asian students, which include Vietnamese students, have generally been rejected, cultural explanations have received much wider acceptance among educators and researchers (Lei, 2006; Lee, 2006).

Critiquing the troubling pattern in educational research on Asian students, Jennifer Ng, Sharon Lee, and Yoon Pak (2007) and Joy Lei (2006) among others have found, all too often cultural explanations are offered to explain the academic success and achievement of Asian students. This discourse is perpetuated by research that argues that despite barriers to academic success, Asian cultural values (i.e., Confucianism), beliefs and practices are responsible for Asian students' academic achievements and failures (Bankston, Caldas, & Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008; Lew, 2005). Whether researchers or educators take a cultural deficit or multiculturalism approach to understanding minoritized students' experiences in school – the students' culture is usually seen as an impediment to teaching and learning (Lei, 2006; McCarthy, 1988, 1990). Culture, from this perspective, is fixed and presumed to be the property of particular groups and transmitted from generation to generation. The assumption is that the source of difference is located in the students' culture, which leads to an effort being placed on understanding the students' culture. If a student is "failing", the insinuation is that there must be something wrong with 'their' culture.

Unfortunately, much of the literature subscribes to this deficit way of thinking about the academic performance of Asian students (Ngo, 2006). Furthermore, the demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' culture is detrimental because it deflects attention away from systemic factors that contribute to inequalities these students experience in schools (Ngo, 2006). In terms of Vietnamese youth, researchers in Canada and the United States have generally focused on the histories and socio-cultural adaptations, integration, and acculturative stress (such as language and cultural differences, retention (and loss), community forces, family relations) (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Van Do, 2002) of Vietnamese communities to understand and explain Vietnamese youth's achievement and performance in school (Li, 2009). The complexities associated with Vietnamese youth's experiences in schools, for example, are explained in terms of citing a cultural

essentialism (Minh-ha, 1989), which leads, as McCarthy (1988) points out, to adopting an explanatory "blame the victim" framework (p. 267).

The focus and emphasis on culture leaves systemic inequalities and relations of power unexamined. Such emphasis on culture reflects the limited inclusion of Asians in mainstream research and discussions regarding the racialization of American and Canadian society and education (Lowe, 2005; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Ng et al., 2007; Omi & Winant, 2005; Omi & Tagaki, 1996; Pon, 2000a, 2000b; Razack, 1995). Not considering these youth as racial and complex beings is problematic and harmful because their issues are seen solely through a lens of "cultural difference" or multiculturalism framework (Sleeter & Grant, 2008). This framework suggests that their problems can be resolved by their assimilation into the dominant American or Canadian culture (Lei, 2006). This is not to say that knowledge of students' 'cultures' and home environment is not important to understanding their schooling experiences and academic performance and achievement. However, the continued emphasis in educational research that presumes and highlights the academic achievement of Asian students, in general, is troubling (Ng et al., 2007).

While there may be more awareness of the students' home 'culture' and its relation to their achievements and performance in school, the understanding and responses to the racialized conditions of Asians remains superficial and simplistic (Ng et al., 2007). For Vietnamese students and other Asian ethnic groups alike, by solely focusing on these students' cultures (e.g., rigidly bounded set of values and linguistic and folkloric practices) and focusing on achievement and performance (particularly high-achieving students) limits and obscures the way researchers and educators understand these students' daily experiences in school, and inadvertently excludes their realities and experiences of racism. In my research, my focus is exploring how race, as an identity position, and its intersections with other identities and position (e.g., gender and class), impact how Vietnamese Canadian students construct, experience and talk about their racial identity and schooling experiences.

Why Vietnamese Youth?

Data on the Vietnamese community in Canada is often amalgamated under the category of Southeast Asian or Asian. Grouping different and often culturally or linguistically unique groups into broad racial categorizations (i.e., Asian, Southeast Asian) has often obscured the significant differences between and within very different racial ethnic groups and as a consequence their needs are not addressed in policy (Nunes, 2008)[5]. In this way, issues related to Vietnamese communities and youth are not highlighted, discussed nor brought to the attention of policymakers or educators. As well, there has not been a lot of attention paid to Vietnamese communities in Canada from the wider research and scholarly community (Ho, 2015; see Pon, Coloma, Kwak, & Huynh, 2017). For example, in conducting a review of the relevant literature and of Master theses and PhD dissertations written in the last two decades, only a handful of studies have been conducted specifically on Vietnamese communities in Canada.

To shed light on some general reports on the Vietnamese community, the Canadian Council on Learning (2009) found that when they examined schools facing the greatest external challenges, Vietnamese, Somali, and Portuguese students represented the highest proportions attending, what the report described as, 'highly challenged schools' in the Toronto District School Board area. According to Colin Lindsay (2007) in a report based on census data on the Vietnamese Community in Canada, Vietnamese students are disproportionately represented in the lowest income group alongside Somali and Tamil students; with the latter groups representing more recent arrivals in Canada. In another report, relating to satisfaction among different racial ethnic groups living in Canada, among the many different Asian ethnic groups living in Canada, Vietnamese report one of the lowest levels of life satisfaction (Derouin, 2004).

It is evident that there are issues impacting Vietnamese Canadian students, their families and communities which beg the need for further inquiry but are not being

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[5] Nunes' (2008) research is on the Portuguese communities in Canada, but suggests that Vietnamese communities, similar to Portuguese, are not adequately addressed and do not garner a lot of attention in policy and research.

addressed in research and policy. However, it should be stated here, that my intention is not to conjure up or suggest there is an "authentic" or universal Vietnamese identity and experience, or to find and distill an essence of being Vietnamese or Vietnamese Canadian (Minh-ha, 1989; Hall, 1990, 1996). Rather, the emphasis should be and is on how Vietnamese Canadian youth are positioned and how they position themselves, as a result of, and based on historical, social, cultural and economic changes and relations. For McCarthy (1990), "essentialist and reductionist thinking, that has predominantly informed current writings and analyses on race and gender in education have relied heavily on single-cause explanations, and in doing so have hindered a dynamic understanding of race relations and race-based politics in education and society" (p. 52). The emphasis in understanding racial inequality, therefore, needs to also focus on the exploration of the political, cultural, and economic contexts in which racial groups encounter one another in schools and society (McCarthy, 1990). In other words, to understand how racial inequality operates in education requires an examination of institutional and social contexts (e.g., immigration policies) (see Pon et al., 2017). Attention to these contexts, I believe, can tell us about the ruptures and discontinuities in their experiences and identities and steer away from mainstream static and essentialist understandings of the experiences of different racial and cultural groups (Hall, 1995; Lowe, 2005).

Vietnamese Immigration

While my research study deals primarily with youth, many of whom are born in Canada, it is in the spirit of trying to understand their experiences, as being in constant transformation within discourses of history and culture (Hall, 1990), that I believe will be important in generating knowledge about the Vietnamese community in Canada. Furthermore, in order to understand the academic and social experiences of the Vietnamese youth in my study, it is important to inquire and take into account circumstances of resettlement and integration faced by their parent(s) and other family members. Hence, in this section, I provide a general historical overview of Vietnamese immigration in Canada. In Canada and similarly in the United States, pre-1975, refugee and immigrant waves of Asian ethnics were wealthier and had more years of education.

Each successive wave, however, brought poorer and less educated refugees and immigrants (Olsen, 1997; Richard & Dorais, 2003; Walker-Moffat, 1995). In Canada and elsewhere in the world, the vast majority of Vietnamese migrants came to Canada as refugees, or relatives of refugees, as family sponsored arrivals. Vietnamese refugees started arriving in Canada during the mid-seventies, just after the inception of Canada's official policy on multiculturalism (Dorais, 2000). Starting in 1975 and on, Vietnamese who arrived in Canada were identified as refugees. Government officials, resettlement workers, the media and general public commonly referred to them as "Vietnamese refugees," "Indochinese refugees," or "Vietnamese boat people." A majority of Vietnamese defined themselves as refugees but many rejected "Indochinese" as a stance against its colonial roots (Dorais, 2005). Today, most refugees from Vietnam and younger generations born in Canada have become Vietnamese Canadian or Canadians of Vietnamese ancestry (Dorais, 2005). There have been four major waves of Vietnamese immigration to Canada, the most well known being the flight of the "Boat People". For many, it was a precarious and traumatic journey out of Vietnam (Richard & Dorais, 2003).

Prior to 1975, there were 1500 Vietnamese living in Canada. This was in stark comparison to the much higher numbers of Vietnamese (and also Cambodian and Laotian) refugees who were admitted during and just after the wave described by some as the "boat people crisis" of the late 1970s (Beiser, 1999; Dorais, 2000). Between 1979 and 1982, approximately 60,000 individuals entered Canada, whose last country of residence had been Vietnam[6] (Dorais, 2000). Throughout the 1980s, the Canadian government encouraged family reunification which contributed to this high rate of admission. It started slowing down after 1990 and since 1995, less than 5000 Vietnamese a year have entered Canada (Dorais, 2000). Today 95% of Vietnamese Canadians reside in four Canadian provinces; Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, with the largest population in Toronto followed by Montreal (Lindsay, 2007).

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[6] Not all individuals leaving Vietnam during this time, identified as Vietnamese. For example, some individuals identified as Chinese, Cambodian and/or Laotian. Therefore, ethnicity does not automatically correlate with birthplace or nationality (Dorais, 2000).

Purpose of Study

Educators and policy makers in Canada and the United States have very little awareness of different Asian ethnic groups, and often rely on the racial stereotype of Asian students as model minorities (Coloma, 2012; Gilmour et al., 2012; Hartlep, 2013; Ho, 2014, 2015; Lee, 2009; Maclear, 1994; Razack, 1995). On the surface, aggregated data suggest that Asian students are a very successful group. Asian students generally have relatively high graduation rates, and they tend to score better on standardized tests than other racial minority groups (Kwon & Au, 2010). Therefore, aggregate measures regarding Asian students, that confirm the model minority image, prevent educators and policy makers from seriously exploring or addressing the specific needs and concerns of Asian students (Lee, 1996; 2009). As mentioned previously, not all Asian ethnic groups, particularly Southeast Asian groups, achieve model minority success, equally or predictably as presumed (Lee, 2006; 2009; Li, 2009; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007). According to Stacey Lee (2009) one of the major reasons supporting the exclusion of Asian students, generally, from dominant educational discourse and research in the United States is "the stereotype that Asians do not have any problems" (p. 5).

In Canada, there has been a dominant and similar view that Asian students are academically successful, which has positioned them outside of the discourse on antiracism education in Canada, as well as limited our understanding of their experiences (Pon, 2000b). In contrast to the attention and critical scholarship on the concept of the model minority in the United States, there has been a dearth of research and literature on the educational experiences of Asians in Canada, including resistance to the discourse and coalition-building, despite the omnipresence of the model minority discourse in Canada (Coloma, 2017, 2012; Goellnicht, 2013; Ho, 2014, 2015; Lee, 2007; Pon, 2000a, 2000b). According to Rob Ho (2015), the expansion of the model minority discourse into Canada from the United States through mass media, popular culture and social media has similarly essentialized and racialized Asian Canadians as also "being over-achieving, widely successful, and highly intelligent perpetual foreigners" (p. 129). Ho (2015) argues that Asians in Canada and the United States "are racially framed and stereotyped in parallel and similar ways that they are almost indistinguishable from each other in their

treatment by the dominant group" (p. 126). As a result, it has made it difficult to argue that Asian Canadians have unique sets of needs that require attention and change in public policy (Ho, 2015, p. 127). Moreover, a lack of disaggregated, ethnic-specific data collection about Asians in Canada has made it difficult to counter the model minority discourse in concrete and empirical ways. As a result, awareness and resistance to the model minority discourse through public discourse and research in Canada has been more muted and limited compared to the United States (Ho, 2015, p. 122). Additionally, acceptance of the model minority image predicated on academic achievement and performance data hinders and eschews further assessment of these Asian students' actual experiences at school and limits our understanding of the actual processes of schooling (Matthews, 2002a/b; McCarthy, 1990).

Often, Vietnamese Canadian (youth) are lumped into the broad category of Asian, and Southeast Asian in policy, research and education and overlooked in dominant educational discourses due to the prevalent view of Asians as model minorities (Maclear, 1994; Pon, 2000b). In my research, the importance of unpacking the heterogeneity and investigating the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth can disrupt the monolithic understanding of Asians as model minorities.

Research Questions

The aims of my research were two-fold: 1) to explore the diversity and complexity in educational experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth and; 2) to understand the ways in which they experience the model minority narrative, as it relates to their educational experiences in school[7].

My main research questions were: What are the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian students in high school? In what ways does the model minority

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[7] For my research, I use and emphasize the site of the school to explore it as a space where race is negotiated, but I share similar sentiments with Nadine Dolby (2001) who comments that formal schooling is increasingly marginalized and disconnected from students' lives (p. 9). From her seminal research of youth in post-apartheid South Africa, she posits that "to fully explore and understand students' engagement with race, it is necessary to look outside the school to factors both local and global" (Dolby, 2001, p. 9).

stereotype shape their views towards schooling, other students and their overall educational experiences?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will discuss how certain theories have, in Jean Anyon's (2009) words, allowed me to see particulars in my research as being "part of a larger, human struggle" and to steer it from being idiosyncratic and esoteric. In doing so, I engaged with theory in my research on a deeper level that went beyond recording, reporting and reaffirming beliefs to deeper levels of explanation. The theories I have drawn from have challenged me to explore and think (and re-think) (Anyon, 2009) 'race'[8], 'identity' and racial inequality in more complex ways. By doing so, the theories I have chosen have also helped me immensely in deepening my understanding of the research process and the political significance of my study (Anyon, 2009, p. 5).

Michelle Fine's (2009) epilogue in Anyon's book was similarly important in grounding my understanding of how to critically use and engage with theory (conceptually, methodologically, and epistemologically). Fine (2009) explains as researchers we should not just come to theory by picking it up and using it haphazardly. Rather, theory should be used critically and thoughtfully in research. The message is that there needs to be a deep and authentic engagement with theory. As Fine (2009) explains, "'the deliberate use of theory' is a process of working, that is deeply social, moral, open to reflection and committed to interrogating contradiction, difference and dissent" (p. 190). As Fine (2009) articulates, no theory is a complete, accurate reflection of the complex realities we study. Recognizing that there are limitations in theory itself, my decision to draw from different scholars who work within the traditions of Cultural Studies, Critical Race Theory and Feminist studies, was both necessary and purposefully

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[8] The term 'race' is enclosed in quotation marks to stress that it is a socially constructed identity position and not a natural or biological condition. I will not continue the use of the quotation marks because I do not consider 'race' to be any more or less a symbolic formation than other identity positions, such as class or gender (Hall, 1997).

motivated by the gap in the model minority and Vietnamese Canadian literature on race and racial inequality as it relates to Vietnamese Canadian youth.

Race, identity, and inequality

Race is a significant and central concept (but not the only social identity position pertinent) in my research. Stuart Hall (1997), Cameron McCarthy (1998, 2008, 2013), Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994, 2005, 2009) have helped me think about the complexity of race, racial identity and inequality. Hall's approach to thinking about race and racial identity is anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist as he complicates essentialized and commonsense notions of race. He vehemently insists that we need to understand race as a discursive system of meaning; as a floating signifier (Hall, 1997) because race has no fixed meaning (Hall, 1996). What Hall (1997) means by a floating signifier is that race is in a constant state of flux, of construction and transformation. There is nothing innate, fundamental or enduring to race. The meaning of race is socially, culturally and historically contingent.

Similar to Hall (1996), the conceptual significance of Omi and Winant's definition of race is that it recognizes the historical variability and temporality of race as an unstable ideological category. Also, in the spirit of arguing against essentialist and reductionist or single-cause explanations of the persistence of racial inequality in education, McCarthy (1998) argues we must look at racial affiliation and racial antagonism from "a plurality of vantage points" (p. xiii). McCarthy (1998) vehemently and eloquently argues throughout his book, *The Uses of Culture*, "to study race, identity, or culture, and to intervene in their fields of effects, one must be prepared to live with extraordinary complexity and variability of meaning" (p. 6) … as "highly decentred and decentering constructs" (p. 16). McCarthy (1998) firmly states, "race is never an absolute structuring force, but is instead one variable in an immensely rich and complex human environment. The struggle is always to understand racial dynamics in the light of other dynamic variables such as class, gender, nation, and sexual orientation" (p. xii). McCarthy (1990) posits that there is a need for a more relational and contextual approach to understanding racial differences in schooling. Such an approach, he argues would allow us to better understand the complex process of racialization in education and would

help us to explore more adequately the important links that exist between racial inequality and other dynamics-such as class and gender-operating in the school setting (p. 62).

For these scholars, "the effort must be made to understand race as an unstable and 'decentred' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 68). The emphasis is on how race is a social construct in which we all interact collectively to construct racial meanings and identities in everyday life. Race intersects with ethnicity, with culture and with histories therefore to categorize everyone as the same is to deny them of their differences, historicity, and lived experiences (Omi & Winant, 2005). By emphasizing the historicity of race, Omi and Winant, Hall, and McCarthy avoid the trap of essentialism. When discussing race, Omi & Winant (2001) acknowledge and point to the "...temptation to think of race as an *essence*, as something "fixed, concrete, and objective... on the other side of this is also an opposite temptation to imagine race as a mere *illusion*" (p. 405). Instead, Omi and Winant (1994) propose that we should think of race as an element of social structure rather than as an irregularity within it; we should see it as a dimension of human representation rather than as an illusion (p. 55).

Hall (1996) similarly suggests that race should really be regarded as narratives and representations; always working within discourses. These discourses are not just ideas but originate from stories, values, myths, ideas and stereotypes that tell us what physical difference means and which physical differences have significant meaning in our society. Hall explains that these discourses originate at particular points in history, are associated with particular strategies and investments, have real socio-economic and material consequences, and become the underlying assumptions that people make about racial groups in the world. For Omi and Winant (1994), "visual cues guide us to know "who a person is" and how the rules of "racial etiquette" determine "the presentation of self, distinctions of status, and appropriate modes of conduct" (p. 62). Stereotypes, then, function to affirm the classifications and categories that society has learned to be true or natural, about certain individuals or groups of human beings and organize individual and institutional behaviour. These ideas and classifications that are assigned to particular

groups and individuals then become normalized, fixed, naturalized, essentialized and believed to be true. Hall's (1996, 2002) focus on representation highlights how representation not only affects the understanding of ethnic minority groups within society, but also how ethnic minority groups perceive their own identities. According to Omi and Winant (1994), an obvious shortcoming with stereotypes lies in its reliance on essentialism and "its denial, or flattening, of differences within a particular racially defined group" (p. 72).

These points are significant to me in terms of understanding the ways in which the model minority discourse is deployed in education, and how Vietnamese Canadian youth construct, articulate and understand their racial and other social identities, as well as, their interactions and relations with others at school vis-à-vis the model minority stereotype. For Hall (1996, 2002) race is not a single, unitary, transhistorical character such that whenever and where it appears it always assumes autonomous and identical features. In thinking about race in this way, I challenge the temptation to revert to essentialism and the temptation to reduce racial identities to a single, fixed experience.

For Hall, the emphasis needs to be on understanding how such racial essentialism and categorization operates. Put another way, the focus is not on the categories themselves, but on the significance of the construction and constant recreation of these classifications and categories through the representation and the production of images and narratives in popular, educational and political discourses. Looking at race through this approach points to the complexity and contingency and openness with respect to how race is constructed in everyday practices (Hall, 1995). In my research then, neither race nor the "model minority" stereotype is an *a priori* or all-encompassing and monolithic category; it is not something that is reproduced or shapes practices and relations and interactions in schools in a linear, mono-causal and/or inevitable way.

For Omi and Winant (1994) although race may be theorized as an abstraction, it is not lived, experienced, or determined abstractly. Their framework allows me to make connections to what race means in particular discursive practices and the ways in which Vietnamese students understand or articulate their experiences as being racially organized

at school (Omi & Takagi, 1996). In using Omi and Winant's (2005) theory of racial formation, I am urged to examine the "socio-historical process" of the "model minority" stereotype. That is how it has been created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55). By racial formation, Omi and Winant (1994) refer to racialization or "the process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories, and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (p. 62). The importance here is examining the political and social processes by which racial identity is assigned and given meaning. Race, thus, must be understood as a reflexive and dynamic tension within and between the micro- and macro- levels of interaction that shapes social structures and representations. As Omi and Winant (2005) explain, "race is at the level of experience, of everyday life, is part of our identity" (p. 5). The strength of racial formation theory is that it attempts link the larger institutional practices to the lives of students, to understand the micro and macro levels (that is the structural and cultural influences) on the social construction of race (Omi, 2001; Winant, 2000).

Similarly, McCarthy's (1998) framework resists the temptation to explain racial differences in education through mono-causal explanation but the necessity is "to show in detail the links between social structures (whether they be economic, political, or ideological) and what real people such as teachers and students do" (p. 53). It is precisely these gaps in the current literature on Vietnamese students and their experiences, which motivate me to use McCarthy's, Omi's and Winant's and Hall's work to further complicate what is already known about Vietnamese Canadian students and their experiences in school.

Racial identities and meanings, Omi and Winant (1994) argue, are deeply embedded in social, economic, educational, and political institutions. Racial classifications such as the model minority are not benign (Winant, 1998). The "model minority" stereotype demonstrates what Omi and Winant (2005) describes as a race-as-objective-condition approach (p. 6), an approach that assumes that one performs race. For example, if one does not exemplify the "model minority" image then they are understood to be deviating from the presumed "norm." The model minority stereotype exemplifies

what Omi and Winant (1994) describe as expectations in "differences in skin colour, or other racially coded characteristics, to explain social differences" and it is precisely "these assumptions, coupled with our daily thoughtless references to "race" create "race," making race "common sense" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 60). The point here is that we cannot erase the concept of race. Our society is so thoroughly racialized that to be without racial identity is to be in danger of having no identity. To be raceless is similar to being genderless. Thus, race is everywhere (Omi & Winant, 2005, p. 5). Hall (1997) does not deny either the existence of physical differences between and among groups of human beings or the significance that is attached to those differences but, it is the ways in which these differences have been represented (e.g., media) that these physical differences become significant and acquire meaning; where race is "defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice; formed, transformed, destroyed and reformed" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 62).

Hall (1997), therefore, reemphasizes, the need to "take politics more seriously and biology less seriously". He recognizes that the body stands in the way of understanding race as a cultural system because "what fixes race is based on what we can see" and "race functions because it signifies as a text that we can read through the body, not just on the body". What matters, in other words, is not the mere fact of physical difference (e.g., skin tone) but rather the meaning and significance we attach to physical differences throughout different periods of history (Hall, 1997). The emphasis on understanding race as discursive allows me to understand the salience of race in particular contexts, as well as the complex and multi-faceted ways the model minority stereotype has changed, discourses that give it credence and the practices and contexts that sustain, augment and diminish it. In other words, race is the product of a system of classifications that is struggled, contested, formed and transformed both collectively and personally; regarding how human beings fit into, and are made to fit into the world, and how certain individual and groups of human beings can or should behave (Hall, 1997).

Although there may be experiences that are common to Asians, it is problematic to assume that all Asian students conceptualize their racial identities in one particular way. The problem of the model minority stereotype is 'racial lumping' regardless of

whether it is in a positive light (Winant, 1998). The model minority stereotype signifies a homogeneous and superficial representation of Asians. It presumes that being "Asian" signifies a particular identity, and a shared set of histories, characteristics, traditions and values. Omi and Winant (1994) suggest that racial myths and stereotypes, while undergoing change over time, remain permanent fixtures within the "system" of racial meaning as extremely "essential" and "integral" to maintaining social order (p. 62). These rules form through the dynamic tension between both dominant group rules and subordinated group values systems, where individuals learn the "rules of racial classification and of their own racial identity" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 62). These rules/racial scripts inform our racial identity and race, as being "collective identities" within certain social structures (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 62). However, McCarthy (1998) argues, the reproduction of hegemonic racial meanings, the persistence of racial inequality and the mobilization of minority resistance to dominant educational institutions have not proceeded in a straightforward, coherent or predictable way (p. 61).

McCarthy (1998) uses the term nonsynchrony to summarize "the vast differences in interests, needs, desires, and identity that separate minority groups from each other and from majority Whites in educational settings" (p. 65). He discusses the instabilities, the variable and heterogeneous nature of race relations and the intersection of race, class and gender in school and society, as systematically contradictory or nonsynchronous. In describing and emphasizing a more sophisticated analysis of the interaction and intersection of race-class-gender differences, he argues can direct our attention to the augmentation or diminution of race, class and gender in schools (p. 64). In using the term contradictory, McCarthy (1998) refers to the "moments of rupture, discontinuity, and structural silence in existing school practices and the social relations that define minority/majority encounters in education" (p. 65).

In order to understand the complexity of racial identity, Hall (1996) provides a very useful definition of identity:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the *process of becoming* [emphasis added], rather than being: not 'who

we are' or 'where we come from' so much as what we might become, how we have been represented, and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. (p. 4)

According to Hall (1996), the emphasis is on the notion of *becoming* rather than *being*. In order words, by looking forward to what could be rather than backwards to what was or what may have been (e.g., how we have been represented in the past), Hall articulates that we resist the urge to reduce racial identities to a single homogeneous experience. Identities are constituted within, and not outside representation. Identity is a multidimensional term that embodies complex and fluid processes within any given historical period. Our identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, sexual, etc.) do not exist independently outside of the cultural, historical, social and economic circumstances in which we live nor can it be considered a linear process. Rather, Hall believes that our identities are fraught with contradictions, ruptures and discontinuities.

The question of (racial) identity is not a question of who "we" are or where "we" came from. The urgency is what we might *become* [emphasis added], which moves my inquiry away from emphasizing an essential, fixed quality of being. Hall (1996) states, "the concept of identity is not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one" ... identity is "fragmented, discursive, and contextual" (p. 3). Trinh Minh-ha (1989), similarly suggests that identities are complex formations and we cannot simply reveal a distinctive or authentic centre or essence because our identities are indicative of partial, constructed, social, and essential features. The conceptual significance of Hall's work for my research is that it will allow me to understand and probe how the representation of Vietnamese students in educational and popular discourses may impact how they understand themselves and how such representations may impact their academic and social experiences.

Similarly, McCarthy's (1998) concept of nonsynchrony points to the fact that,

Different race-class-gender groups not only have qualitatively different experiences in schools but actually exist in constitutive tension, often engage in

active competition with each other, receive different forms of rewards, sanctions, and evaluation, and are ultimately structured into different futures. (p. 78)

The conceptual value of McCarthy's (1998) theory of nonsynchrony affirms that there are multiple and contingent identities and allows for a less romanticized negotiation of identity and agency within particular power dynamics and socio-historical contexts. McCarthy asserts that the response to current relations in education and race reform needs to recognize that "minorities are simply not oppressed as racial subjects, but are positioned as gendered and classed subjects as well" (p. 79). These dynamics, he argues, are interwoven unevenly (or nonsynchronous), and define the daily encounter of minority and majority actors in institutional and social settings.

It is precisely these issues of nonsynchrony, he argues, that shape and structure the experience of inequality and the micro- and macro-dynamics of educational and social life and must be considered in approaching race-relations reform and doing current research on racial inequality in schools and society. Hall (1996) thus maintains that identities are never unified or singular; rather they are increasingly fragmented and fractured. According to Kevin Kumashiro (2002), the multiple, situational, and fluid nature of identity poses several challenges to school communities because the dominant trend in society and educational discourse has been to affix particular labels on individuals in order to determine the best way to educate her. The idea is to resist categorization (Kumashiro, 2002) and to be critical of narrow conceptualizations and dominant assumptions about Asian youth's realities and identities. The emphasis here is on understanding that our (racial) identities are always in a process of being constructed, and subject to change. Therefore, by conceptualizing race as a floating signifier (Hall, 1997), suggests that our racial identities are never complete because they temporarily attach into discourses. In other words, because identities are constructed within and not outside discourses, they need to be understood as being produced in specific historical and institutional contexts and sites (Hall, 1997, 2002).

The value of McCarthy's (1998) theory is based on the fact that individuals and groups do not share identical consciousness, interests, needs or desires, at the same time.

Hall claims that "identities are sliding, but they are not infinitely sliding" (Hall, 1995, p. 66). What he means by this is that in order to construct our identities and meanings, we need to stop and take on a provisional identity. In other words, because there is no fixity to identity, there are always possibilities of reworking and transforming them. In doing so, this provides opportunities to point out the contradictions in identity making and to work to subvert and challenge the tendency to fix identity (Hall, 1995; 1996a).

It is within the arguments articulated in this section of my theoretical framework, that I position my approach to my study of Vietnamese Canadian youths' academic and social experiences in school. By complicating and problematizing notions of race, identity and racial inequality using Hall's, McCarthy's, Omi's and Winant's conceptual arguments encouraged and forced me to critically evaluate the current literature, to think about what was pertinent to ask my participants, and to consider the cultural, social, political, and historical context and discourses in which my study and participants are situated in. Hall's, McCarthy's, Omi and Winant's conceptual frameworks have also been critical in my analysis and discussion of how my participants constructed, negotiated, resisted, understood, and experienced the model minority stereotype in relation to their racial identity and schooling experiences.

Critical Race Theory

Since race and racism are central analytic focuses of inquiry in my research I also employed Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an integral and complementary framework. From a critical race perspective, the voices and perspectives of Vietnamese Canadian youth remain on the peripheries of dominant educational discourses and research on educational equity, race, and racism (Pon, 2000b), and through the lack of recognition of their racial realities, experiences, and concerns (Ho, 2015). The utility of CRT in combination with the other critical epistemologies employed in my research is recognizing the ways in which concerns regarding race and racism have and have not been addressed previously in educational research on Vietnamese Canadians through an intersectional analysis of the relationship between race, class, and gender, for instance, and the goal of presenting narratives from a marginalized group that challenge the dominant narrative about merit and equality in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker

& Lynn, 2009). Moreover, CRT can be used as a tool (Ladson-Billings, 1998) to address and acknowledge the heterogeneity and complexity of Vietnamese Canadian youth's diverse educational experiences, to challenge preconceived notions about Vietnamese youth, and to understand how the model minority discourse plays out in their experiences at school.

A central tenet of CRT is that racism is deeply embedded and endemic in our society (Dixon & Rousseau, 2006; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2004). The impetus for looking at racism and the significance of race in education is the denial of the significance of race and racism in educational discourse and practice, and the trend towards the use of strictly class-based or gender-based criteria in formulating equity policies today (Dei, 2009; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Parker & Lynn, 2009). Having said this, the presumption that guides much of the educational discourse and debate around educational equity is that equal educational opportunity now exists; therefore, continued (low) levels of achievement on the part of minority students must be a function of family, culture, or a lack of effort and will. The prevailing view is that if students do not achieve it is through their own fault. CRT, then, questions the privilege to claim neutrality. Similarly, it challenges notions of meritocracy, individualism and colour blindness (Ladson-Billings, 2004). For many educational scholars, the power of CRT lies in its ability to avoid using cultural-deficit paradigms (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) to explain issues such as the achievement gap between White and students of colour, or the educability of minoritized groups (McCarthy, 1990) and in its demand for "a deeper analysis of the historical and contemporary conditions" that have created these disparities (Kumasi, 2011, p. 200).

The other impetus for focusing on racial inequality and the significance of race on Vietnamese youth's experiences is based on the predominant trend in research on the experiences of Asian students, in general, and Vietnamese youth, to offer only cultural explanations. The assumptions that bolster this approach to understanding these students' experiences at school miss an important reality: students experience very different educational realities, policies and practices. Nevertheless, the dominant belief is that it is students, their culture, and family, not their schools, classroom circumstances or teachers'

perceptions of them, which are the sources of unequal educational attainment and opportunities (Gillborn, 2008). Kafi Kumasi (2011) highlights a disturbing trend in mainstream educational discourses regarding how school inequities are explained and argues that the problem with race-neutral views of inequity is that the disparities between certain groups of students are often explained as and attributed to issues of class and culture, while minimizing and dismissing the influence of racism (p. 199).

Although the model minority stereotype appears to function as a "positive" stereotype, from a critical race perspective, any representation, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, is problematic because it essentializes and reinforces superficial understandings of students' educational experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For example, the model minority discourse renders invisible the diversity of needs and experiences of Asian students, and even more insidious, it disguises any claims of racism in their experiences at school (Gillborn, 2008; Lee, 2009). Such discourses only continue to exacerbate the inequalities that exist in our society and education today. Consequently, marginalized students are silenced through not taking issues of race and social oppression seriously (Dei, 2009) but also results in a constant negation of their lived experiences and alternative knowledges (Dei & Calliste, 2000, p. 11).

Within CRT, counter-narratives or counter-stories stand in opposition to these narratives of dominance or master narratives. Daniel Solórzano and Tara Yosso (2002) define counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" including people of colour, women, gay, and the poor (p. 26). It is a way to create meaning as well as to challenge myths (Delgado, 2001). The strength of counter-storytelling is the dismantling and rupturing of master narratives which racism is based on, created, justified and maintained (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 27). Storytelling is a way of showing that the stories people of colour tell come from a frame of reference different from that of the dominant culture (Kumasi, 2011, p. 207). CRT scholars in general maintain that people of colour speak from an experience framed by racism and that in order to appreciate their perspective we must allow them to "name their own reality" and to give voice to their unique racialized experiences (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57).

From a CRT perspective, it is not only those in dominant groups (e.g., Whites) who tell majoritarian stories or master narratives. People of colour often buy into and even tell these stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Whether told by people of colour or Whites, master narratives are often not questioned because people do not see them as stories but as "natural" parts of everyday life. No matter how sophisticated our theoretical analyses might be, and no matter how we identify, we have all been trained to read and evaluate ourselves and each other according to these status-quo stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Whether we refer to them as stereotypes, master narratives, or majoritarian stories, critical race theorists assert that it is important to recognize the power of White privilege in constructing stories about others (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and to expose race neutral discourses to reveal the presence of how racism and White privilege operates in the everyday (Dei, 2009; Delgado, 2001).

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), master narratives are not just stories of racial privilege; they are also stories of gender, class, and other forms of privilege. Master narratives privilege Whites, men, the middle- and upper-class, and heterosexuals by naming these social locations as natural or normative points of reference (Delgado, 2001). For AnaLouise Keating (2009), "we need new stories, new tactics, and new visions" (p. 84). A central tenet of CRT is that these new visions and stories are knowledges that can and should be generated through the narratives and should emerge from and with people of colour (Kumasi, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2004). In my research, then, emphasis and value are placed on naming one's own reality, and on Vietnamese Canadian youth's multiple and varied voices, positions, and experiences (Bell, 2003; Cook-Sather, 2006; Lincoln, 1995b). The strength of CRT is its emphasis on counter-narratives as a way to recognize the racialized, gendered, and classed experiences of these students (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), and as being legitimate, appropriate and critical to understanding how to change and challenge racism (Bell, 2003; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). In this way, CRT informs my methodological decision to use a case study approach (Yin, 2003, 2012) and the use of interviews to capture the voices and shed light on the experiences of my participants.

Intersectionality

Another tenet of CRT is its emphasis on and importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). CRT provides a powerful explanatory tool to help tease apart the intersections of race, class, gender and other forms of domination (Ladson-Billings, 2004). This is the process of examining the ways in which race interests with and is constituted by other markers of difference, such as gender and class. Developed and advanced by feminists (Parker & Lynn, 2009), it questions claims that there is a universal experience or perspective by a particular group of people (Collins, 2000). Put another way, it is focused on Matsuda's (1991) principle of 'asking the other question', that is, to include other categories in the analysis than those that appear to be most obvious to me as the researcher. The emphasis here is that neither gender nor race and class are 'done' in isolation from each other, but the emphasis is how they operate together on an everyday level. Analyzing intersections opens possibilities for understanding the complexities of Vietnamese youth's lives and schooling (such as students who are LGQBT, students with special needs). There has been research that suggests that LGBQT Asian students deal with racism, homophobia, and heterosexism at school, as well as homophobia and heterosexism in their own ethnic communities (Kumashiro, 1999, 2001, 2006).

Focusing on intersectionality facilitates a more nuanced analysis of identity, race, gender, sexuality and class in my research. Matsuda (1991) articulates,

> When I see something that looks racist, I ask, Where is the patriarchy in this?
> When I see something that looks sexists, I ask, Where is the heterosexism in this?
> When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, Where is the class interest in this? (p. 1189)

It is important to note that the focus of my research is on using intersectionality as a way to examine how race intersects with gender, class, and sexuality. The point of using an intersectional approach is not to find "several identities under one". This would reinscribe the fragmented, additive model of oppression and essentialize specific social identities (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205).

George Dei (2009) is correct in pointing out that in order to enrich our understanding of racism(s) we need to understand the intricate web of intersecting and interlocking oppressions. He explains, our racialized, gendered and classed identities are sites of shifting power relations that inform, constrain and determine our human experience and condition (p. 31). The departure for the discussion of intersectionality in my research is intended to emphasize the point to question and analyze the different ways in which race is intertwined, informed and complicated by gender, class, and sexuality. An intersectional approach, thus, requires me to analyze these 'neglected points of intersections' (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). That is, the complexity of the experiences of Vietnamese students would have been missed if I had focused on and analyzed exclusively on the category of race and used racial identity as my only lens of analysis.

It is important to underscore the importance of analyzing how different social divisions are intertwined. That is, how race, is intertwined with and transformed by gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality and not as a mere addition to gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and so on (Lykke, 2010). According to Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1983):

> All three divisions [based on gender, ethnicity, and class] ... are affected by and affect each other and the economic, political and ideological relations in which they are inserted... It is not a question therefore of one being more 'real' than the others or a question of *which* is the most important. However, it is clear that the three divisions prioritize different spheres of social relations and will have different effects which may be impossible to specify in concrete analysis. However, we suggest that each division exists within the context of the others and that any concrete analysis has to take this into account. (p. 65)

Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests that intersectional work has the potential to continue highlighting the importance of making marginalized and excluded groups more visible. Without an intersectional framework, researchers might miss such nuanced differences among groups of people. It is not to essentialize certain divisions as being, isolated and

specific forms of concrete oppression nor is it to analyze other social divisions in additive ways.

In my research, the model minority, as a narrative reflects hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of racism and reify race (Gillborn, 2008). The model minority narrative constructs a homogenized "right way" to be Asian (Lee, 2006). This is problematic. My emphasis is on understanding that although students may be constrained by racialized discourses, in what ways are they are engaged in ongoing meaning-making processes, and in what ways and forms do they take up certain positions, expand or change them and make them their own. This is based on my previous theoretical presumptions that race is socially, politically and historically contingent and should not be seen as something people 'are' or 'have'. It is recognizing that these students are not living out pre-determined scripts but have the agency to change, shift and mold these racialized discourses (Hall, 1990).

Nina Lykke (2010) explains that foregrounding the 'doing of intersectionality,' that is, "the doing of the relation between categories, the outcome of this doing and how this doing results in either troubled or untroubled subject positions" (Staunaes, 2003, p. 5 as cited in Lykke, 2010, p. 74). Thus, I wanted to consider the analysis of agency and subjectivity and the ways in which Vietnamese students construct their social identifications, and to emphasize that they are active agents who rework these categories in a diversity of subjective ways (Lykke, 2010). Therefore, in what ways do students make meaning of racial categorizations, such as the "model minority", as it is intertwined with gender, class, and sexuality? What are the ways in which they take up un/troubled positions in their everyday lives? (Lykke, 2010, p. 75).

In order to fully understand and analyze the complexity of Vietnamese students' educational experiences, Leslie McCall (2005) reminds me that it is important to understand that these youth are located on boundaries between different categories in ways that have made their specific situation invisible. Yuval-Davis (2009) describes these boundaries as being formed around myths (whether historically valid or not) (e.g., the myth of the model minority). The creation of these boundaries occur because of what

Keating (2009) describes as, the "urgent need" to stereotype and label, which has become extremely widespread and deeply internalized in our society (p. 84).

Summary

In this chapter I have provided the context and rationale for my research and the justification for my use of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as the framework to examine my research questions. The following chapter will provide a more in-depth background of my research with an overview of the current literature on the model minority and the experiences of Vietnamese youth in school.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the current perspectives and literature on Vietnamese students and the current literature on the model minority stereotype. Although, the majority of the studies are based in the United States, the importance and emphasis here is what I can glean from these studies for my own research. In the following sections, I 1) outline the major perspectives that have framed current research on the educational attainments and performance of Asian students; 2) discuss the relevant literature of Vietnamese students in schools in the United States and Canada and; 3) provide an overview of research that has looked at the impact of the model minority stereotype on Asian students' academic achievement and experiences.

In the literature review I attempted to draw on many sources, while trying to maintain a Canadian contextual focus. It became very evident in the literature that more research is needed on Asians in Canada (Coloma, 2006, 2012; Lee, 2007; Pon et al., 2017; Razack, 1995). Currently, there is very little research on the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese youth in Canada and critiques to the model minority discourse in Canada has been very limited (Ho, 2015), indicating a significant gap in the literature. Moreover, the lack of scholarly research on Vietnamese Canadians is not surprising given the absence or "lateness" of Asian Canadian Studies (Lee, 2007). Several scholars have recognized a crucial need for Asian Canadian Studies in universities and colleges across Canada to support scholars and students committed to researching and teaching on Asians in Canada (Pon et al., 2017, p. 14). Although Asian Canadian Studies is not as comprehensive when compared to the breadth of research on Asian Americans (Lee, 2007), the anti-racism activism in Canada by Asian Canadians has been positively impacted by Asian American Studies (Pon et al., 2017, p. 11). This influence may be indicative of the similarities in political and historical contexts in which Asians have been racialized in the United States and in Canada (Chatterjee et al., 2012; Gilmour et al., 2012; Pon et al., 2017). As a result, my research has been significantly influenced by the critical scholarship on Asians both in Canada and in the United States.

In this section I provide a broad overview of three major perspectives in the literature that have framed the current understanding on the educational attainments and achievements of Asian students (Conchas & Perez, 2003). The first perspective is the *cultural paradigm* (Lee, 2009). This perspective suggests that Asian culture promotes education, that Asians possess traits that are highly regarded by the dominant group, such as hard work, motivation, respect, and the delay of gratification for future success. Asian families and parents in particular aid in this process by socializing their children to work hard in school to uphold family honour (Van Do, 2002). The second perspective is *relative functionalism* (Sue & Okazaki, 1990)**.** Proponents of this perspective argue that the educational attainment of Asians is highly influenced by the opportunity structures associated with social mobility and cannot be attributed solely to cultural factors. Therefore, for Asians, the focus on education is a result of other blocked means of mobility, where education is the one way for social mobility. The last perspective is the *cultural ecological paradigm* to explain the relationship between minority status, perceptions of the limited opportunity structure and academic achievement (Ogbu, 1990; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). These scholars distinguish between "voluntary minorities" those immigrants who freely choose to immigrate in order to improve their lives (such as Asians) and "involuntary minorities" as those forced into the United States through slavery (such as African Americans) or conquest (such as Mexicans and Pacific Islanders). According to cultural ecologists, differences in academic achievement result from a racial group's perceptions of opportunity structures and their consequent interpretations and reactions to schooling. Voluntary minorities do well because they perceive upward mobility, whereas, involuntary minorities resist the notion that school will lead to social and economic mobility.

According to Gilberto Conchas and Cristina Perez (2003), these frameworks that have predominantly framed current research on Asian students, actually reinforces the model minority stereotype and characterizes Asians as a monolithic entity devoid of within group variations. The limitation of a cultural ecological approach is that it essentializes culture as being static and monolithic while it ignores other important factors in Asian students' lives. Rather, it is important to complicate the notion of culture and its intersections with issues of race, class, and gender (McCarthy, 1990).

A smaller but growing number of studies located in the United States have looked at the representation and experiences of Asian American students as racialized beings and how this can affect their schooling experiences (Jo, 2004; Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Kumashiro, 2006; Lee, 1996; Palmer & Jang, 2005; Palmer & Maramba, 2015; Ng et al., 2007; Quach, Jo, & Urrieta, 2009). This growing area in research recognizes the intersections of race, gender, class, and power relations that are reproduced in these students' day-to-day social interactions in school (Kiang & Kaplin, 1994; Kumashiro, 1999, 2001; Lee, 1996, 2006; Lee & Vaught, 2003; Lei, 2003; Lowe, 2005; McKay & Wong, 1996; Ngo, 2006; Pang et al., 2003; Quach et al., 2009). These studies reveal that Asian Americans and their educational experiences are extremely complex and are more complicated than what is indicated by research that presents them only as cultural beings. These scholars document that Asian students, regardless of academic achievement levels, have conflicting needs and desires, face and respond to stereotypes, racism, verbal and physical harassment, internalized racism, and draw attention to tensions with other racial groups as well as within Asian ethnic groups.

My research departs from existing studies in that it moves away from being another "counter-model minority myth project" (Poon et al., 2015) such as demonstrating educational disparities and barriers, countering claims of universal academic success among Asian students, or demonstrating that not all Asian students are academically successful (Poon et al., 2015; Teranishi, Behringer, Grey, & Parker, 2009). Moving away from the dominant framing of the plethora of existing scholarly research focused on debunking the model minority stereotype on Asian students, my research contributes to a limited but growing number of studies and recognition for more research to undermine the model minority discourse from a Critical Race Theory perspective (Buenavista, Jayakumar, & Misa-Escalante, 2009; Cui & Kelly, 2013; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2015; Suyemoto, Kim, Tanabe, Tawa, & Day, 2009; Teranishi et al., 2009; Tran & Birman., 2010; Uy, 2018; Yu, 2006). My research differs from existing research on the model minority narrative and Vietnamese youth by asking new questions, contesting current frameworks that have become the very foundation of this field, and allowing new voices to speak (Lee, 1996; Kumashiro, 2006).

Furthermore, my research contributes to advancing a more critical scholarly agenda on research on the model minority narrative and Asian students' experiences in Canada (Coloma, 2017; Ho, 2015; Pon et al., 2017) by examining the racist implications of the model minority discourse (Poon et al., 2015). It is in this sense that my study extends and contributes to the empirical work that has already been undertaken by other scholars (Kumashiro, 1999, 2006; Lee, 2009, 2017; Lowe, 2005; Ngo, 2006; Teranishi, 2002, 2009; Uy, 2018) in new political and theoretical directions that refute the model minority stereotype as a limited explanatory account for making sense of the experiences of Vietnamese students (Anyon, 2009) and to take on a more humanized approach to understanding their experiences by moving away from the common approach to focus on data disaggregation (i.e., on academic achievement and a focus on low- and high-achieving students) towards a recognition for the fluidity of their diverse lived experiences (Lee 1996; Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2015; Tran & Birman, 2010).

Literature on Vietnamese youth

In this section, the majority of studies on Vietnamese youth are based in the United States indicating a gap in research on Vietnamese in Canada. Moreover, there is very little empirical research focused specifically on Vietnamese youth's racial identity and their experiences of racism and discrimination in school in both countries. Therefore, I hope that my research will be able to contribute to this sparse area in the literature. In the subsequent paragraphs, I briefly outline some relevant studies in Canada and the United States that have been conducted on Vietnamese youth in schools.

Most of the current literature emphasizes the success of Vietnamese students and families, and some of the literature indicates the existence of problems within schools and within the Vietnamese community such as youth involvement in gangs and juvenile delinquency among Vietnamese youth (Van Do, 2002; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Furthermore, most of the literature on Vietnamese youth is focused on Vietnamese youth as immigrant students and their adaptation in school, and the influence of culture on their school achievements and failures (Bankston, 1998; Van Do, 2002; Zhou & Bankston, 1994, 1998). To elaborate, most of the research on Vietnamese youth has emphasized and focused on the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students, in terms of language

learning acquisition and barriers, cultural adaptation, family relations, ethnic communities, integration and their (and their parents') refugee and immigrant experience in Canada or the United States. While this research is essential and interrelated, and important to understanding what is going on in Vietnamese communities, it does not give much insight into the experiences of racism and discrimination that Vietnamese youth experience in schools (Phan, 2003).

In a qualitative study conducted in urban schools in British Columbia, Canada, Tan Phan (2003) examined the experiences of eleven Vietnamese refugee students and their experiences of discrimination in schools. The students reported experiencing and witnessing racial conflict, harassment and unfair treatment; boys reported experiencing more racism than girls but most of the students felt confident that racism would not present huge obstacles for them in the future. These students recounted negative experiences of being harassed by their teachers and being referred to as "stupid refugees" and "troubled, undisciplined kids". They were often placed or streamed into ESL classes and given menial work such as colouring, drawing and watching movies. Phan noted that for these students despite being able to overcome barriers and being academically resilient and successful, they discussed what they perceived to be the oppressive nature, often racist overtones, of the educational system, for themselves and other Vietnamese Canadian students. This harsh treatment, unfortunately, was not the exception but was frequently highlighted by these students who stated that they were reprimanded when they were not behaving in the "Canadian way". For example, one student explained that teachers responded favourably to him when he received top marks in most of his classes and he admitted to trying to "act White" in order to fit in. In other words, this student felt like he had to give up aspects of his racial identity to achieve academically and socially. The students in Phan's study discussed at length experiencing racism in school where they felt silenced, marginalized and mistreated by other students and their teachers and others outside in the community (e.g., police); referring to school as a "place of White domination and control, where teachers were seen as instruments of such control" (p. 561).

Phan's (2003) study revealed that these students overcame their difficulties in school by striving to excel academically and moving out of the ESL classes into the regular classes. They claimed that the racism they experienced only made them "try harder" and "study more, do better" (p. 562) as a way to overcome these barriers and challenges. The students refused to be discouraged or debilitated by it. Part of this resiliency, Phan explains, has to do with their experiences as refugees and their parents' experiences escaping the war and overcoming their challenges and difficulties as refugees. Therefore, prejudice and discrimination were a motivator for these students to achieve and succeed. For one student, after attempting to be more like "White people" he began to believe that regardless of how he acted, non-Asians would always see him as being different, which led him to embrace his Vietnamese identity. These students refused to see themselves as victims and expressed optimism about their future. They subscribed to the notion of meritocracy and talked a lot about working hard to access more opportunities. The mantra for many of these students was working hard will make them successful. For these Vietnamese students, the academic scholarships they received were tangible proof of their resiliency and hard work. Experiences of racism, Phan argues, may have contributed to their academic motivation and sense of personal efficacy. It was through their personal determination, positive attitude and effort that enabled them to overcome discrimination and reach their goals.

In another study, Min Zhou and Carl Bankston (1998), focused on the factors related to Vietnamese American students' achievements in school. The researchers used qualitative data from observations and 76 unstructured interviews in the community. Zhou and Bankston suggest that cultural beliefs about the influence of family relationships on education is related to school achievement. The researchers found unexpectedly high levels of achievement among these Vietnamese American students, many of whom are from poor, non-English speaking, immigrant families. Zhou and Bankston suggest that one of the primary reasons these Vietnamese students are able to achieve and do well academically is due to the network of social relations and support provided by members of their ethnic group. Zhou and Bankston also suggest that the students' high levels of achievement are influenced by their cultural values about family relations and cooperation which in turn have shaped their attitudes toward education.

However, Zhou and Bankston also note that there are similarly many Vietnamese American youth who do not experience high achievement.

In a related study, Conchas and Perez (2003) explored the social and academic experiences of immigrant and native-born Vietnamese high school students in California to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Asian American success. Conchas and Perez (2003) specifically challenged and examined the model minority stereotype's usefulness in helping to understand patterns of academic identity and ability among high-achieving Vietnamese students in distinct school contexts. This study compared 27 Vietnamese students' experiences in two academic programs, from grade 10 through to grade 12. Data were collected in interviews, focus groups, and observations. All the students in the sample came from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, where most parents worked in the service industry, and some families struggled with alcoholism, violence, single-parent or no parent families. The researchers found that a significant number of Vietnamese students achieved academic excellence, despite difficult structural, historical and cultural experiences. Most students self-identified as first- and second-generation immigrants to the United States.

Conchas and Perez (2003) found that the social and academic identity of Vietnamese students was shaped through their schooling experiences, noting that there was racial tension and division among teachers and the students at the school. For some students, college and career expectations were intricately linked to their class and racial identities. Vietnamese students, regardless of the academic program they were in, deliberately used the model minority image espoused by the media, their peers and teachers, to their advantage by acknowledging their teachers' and counselors' positive images of them and by forming strong peer networks to accomplish their academic goals. However, these students attributed their academic success to their home environment and regarded their parents as instrumental in motivating them toward academic success. They believed that their families raised them to be high achievers. Family honour was at stake (for many of these students). It was about not disgracing the family, as there were high expectations from their parents to do well in school. Many of these students internalized these sacrifices. They assumed an obligation to uplift the entire family's social and

economic well-being and status. Every Vietnamese student in this study cited family background as fundamental for academic success. At the same time when these students were categorized as high achievers, they were also aware of other Asian students who did not embody the model minority image. Students talked about the intersection of race and social class and for some of these students being poor made it more difficult to get through school and students were very aware that racism existed in and outside of school.

While the students attributed their academic success to their home environment, Conchas and Perez (2003) found that these students' academic successes were also advantaged ideologically and structurally through teachers' high expectations. Ideologically, teachers' high expectations reinforced students' high motivation and self-esteem. Structurally, these high expectations meant that students were enrolled in more advanced classes. Vietnamese students, thus, benefitted from teachers' favourable perception of Asian students at their high school. From their interviews with teachers, administrators and counselors, Conchas and Perez (2003) discovered that there was a significant tendency among the teachers and counselors to view Asian students as focused, enthusiastic, and prepared to do work. In contrast, they viewed African Americans and Latinos as less academically motivated. This led to racial and ethnic divisions in the school, where Asian students were regarded as superior learners, which often meant they were assisted by teachers and counselors in accessing the most prestigious academic programs. At the same time, however, greater stress was placed on these students as they were tracked into highly regarded college-bound programs. According to the Vietnamese students, they believed that the majority of teachers based their expectations of Asian students on stereotypes of Asian achievement. The significance of Conchas and Perez's study is that they found a strong association between ideological and structural factors in propelling Vietnamese students' access to higher-level programs based on the model minority image.

Peter Kiang and Jenny Kaplan (1994) conducted a 16-month qualitative study at one urban public high school in South Boston. The study was initiated after a violent clash between White and Black students at this particular school. The researchers were interested in building a better sense and understanding of the racial dynamics (i.e.,

tensions, conflicts, etc.) at this school from the perspectives of the Vietnamese students. This study was based on observation and inquiry through the researchers' work as formal and informal advisors at the high school and they advocated working with Vietnamese immigrant and refugee students. The data collection included a combination of open-ended individual and group interviews. Interviews were approximately 90 minutes in length and were conducted with 14 Vietnamese students. Vietnamese students at this school felt their specific experiences of racism were ignored or unrecognized by both the school and media. Kiang and Kaplan (1994) found that the school context was predominantly defined and discussed in terms of Black and White student relations, while the complexities of these race relations and the realities of Vietnamese students' lives and concerns were rendered irrelevant or invisible.

The researchers chose not to include the perspectives of teachers, administrators and other groups of students because the purpose of this study was about authorizing the voices of Vietnamese students, who, they argue, are typically silenced in relation to highlighting these complex, difficult issues. Every Vietnamese student interviewed recounted numerous examples of witnessing or experiencing harassment as part of their daily lives yet these students often remain marginal, if not invisible at school. For many of the Vietnamese students, they reported experiencing social exclusion and racial conflict on a daily basis. Their perspectives and experiences challenged the validity of the dominant Black and White paradigm that defined the public understanding of race relations at the school. Kiang and Kaplan (1994) suggest that Vietnamese students' perspectives at this school shed light on the more complex reality of race and racism in society. Kiang and Kaplan (1994) are not the first to suggest that discussions and practices regarding race relations need to go beyond looking at race and racism as concerning only White and Black students and the need to include other racialized groups.

While this section briefly outlined some of the pertinent studies on Vietnamese youth in education, I found that the existing research on Vietnamese youth offers a limited perspective on their experiences. The main focus of such existing studies on Vietnamese students has been to understand "Asian student success" and the factors

attributing to their "successes" or "failures", which are often presumed to be located within their culture and home environments. It is problematic because it inadvertently perpetuates the model minority narrative, and only contributes to the invisibility and silence of the students' experiences in research whereby disparities in their experiences and achievement are suggested to be located within their families and culture (Poon et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Vietnamese students are often lumped under the pan-ethnic label of Asian or Southeast Asian in the model minority literature which has been critiqued for failing to capture these students' complexities (such as their race, gender, sexuality) and do not provide an understanding of their authentic and actual experiences (Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2015). Their experiences are often neglected at the expense of debunking the model minority myth (Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2015). This dominant framing of studies on Asian students including Vietnamese youth inadvertently essentializes these students based on their educational achievement, separating and comparing students into presumed low-achieving ethnic groups and high-achieving ethnic groups (e.g., Southeast Asian students, i.e., Vietnamese, Laos versus East Asian students, i.e., Chinese, Japanese) (Ng et al., 2007; Poon et al., 2015; Wing, 2007).

The current gap in the literature on Vietnamese youth leaves out more in-depth research on their experiences and perspectives in education and the theoretical lens that have been used by other researchers provides a limited understanding of these students' daily experiences in school, and inadvertently excludes their realities and experiences of racism. My study thus extends the existing research by recognizing the importance of intersectionality and Critical Race Theory as frameworks to move towards a more nuanced understanding of their experiences and perspectives in high school. In the following section, I outline several seminal studies that engage and examine the model minority stereotype and the impact it has on Asian students' experiences and identities in more complex ways.

The model minority literature

The existing and extensive literature on the impact of the model minority on students has found that the model minority stereotype does indeed shape students' intellectual identity and their expected performance (Lee, 1996; Li, 2009; Ng et al., 2007). As evidenced in several studies on Asian American adolescents' identity formation (Lee, 1996; McKay & Wong, 1996; Quach et al., 2009), the model minority discourse operates as a very powerful force in their academic and personal lives. For students who are underachieving, trying to live up to the model minority stereotype resulted in mental and emotional problems (Li, 2009; Thompson, Kiang, & Witkow, 2016; Wong & Halgin, 2006).

Furthermore, a number of studies have looked at the impact of the model minority stereotype on different Asian ethnic groups (Alva, 1993; Lee, 2006; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Pang, 2007; Pho, Gerson, & Cowan, 2007; Qin, Way, & Mukherjee, 2008; Siu, 1996; Um, 2003; Uy, 2008; Verma, 2008; Yang, 2004) and their responses to it (Asssalone & Fann, 2017; Lee, 2009; Wong, Lai, Nagasawa, & Lin, 1998), yet few have examined how race, gender and class intersect to understand the impact of the model minority stereotype on Asian students' educational experiences (Lee, 2006; Matthews, 2002b; Walker-Moffat, 1995). The tendency of prior research to treat race, gender and class separately has potentially obscured important differences in how the model minority narrative is experienced, maintained and understood, undermining efforts to challenge and talk about the model minority in more complex ways.

Stacey Lee (1996, 2009), conducted a year-long ethnographic study to explore how social class, ethnicity, generation and gender shaped the educational opportunities and achievement of Asian students at one high school. To counter the one-dimensional understanding of Asian Americans as "model minorities", Lee examined the way various identities and the intersections of identities (i.e., social class, ethnicity, generation and gender) between and within ethnic groups, informed and shaped the experiences, achievement, and educational opportunities of these students. She found that these differences in and intersections of class, ethnicity, generation and gender created

differences in circumstances and opportunities that affected the social and academic experiences of different groups of Asian students.

Lee discovered that Asian American students' feelings about the model minority stereotype varied considerably according to which of four groups they defined themselves as belonging to: Asian-identified, Asian American-identified, Korean-identified, and Asian New Wavers. Asian-identified students were described as students who adhered to their ancestral socio-cultural and linguistic norms and patterns and tended to conform more often to the model minority stereotype. Asian American-identified students saw themselves as bicultural. They tended to talk about their cultural positionality as being along a traditional Asian and Western continuum. They also tended to question the model minority stereotype because they were aware that it did not represent the diversity among Asian students. Further, they felt that the stereotypes tended to polarize students along academic, social, and ethnic lines. Korean-identified students in Lee's study tended to set themselves apart from other students of Asian origin. The Korean-identified students tended to align themselves more with their White peers and considered themselves superior both academically and socially. Because they were very conscious of social mobility in the United States, they tended to adapt to the academic, behavioural, and social patterns of their White peers in high school. Socially, for example, they tended to emphasize good appearance by purchasing designer clothes. Asian New Wavers represented counter-cultural behaviour patterns. They tended to present an unconventional persona (e.g., baggy pants, combat boots, and dyed hair) and were more likely to smoke openly, skip classes, and listen to hip-hop music. In doing so they challenged the notion that all students of Asian ancestry are model minorities. Some of the significant findings from Lee's study demonstrated that, regardless of how the Asian students self-identified, they faced considerable barriers in school, took up the model minority stereotype in subversive and different ways, and were far from being model minorities as their identities and experiences were significantly diverse and at times, in conflict with how they were perceived by teachers and administrators at the school.

Unlike Lee's study, Bic Ngo's (2006) study employed a comparative lens to compare Southeast (e.g., Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Lao Americans) and South Asian Americans. Ngo discovered that the education of Southeast and South Asian American students is imbued with experiences of discrimination and alienation, but their experiences are masked and compounded by the ideology of meritocracy and the model minority narrative. Ngo found that racism compounded with issues of cultural capital, gender and generational struggles which significantly impacted these students' educational experiences and attainment. These challenges in their academic experiences however were exacerbated by the model minority stereotype and by the ideology of meritocracy.

Ngo discovered that as first-generation immigrants, many Southeast and South Asian American parents did not have the necessary cultural capital to understand how to negotiate and intervene to make sure their children benefitted from all the opportunities at school or to assist in their children's education. The model minority stereotype challenged negotiations over gender norms, cultural identities, enormous class disparities, and negotiations of family roles and responsibilities among the students. For many Southeast and South Asian American students, their educational experiences often necessitated balancing expectations and pressures from their parents, teachers and friends which Ngo argues shaped and impacted their identities and experiences at home and at school. Based on her study, Ngo (2006) argues that Southeast Asian Americans are uniquely and precariously positioned both within and outside this discourse of academic success and the model minority. One the one hand, Southeast Asians are lumped with other Asian American groups and viewed as part of the model minority. On the other hand, they are portrayed as gangsters, high school dropouts and welfare dependents.

By focusing on issues of cultural capital, negotiations of identity, gender, and generation, and experiences of racism, Ngo (2006) found that these factors created substantial difficulties in the education of both Southeast and South Asian American students in her study. She examined disaggregated data on educational attainment on the basis of SES for ethnic groups such as Cambodians, Hmong, Laos and Vietnamese Americans and found that they were not faring as well as when the data was aggregated

under the more generalized Asian American category. Ngo argues that the disparity and differences show that Southeast Asians, for the most part, are similar to other racial and ethnic groups such as African Americans, Native Americans and Latinos. She notes that the point of these statistics is not to highlight the challenging circumstances of Southeast Asian Americans in comparison with other racial and ethnic groups, but to underscore the difference between Southeast Asians, South Asians, and other Asian Americans as well as within Southeast Asian groups.

Ngo's research is useful to understanding the impact of the model minority discourse on Southeast Asian students' experiences but its limitation is that it starts with an agenda of disproving the model minority myth, and forefronts the issue of educational achievement and barriers through focusing attention on disaggregated data and deficit framing of the barriers these students experience. Furthermore, Ngo's research lumps Vietnamese youth into the pan-Southeast Asian category, which also inadvertently leads to a homogeneous understanding of Vietnamese youth as sharing the same issues as other Southeast Asian ethnic groups. Thus, my research will hopefully contribute to the need for a more intersectional and critical race analysis of Vietnamese students' experiences, and to avoid privileging narratives of what they are not (Poon et al., 2015, p. 470).

In another ethnographic study, Lee (2006) focused on Hmong youth in the Midwest. She found that teachers regularly described middle class East Asian students (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) as being model minorities, and often compared their achievement to their middle-class White peers. In contrast, the teachers regularly expressed concern that Hmong students are 'at risk' for becoming the 'new underclass' because they are assimilating into African American youth culture, which was viewed by teachers as deficient. According to these teachers, Hmong students were simply making 'bad' choices that caused their academic struggles. Other teachers assumed that Hmong students' academic struggles were the result of their home cultures, which teachers viewed as foreign and/or deficient. Here poverty was interpreted as evidence of deficiency. Lee discovered that by focusing and emphasizing the presumed problems with Hmong students, teachers effectively blamed the students and absolved themselves of any responsibility for serving Hmong students. Lee's study shows how teachers failed

to recognize that the culture of the school privileged students from middle class backgrounds.

In another aspect of Lee's research, she found that elders in Hmong communities view traditional gender norms to be central to the maintenance of their ethnic identities. Lee explains that traditional ideas regarding gender have a profound effect on the girls' education thereby hindering their pursuit of education. Based on this study, and her previous work, Lee argues that while ideas about gender vary across social class, ethnicity, religion and generation, she maintains that gender remains an important category of influence in the lives of all Asian American students with respect to shaping their social and academic experiences. Despite gender and generational differences, she found that Hmong American students faced a common experience of racism. These students lacked the valued cultural capital to negotiate at school, were marginalized by the curriculum, and all were subject to racist and stereotypical assumptions regarding Hmong culture.

The significance of the aforementioned studies offers insights into the intertwined dynamics of race, gender, class, family, generation and migration and how these intersections and issues are exacerbated, and/or challenged by the notion of the model minority in schools. My research will expand on these studies by addressing the complex racial dimensions of the model minority discourse on Vietnamese students' experiences in school. My research, thus, is not about demonstrating how Vietnamese youth are *not* a model minority. It avoids contributing towards the reproduction and reinforcement of deficit thinking and essentializing these students. My study draws on theoretical perspectives that challenge the dominant existing frameworks used to understand the impact of the model minority narrative. To date, there remain significant gaps in the body of knowledge around Vietnamese students' experiences in school, which will be addressed through the use of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as the guiding frameworks.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the existing literature on Vietnamese youth and the model minority stereotype. The limited literature on the experiences of Vietnamese students' experiences in school and the abundance of literature on the model minority illustrates a particular gap and necessity to shift the reframing of research in this field moving forward. Indeed there is plethora of existing studies debunking the model minority myth, but there has been a recognition that this scholarly work needs to be advanced by focusing on the racial disparities in Asian students' experiences through a more critical and intersectional lens (Teranishi et al., 2009) and a focus on the racial implications of the model minority narrative rather than simply countering it and demonstrating that there are students who defy the model minority stereotype (Tran & Birman, 2010). What follows is an overview of the methods and methodology that were employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology, Methods and Research Design

This chapter provides a justification for the methodology and methods that I employed for this study. I devote some attention to researcher positionality and reflexivity as my role as a researcher was an important issue in carrying out the study. The last section of the chapter provides details about each participant and includes justification for the data collection methods and data analysis.

Researcher positionality and reflexivity

According to John Creswell (2012a, 2012b), ethical issues do not only arise during the data collection process or when submitting one's ethics proposal. There are ethical issues, among others, which arise during several phases of the research process which pertain to a consideration of my role as researcher. The way that education research is conducted is just as important as what is actually discovered in a study.

For Michael Patton (2002), doing qualitative research is a reflexive process (prior to, during and after my research) that allows for continuous, and deep insight and meaning making, not only of the data, but meaning making, as a researcher. Therefore, one of the important issues in conducting this type of research is that as a researcher I have to be clear about my situatedness, my presumptions and interpretations, especially when describing and interpreting the experiences of my participants. I need to be explicit about where I position myself within the research so that the audience and stakeholders of my research understand and can make sense of my research from my situated and lived experiences as a Vietnamese Canadian (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). By doing so, I am making sure that my research is transparent, and it allows for the identification of any pitfalls and limitations in my research. Colleen Larson (1997) asserts that if we, as researchers, are to understand the world we study we must situate ourselves squarely within it rather than taking a vantage point outside of it (p. 459).

As a Vietnamese Canadian growing up and going through the education system, I do not claim an 'authority of experience'. My claim to some knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of Vietnamese youth's experiences is based on my

personal journey going through the education system in Canada and these experiences have influenced how I read and interpreted the stories of my participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This positionality involved being very conscious of my personal and social location as I went through the research process and made sense of the narratives I captured in my study. Therefore, I believe it is important as a researcher, to identify my personal and subjective location – i.e., how my race, ethnicity, gender, social class, culture and history offer a specific vantage point for understanding and analyzing my research problem, the research process, and research data (Collins, 1999). Such personal location and disclosure provide stakeholders and readers of my research with a context within which to critically examine and make sense of my study (Creswell, 2012b).

Additionally, it was necessary to reflect on who I am in relation to my participants in my study (Milner, 2007). That is to acknowledge the multiple roles, identities and positions (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation) that I, as researcher, and my participants bring to the research process (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tillman, 2002). From this perspective, my development of cultural knowledge was critical throughout the research process. Therefore, who conducts research with people and communities of colour matters less than what the researcher knows about the people and communities under study (hooks, 1989). Milner (2007) and Ladson-Billings (2004), both argue that the researcher's varied and multiple positions, roles and identities are intricately and inextricably embedded in the process and outcomes of education research. From a CRT perspective, the researcher's interests can unwittingly overshadow the interests of those participating in the research. In other words, the nature of reality or of our truths shapes and guides our ways and systems of knowing and our epistemological systems of knowing (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Similarly, Milner (2007) argues that the truth, or what is real and thus meaningful and "right" for researchers and participants depends on how we have experienced the world (p. 395). In thinking of what is meaningful and "right", I was forced to consider the profound impact of my research on the participants' well-being (Hostetler, 2005).

A critical process in making my positionality transparent and understanding how my research contributed to the well-being of my participants (Hostetler, 2005) were

through the use of racial and cultural introspection during the research process including the need for researchers to pose "racially and culturally grounded questions about themselves" (Milner, 2007, p. 395). For instance, I was conscious throughout the research process of reflecting on the ways in which my racial and cultural background influence how I experience the world, what I emphasize in my research and how I evaluate and interpret others and their experiences: How do I know? What racialized and cultural experiences have shaped my research decisions, practices, approaches, epistemologies, and agendas? Thus, according to Milner (2007) engaging with such questions can bring an awareness of known (seen), unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positions in relation to the conduct of my study.

Cornel West (1993) asserts that it is difficult to work for emancipation on behalf of others (and to work to solve problems with and on behalf of others) until people (or in this case researchers) are emancipated themselves. Moreover, as Cynthia Dillard (2000) suggests, each time a researcher engages in research, he or she is (re)searching himself or herself all over again, in addition to studying something or someone else. Milner (2007) explains that only when researchers engage in this process of reflection can their consciousness about explicit, hidden or unexpected matters become apparent, matters which can have a bearing on an entire research study. Milner (2007) goes on to emphasize, the nature, depth and meanings of (and answers to) the questions posed may change, evolve, and emerge as researchers come to know themselves, their situations and their experiences in a new, expanded or different way. Although, the answers to the questions may change, the responsibility to engage in this process of self-reflection remains the same and absolutely integral and necessary.

Working the hyphen

In considering my multiple and varied positions, roles and identities, I agree with bell hooks (1989) that there needs to be a degree of "disclosure" in doing qualitative research and with stakeholders (e.g., participants, academia, etc.) of our research. By disclosure, hooks (1989) suggests that,

There is a constant struggle and tension in what it means to reveal "personal stuff" (in research). There is a level of uneasiness and reluctance to revealing the personal, about speaking truths, speaking the outrageous, ideas about the self which we are told are private, not public. (p. 2)

It is the "personal stuff" which goes against traditional research and what counts as and constitutes knowledge (Creswell, 2012b). According to hooks (1989), it is imperative to consolidate this split between the private and public and to reveal its deep connections to the way racism, sexism and class exploitation work in our daily lives (both privately and publicly) as researchers and academics:

[It is] in those private spaces –that it is there we are often most wounded, hurt, dehumanized: there that ourselves are most taken away, terrorized and broken. The public reality and institutional structures of domination make the private space for oppression and exploitation concrete-real. That's why I think it [is] crucial to talk about the points where the public and the private meet, to connect the two. And even folks who talk about ending domination seem to be afraid to break down the space separating the two. (p. 2)

I also relate this notion of disclosure to how the participants engaged in this study. I was conscious of the need to be attuned to the anticipated fear and hesitation they could have felt throughout the interviews in talking about their *private* lives. hooks (1989) explains that many poor and working-class people of all races have been told not to talk about 'the private', yet, in asking them to do so, she cautions that we do not make them an "object or spectacle" (hooks, 1989, p. 4). Furthermore, I concur with hooks who argues that it is a humbling experience to talk about these (private) feelings, and things that may not make people see me (as researcher) as "so smart" (hooks, 1989, p. 4).

Analogous to hook's notion of disclosure, Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (2000) discuss the importance and challenges of writing ourselves into our study by reflecting on who we are and the people in our study. Fine (1998) describes the tension in terms of researcher neutrality and objectivity as *working the hyphen.* She explains that when we, as researchers, engage in the social struggles *with* those who have been Othered, we work

the hyphen, revealing more about ourselves and far more about the structures of Othering. By working the hyphen, Fine (1998) suggests as researchers, we need to probe how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations, and allow for participants to discuss with the researcher what is, and is not, "happening between," within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence. (p. 135)

According to Fine (1998) it is within this spirit of working the hyphen that when we construct texts collaboratively, self-consciously examining our relations with/for/despite those who have been contained as Others, we move against, we enable resistance to, Othering (p. 139). It is more than just giving voice to the other, and as Fine argues instead it entails listening to the plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge. I came to the research with an awareness that there is a great responsibility and importance as a researcher to acknowledge and understand how my background has the potential to influence how my participants perceive me, how I am perceived by others (i.e., academia), how I engage in my research and how my research will impact my participants (Hostetler, 2005). I wanted to avoid the suggestion that my research involves simply what Troy Duster (2000) refers to as "mere autobiographical sociology". In this case, I wanted to problematize any necessary affiliation or causal relationship between Asian researchers who study the problems of Asians. I reject this notion. I believe that it is about seeing particulars in my research "as part of a larger, human struggle" and steering my research from being too idiosyncratic and esoteric (Anyon, 2009). I recognize that I have to acknowledge my own struggles, my own reservations and my own assumptions and limitations based on my own experiences as a novice researcher with some degree of insider knowledge. By its very nature, qualitative research is interpretive, and it seeks to present, as objectively and fairly as possible, the knowledge and perspectives of research participants (Creswell, 2012a, 2012b). However, without distracting or misinterpreting them, I realize I am guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it may be understood and studied. In other words, my values as a researcher permeate my research and research process, whether consciously

or unconsciously. These are tensions and issues which I continually reflected on and considered at every stage of my research.

Reflecting on my position as a researcher was intensely difficult. Ruth Arber (2000) points out that the notion of positioning is troubling because it entails that it is something that is "natural, authentic, timeless" that "can fully explain and categorise us and them" (p. 46). It begs the question about whether positioning is simply about "stepping into pre-configured and solid identities" (Arber, 2000, p. 60). Rather Hall (1997) articulates that my identity "is always slipping", "always in the process of becoming" a "construction; something that is never completed. It is akin to what Pillow (2003) calls "uncomfortable reflexivity" (p. 188). I was cognizant that I did not want my reflexivity to be "a confessional act" (Pillow, 2003, p. 177) but rather an "ongoing self-awareness" (Pillow, 2003, p. 178) and doing research "with" instead of "on" my research participants (Pillow, 2003, p. 179).

I reflected on Trinh Minh-ha's (1989) words to reconcile some of my reservations I have as a minority researcher who is both an insider in the Vietnamese community and an outsider in the Western academy (see Li & Beckett, 2006), and the fluidity and fragility in occupying these positions, and the need to interrogate my own social positions of privilege and subordination, as a second-generation, working-class, Vietnamese, heterosexual woman. Minh-ha reminds me that I occupy different positions and in doing so, I "am crossing borders, moving through in-between spaces" and constantly negotiating differences between and within cultures, and the insider and outsider positions (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 7). She writes that this process of being the researcher and the activities expected of the researcher such as "writing, reading, thinking, imagining, speculating" are "luxury activities". A process that has plagued me with a lot of guilt; Minh-ha (1989) describes this as "guilt over the selfishness implied in such activity" in my position as a mother, and woman of colour, and being the first person in my family to attend university. However, this research process has also helped me to articulate some of the struggles I have experienced in negotiating this space of "infiltrating the world of the privileged" and feeling like I cannot "live up to the standards of excellence of some imaginary universal writer" and dealing with "the nagging fear of falling short" (Minh-

ha, 1989, p. 7). As a researcher I cannot speak of the other "without speaking" of myself, "without involving my story" (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 7).

As I reflect on my educational experience coming into this research, I realize that my racial experiences have often been connected to my educational journey and in the education setting. It has always been a space where I have encountered incidents of racialization but understanding that these experiences have been complicated by my gender, social class, and sexuality. As a Canadian born Vietnamese woman having gone through the Ontario education system, I was not able to separate this research topic and my experiences from my role as a researcher (Creswell, 2012b). I recognize that my own personal and social background and characteristics influenced the research process (Uy, 2018). The issue of race and racism in education and the model minority stereotype were not my first considerations as topics for my doctoral dissertation. In a sense, I think that I had kept these issues at a distance and minimized these experiences so that I would not have to engage in what Gloria Anzaldúa (1990) describes as a "total feeling and emotional immersion, the shocking drench of guilt or anger or frustration" that "wakes us up to some of our realities" (p. xvii). Anzaldúa (1990) reminds me that "distance" and "objectivity" do not help us come to terms with our issues. It may only be "a temporary breather" (p. xvii).

This research has been the most meaningful, yet also, most difficult part, of my educational career because it forced me to unpack some of these realities. Thus, I came to this research not as an "objective" outsider (Creswell, 2012b), but as someone who shares similar life experiences with the participants, such as being perceived as a "foreigner" and "quiet" and experiencing racial discrimination. However, claiming that I share some of the same experiences of my participants does not entail that I have "better" or more "valid" data (Pillow, 2003, p. 184). These shared experiences also did not necessarily grant me "insider status" (Pillow, 2003, p. 184), but it enabled me to approach these issues with a particular understanding and sensitivity. As a second-generation Vietnamese Canadian, I had much in common with my student participants – knowledge of the culture, and parents who are also refugees, lack English proficiency and familiarity with the education system, and work as labourers. These similarities helped create an

affinity with my student participants as I perceived that some participants developed a rapport with me quickly with some more open with me about their experiences during the research.

Methods

This was a qualitative case study (Yin, 2012) that involved employing the interview method to record the voices, experiences and stories of high school students who are of Vietnamese origin or identify Vietnamese as one of their identities. Through the use of interviews, specifically, semi-structured interviews, my research participants were able to discuss their experiences at school. The basis for my decision to use interviews is the ability to use conversation, discussion and questioning to allow my participants to share their personal experiences and insight (Lincoln, 1995b). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, I wanted my participants to have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings in an open-ended way. Such an approach relies heavily on the interpersonal skills of the researcher as an interviewer, and my ability to establish rapport with the students.

My aim was to develop an interview strategy that empowered my participants and to elicit elaborated responses. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) propose that the direction of the interview can be the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique. One of the advantages of employing semi-structured interviews is that they have the potential to provide more depth of information by allowing for more open ended and conversational flow. In the interview, personal perspectives can be provided and meanings and feelings can be shared and elaborated. As well and importantly, clarification of questions is possible in such interviews and as a researcher I had the ability to probe and ask further questions as topics emerged based on what was being said by the participant and to ask for clarification and examples. As such, I was able to discover and learn more about the students' lived experiences in high school and their current and future academic aspirations and goals (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln, 1995b).

The purpose of conducting single interviews instead of group interviews allowed for an individual focus and allow for differences of experiences to emerge (Merriam, 1998). The interviews allowed for different and multiple perspectives to emerge and richness of stories not possible, for example, through questionnaires or a focus group. Using semi-structured interviews, I was able to understand the specific backgrounds and experiences of each student. Moreover, interviews provided me an opportunity to investigate the students' stories, ideas and beliefs further and to gather data which may not be obtained by other methods such as observation or survey (Cohen et al., 2011). My interview protocol centred on conducting exploratory interviews (Cohen et al., 2011) which offers a deep knowledge base of the particular and allowed participants to talk freely, emotionally and to have richness, depth, authenticity and honesty about their experiences (Cohen et al., 2011). This approach gave precedence to the first-hand experiences of each student as it gave me insight into the "lens" through which these students interpreted their experiences at school (Yin, 2003; Cook-Sather, 2002; Lincoln, 1995b).

Participant recruitment

Participants were selected "purposely" (Patton, 2002). The main criterion for participants was that they are currently enrolled in high school and identify as Vietnamese with respect to their ancestry (i.e., second-generation or 1.5 generation Vietnamese Canadian). As well, students did not have to be fluent in Vietnamese or have knowledge of the spoken language to participate in my research. I applied for ethics through two school boards in two cities in Ontario which have been assigned the pseudonyms, Western community and Northern Heights community.

I had received ethics approval from each respective school board to recruit students from their schools. Within Western community, I sent a research package enclosed with copies of my letter of information and consent forms to ten secondary schools. Of the ten secondary schools, one that I name Open Secondary School (OSS) responded to my interest in recruiting and interviewing students for my research. At Open Secondary, a guidance counsellor was the person whom I connected to facilitate the room booking and schedule for interviews with interested participants. Students from Open

Secondary were selected through peer referrals, and the guidance counsellor's recommendations. These students were also made aware of the call for participants through postings of the research poster at their school and during their school morning announcements. As for Northern Heights community, the call for participants in my research was sent to the secondary schools via the local school board's ethics committee but none had return a response. Due to the lack of response from secondary schools within Northern Heights community, I was able to connect with a member from the Vietnamese catholic community board of directors in the same community, who was willing to distribute the letter of information for my research through word-of-mouth. It was there that I was able to recruit student participants through snow-balling (Glesne, 2011). Participants from Northern Heights community came from two secondary schools, a public and catholic secondary school that I name Parker Secondary School (PSS) and Manner Catholic Secondary School (MCSS). Before the first interview, all the participants were given copies of the letter of information and the letter of consent. The letter of information clearly stated the purpose of my study and indicated the risks and benefits of the study. As well, the students were made aware that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Secondary School Profiles

The following section provides a brief overview of the secondary schools that students were attending at the time of the research. Information regarding the social class, race, and ethnicity of the student population was made available to me through the participants' description of their respective schools.

Open Secondary School

Open Secondary School (OSS) is located in Western community and has a student population of around 1000 students. It is well-recognized as "a very multicultural school" with the majority of students coming from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Open Secondary has a reputation for being "an Asian school" including a large number of students of East Asian ancestry (i.e., Chinese) and a minority of international students

from Asia attending. The majority of the students come from different areas of the city, described as working class to middle-class SES neighbourhoods.

Parker Secondary School

Parker Secondary School (PSS) is located in Northern Heights community serving a student population of approximately 800 students. It is located in a middle-class neighbourhood and students attending this school come from predominantly middle- to upper-middle class SES neighbourhoods. The student population is predominately made up of "White students" with a minority of students from Middle Eastern, South Asian, East Asian and Southeast Asian backgrounds.

Manner Catholic Secondary School

Manner Catholic Secondary School (MCSS) is also located in Northern Heights community. The student population is known to be made up of students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds and known to be "very multicultural" including students from Italian, Cambodian, Assyrian, Vietnamese, and Portuguese backgrounds. There are approximately 700 students attending this secondary school and the school serves a range of SES neighbourhoods with a mix of government-subsidized housing to working- and lower- to middle-class households.

Participants

The following table outlines information about each participant. The information includes their age, sex, grade, and how they self-identified. All the participants were Canadian born and identified Vietnamese as part of their ancestry. A total of 15 participants were interviewed, including 11 female participants and four male participants, between 16 to 18 years old and in Grade 11 or 12. To ensure the identities of the participants remain anonymous and the information they provided remain confidential, pseudonyms[9] were assigned to each participant.

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[9] I chose pseudonyms that were of similar ethnic origin as the participant's given name.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information - Northern Heights Community

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Grade	Background	School
Beth	F	16	11	Identifies as "Africasian" and "Black Asian"; Parents were refugees; Working class	PSS
Kelly	F	16	11	Identifies as Vietnamese; Parents were refugees; Middle-class	PSS
Lucy	F	17	12	Identifies as Vietnamese; Parents were refugees; Working class	MCSS
Long	M	18	12	Identifies as Canadian (first), then Vietnamese; Parents were refugees; Working class	PSS
Mia	F	17	12	Identifies as Vietnamese; Parents were refugees; Working class	MCSS
Sam	M	16	11	Identifies as Vietnamese Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	PSS
Uma	F	16	11	Identifies as Vietnamese; Parents were refugees; Working class	PSS

Table 2: Participant Demographic Information - Western Community

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Grade	Background	School

Alice	F	18	12	Identifies as Vietnamese & Asian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Chloe	F	17	12	Identifies as Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Evan	M	18	12	Identifies as Vietnamese Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Grace	F	18	12	Identifies as Vietnamese and Asian Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Hannah	F	17	12	Identifies as Cantonese, Vietnamese & Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Leah	F	16	11	Identifies as Vietnamese Canadian; Parents were refugees; Middle-class	OSS
Marten	M	18	12	Identifies as Vietnamese Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS
Stella	F	18	12	Identifies as Vietnamese & Canadian; Parents were refugees; Working class	OSS

Data Collection

Prior to the first interview, students were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants were also informed that they were able to ask any questions regarding the study and their participation in it.

For the data collection, I conducted a semi-structured individual interview and a follow-up interview with each participant. The period of data collection was between November and April from 2013 to 2014. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face, using the semi-structured interview process. I met with the participants on at least two separate occasions. The first semi-structured interview ranged between 30 and 60 minutes. The follow-up interviews ranged between 20 and 45 minutes. I met with participants from Northern Heights community at a mutually agreed place, often at a public library or coffee shop. I met with the participants from Western community in a quiet room located in Open Secondary. These interviews were organized with the assistance of a guidance counsellor from Open Secondary. A digital audio recorder was used to record each interview session and informal field notes were recorded after each interview. The interview data and notes are stored in a secure place that is password and lock protected.

Each student was interviewed twice. After the first round of interviews, students were asked to meet for a second, follow-up interview at their convenience. The first interview was a semi-structured interview composed of pre-written questions (please refer to Appendix C: Interview guide and semi-structured interview questions). The focus of the interview questions had changed depending on the responses of the students during the interview. At times, participants were asked to elaborate or expand on points and topics that they may have raised during the conversation. Topics of interest in the first interview were centred around their family background, educational experiences leading up to high school, academic interests, extra-curricular activities inside and outside of school, educational goals and aspirations, interactions with and relationships with peers and teachers at school, and other issues related to their academic and social experiences at school.

The purpose of the second interview was for clarifying and verifying previously made statements as well as expanding previous statements made by the participants in the

first interview. The follow up interview generally took place a week (at the earliest) to a month after the first interview to allow for the first interview to be transcribed. Follow up questions were created based on the transcript from the first interview. I recognized that participants had other commitments and limited time to meet for a second face-to-face interview, so they were informed that the follow-up interview may be conducted via email, telephone or skype, if needed. All participants were able to meet face-to-face for the follow-up interview.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed[10], and the transcripts were read over numerous times for emerging themes, issues, and patterns from reading the participants' stories and perspectives. Using a thematic analysis approach (Patton, 2002), the findings were organized thematically and not by participant. This was the most time consuming and the most important part of my research. Patton (2002) explains the key goals in the process of data analysis "involves making sense out of what people have said, looking for patterns, putting together what is said in one place with what is said in another place, and integrating what different people have said" (p. 380).

Patton (2002) argues that validity in qualitative research methods is largely dependent upon the skill, competence and rigour of the researcher. For example, minimizing the validity issues in interviewing can be done by decreasing the number of incorrect interpretations through asking participants whether inferences drawn from what has been said are correct. Validity was achieved through the use of participant validation in the follow-up interview to clarify and confirm things that they had said in the first interview (Cohen et al., 2011). For my research, I did not use a computer program for analysis. Instead, I read and re-read the transcripts and pulled out emerging themes.

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[10] Considerations of the transcription process and conventions used in my study were informed by Atkinson and Heritage (1999), Bailey (2008), Cohen et al (2011), Tilley (2003), and Tilley and Powick (2002). Specific transcription conventions were used during the transcription process of the interview data. For example, pauses between utterances and emotions or gestures used by the participants were included in the data transcripts. The transcription conventions used in my study were based on the transcription conventions (Appendix A) cited in Tilley and Powick's (2002) article.

These were sorted into different categories and themes and allowed me to discern relationships, and patterns. The interview data is reported verbatim but, as previously mentioned, some information, such as names of persons (e.g., teachers, students, administrators, etc.), places (e.g., schools, community centres, etc.) and events, was changed and given pseudonyms to keep participants anonymous.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a justification for my research methodology including a discussion of my own positionality as a Vietnamese Canadian researcher researching Vietnamese Canadian high school students' experiences. I highlight the significance of my own insider positionality. I also detailed information about my decision to use semi-structured interviews and provided background information about the secondary schools that the participants attended. In the following chapter I provide a thematic analysis of the data in light of my theoretical and intersectional framework that is informed by Critical Race and Cultural Studies scholars.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter details the major findings that emerged from my study. The findings are divided into two sections. The first section details the participants' experiences of the model minority narrative: 1) being racialized as a model minority; 2) parental pressure; 3) perpetual foreigner; 4) racial stereotypes as jokes; and 5) "Asians hang out with Asians". The second sections detail the impact of 6) social class; and 7) gender, and sexuality on the participants' experiences at school.

Experiencing the model minority narrative

Being racialized as a model minority

In the interview, participants were asked questions about their perceptions about the characterization of Asian students as model minorities and whether they were impacted by it at school. The following narratives reveal how the participants experienced the model minority narrative through treatment by their peers at school and demonstrate how these experiences shaped the participants' different educational experiences. For a participant called Chloe, she did not consider herself as being an academically strong student but described being constantly perceived as being "very smart" as "stressful" and anxiety producing where she felt other students had high expectations of her. As a result, she felt that she had to continually perform academically well at school to avoid being questioned by her friends and other students about why she did not get "high marks". She explained:

> My friends assume that I'm a very academic person, and I have no clue why. I think it's because I help them too much so they think I'm very academic. So they have really high expectations right, so if I get a bad mark, they're like "oh like what happened?" It does not make me feel bad but stresses me out. It's like they made this standard that I have to achieve, in order for me to like not hear those kind of comments. (Chloe, Grade 12)

Billy Wong (2015) similarly found that British Chinese and Indian students developed feelings of self-doubt and experienced additional burdens when they were categorized as a model minority or when others expected them to always be successful. One common experience for many participants was being asked frequently for math help at school from students who they did not socialize with or know very well. Many of the participants were regularly confronted by assumptions that were based on the model minority narrative from other students (e.g., achieving perfect grades, being math nerds, always studious, etc.) and many of the participants felt interrogated by other students about their perceived aptitude in math. This is illustrated in the following narratives from some of the participants:

> They always ask me, "Oh Alice how did you do on that math test? You probably got perfect." Or "Alice can you help me with my math, I don't get this question," and usually I haven't even done the homework yet (laughing). Like one of my friends, about like a couple of weeks ago, he told me, "Oh Alice I didn't even know that you were not that smart. I heard from this girl you were really, really smart". And I was like, "Oh no, I'm not really smart." (laughing) (Alice, Grade 12)

> When people find out, all the time, when someone finds out I'm in college math, they're like, "What?" They always say, "What? You're Asian you're supposed to be good at math." I'm like, "Actually you should see my math mark, it's not really good." They always think we have to be good at math, we have to go to business management or business school... (Stella, Grade 12)

> I guess from those stereotypes, people see me as someone who is really studious. Like if they find out that I didn't do an assignment they'll say, "Oh really? I thought you would've done it". (Grace, Grade 12)

> For example, when I got a 70 in math, this guy, he is Asian too, he says, "You're Asian, how can you get a 70 in math?" It kind of bugs me. He didn't hurt me deeply but it still affects me a little bit. I wish I was good at math. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Kelly, for example, admitted in the interview that she regularly went to math help during her lunch breaks and took summer and night school to improve her grade in one math course because she was not doing well. Despite feeling that she was not doing well in her math course and regardless of her mark in the course, other students continued to presume she was naturally adept at math. This illustrates how Kelly's academic struggles are not visible to other students as she is constantly inundated with comments from others at school about being a model minority student.

When the participants were asked whether their teachers had these similar expectations, several of the participants thought that they did but it was not as explicit. Stella shared:

> I can tell deep down that's what they're thinking about. You should be smart, you're Asian… I'm the one Asian that doesn't do well on tests. It's kind of odd seeing the one out of ten Asians not do well so I guess that's why they expect a lot from me. (Stella, Grade 12)

Teachers' expectations of Stella as a model minority student reflects the function of the model minority narrative and the racialization of Asian students as being capable students. For example, Stella felt she was the only Asian student at her school who did not do well academically and noted that her teachers expected more from her simply because "all the other Asian students do well". In this sense, she feels she is held to a different standard than other non-Asian students. She explained that she felt her unique capabilities and strengths are overlooked as a result of being perceived as a model minority and lumped together with all the other Asian students at her school. However, Stella shared the different ways and efforts she made to separate herself from other Asian students and disassociate from the dominant model minority discourse. She insisted that she was "different from other Asians" and consciously made an effort to separate herself academically and socially from other Asian students by enrolling in college preparation courses, speaking out in class, and socializing with non-Asian students. Stella consciously resisted any association with the model minority.

According to McCarthy (2014), when students question the model minority stereotype, and question its validity, they have the potential to actively impact the way it is framed. While many of the participants did not think the model minority stereotype was problematic they did reject the notion of the model minority on the basis that there were Asian students who were "not very smart". They also rejected the validity of the model minority because many of the participants claimed: "I'm not good at math". Most of the participants did not embrace the stereotype because they did not see themselves as being "a typical Asian". This was a phrase which most of the participants used and identified quite frequently as a proxy term for model minority. According to many of the participants, a "typical Asian" is "naturally smart, studious, and good at math and sciences". This allowed participants to separate themselves from the stereotype because they considered themselves outside of the model minority and refused to be essentialized by it.

A participant called Mia reified an aspect of the model minority discourse that Asian students have a natural academic ability. She explained that she was "not a typical Asian" because she had to "try" to get high grades. In this narrative Mia attempts to disassociate with the model minority imagery by attributing her successes or failures to her own effort and hard work:

Mia: A typical Asian gets smarts… good marks without trying…

Vi: You wouldn't consider yourself a typical Asian?

Mia: No because I have to try. Like right now if I'm not trying I'll get 70s…60s.

When I asked her to clarify what she meant by "trying", she responded: I have to study the night before to get good marks. Mia considered the "typical Asians" as the students who are "gifted" and "do not have to try" to excel and get high grades. She and many of the participants also made statements that they knew Asian students who were "not smart in math" or claimed they were "not very good at math" therefore this stereotype is not "true". These participants' responses usually reflected a colour-blind position and

meritocratic discourse stating that they did not believe race had anything to do with academic achievement:

> I don't think my race has anything to do with anything. I think we all get treated the same no matter what race (pause). I'd say most people I know don't care what your background is. We're all just people. I don't think they really apply any of those stereotypes on me. I know they think I'm smart but I don't think it's because I'm Asian. (Sam, Grade 11)

When the participants take on this colour-blind position and uphold the notion of meritocracy, it makes it difficult for them to identify the racism they experienced in school. Students thus assume responsibility for their failures as well as the disparities in their experiences at school.

Another way that the model minority discourse masks the students' experience in schools is a lack of recognition for their individual efforts. It highlights how they are both racialized and "invisible", which some participants admit have intensified their feelings of isolation at school. For many of my participants, their academic success and efforts were not only recognized by others, but they were often dismissed by others with comments such as: "'Cause you're Asian". Alice Bradbury's (2013) study using data with teachers from primary and secondary schools in London, United Kingdom, describes these instances as "discourses of dismissals of educational success" where students who are ascribed a model minority status are subjected to dismissive comments regarding their academic achievements. This circumstance is illustrative in the following statements from the participants in my study:

> Yeah. Like Asians have to be good at math. I mean I think I'm personally good at math. I feel like it's bad because like when we used to go to math class in grade 11, with White people. Now in grade 12, it's all Asians taking math. In grade 11, all the White people would do bad in math and Asians did well and they're like, "It's 'cause she's Asian." Yeah well I don't know. It's not true. Not all Asians do well in math. I know White people who do well in math. (Hannah, Grade 12)

Chloe was also critical of being stereotyped and shared similar sentiments. She found that when it came to anything school related, she felt only Asian students were stereotyped and any achievements Asian students obtained would be dismissed. She was frustrated because she did not find this to be true for other students where their achievements would be reduced to a racial stereotype:

> I noticed this thing how like Asians, you score well in math, they're like, "Oh yeah 'cause you're Asian". That kind of thing. They put...they list Asians as a very stereotypical thing. They need to be smart, they have to be good at math and science and you never hear that of any other race right? Like even people who are not Asian, they would use that stereotypical thing. Like 'cause that happened to me many times. Oh like I scored really well on this test and this person who is not Asian is like, "Oh yeah 'cause you're Asian, I'm not surprised". (Chloe, Grade 12)

This notion of being subjected to discourses of dismissals of educational success via what Bradbury (2013) describes as "discourses of inauthenticity" is best exemplified in Chloe's following comments:

> …it's kind of a stereotype thing for Asians to be doctors and stuff like that. I have a lot of friends that their parents say the same things, it's either being an engineer or doctor or whatever. For example, if I were to get a really high score, they're like, "Oh yeah 'cause you're Asian" or I'm thinking biology, "Oh yeah 'cause you're Asian you have to be a doctor or something like that"… (Chloe, Grade 12)

> A lot of my friends that are Asian, they don't do well in math and they don't do well in science. They, you know, have different strong points but people don't see that. People just see, you know, you're Asian, you're smart at math, you'll be a doctor or be a dentist kind of thing. (Chloe, Grade 12)

Like some of the other participants, Chloe felt frustrated that the model minority stereotype confined her. She felt that when she would do really well academically, other people would dismiss it or not praise her and claim it is because she is Asian and it was to

be expected. In contrast, when she was not doing well, she also felt she would be judged harshly and felt pressured to consistently be successful:

> If I ever get a bad mark, like, "What's wrong with you? You're supposed to be smart". And you know I find that offending because Asians like, they're normal people, and they could be good at this or that. Someone could be good at English but bad at math. But for me, I'm more on the ...like not on the mathematical side, but on the musical side, but I also like biology, but I don't like math. (Chloe, Grade 12)

One participant called Uma (Grade 11) noted that she felt the pressure to be "smart" and as a result, she felt that other students wanted her to be part of their group in group work situations. She recalled being in one group work situation with other Asian students and overhearing the other students in her class automatically label her group as being "smart". Uma, however, did not perceive herself to be "a typical Asian", and she felt confused when other students, namely non-Asian students perceived her in this way:

> Uma: Everyone views us as smart. They will come over and be like, "Help me with math" or something. I'm really bad at math. I'm not as good as I want to be. They'll be like...(pause) One day in health, after gym class, we do two units in health class, so in health class, they just looked over, it was like get in groups of five and they looked at me and my other Asian friend, and they're like, "Pair up with them". I'm looking at them like what the heck, and so I had a group of five and they're all like my friends and one of the guys was like, "Wow, that group looks so smart", and it was me, Viet girl, Korean guy and two White guys. They're like, "Wow, they look smart". I'm like, "Do we really?" (laughing)

> Vi: Do you think they said that because there were Asian students in that group?

> Uma: I actually think so because I've never had a real class with them and I've never told them anything. I don't even talk to them so how would they know if I'm smart or not.

Uma found that often the large share of work would be left to her and the other Asian student(s) in a group because of the perception from non-Asian students that they are "smart". Uma also expressed a bit of anger in talking about how she and other Asian students usually did not get the credit for doing most of the work:

> I know that some of them, the work gets pushed on to them. They're the ones who do most of the work but they're not getting all the credit. (Uma, Grade 11)

Another point of contention for Uma was being asked frequently by other students for her help on their work. When I asked her to elaborate on her feelings about being frequently asked by other students for math help, she responded:

> I'm okay with helping people who I talk to. It gets really weird when like a complete stranger comes over and they have no knowledge of how good I am at math and I don't tell them my marks or anything. They just come over and they're like, "Hey Uma, how do you do this?" and I'm like "Why are you asking me? There are other people around you". (Uma, Grade 11)

When I probed about her reservations and discomfort around being asked by other students for help on their math work, she responded:

> Because I feel like I'm getting used. They try to make small talk, "Oh hey how are you?... By the way, how do you do this parabola?" Like why don't you cut to the chase? (Uma, Grade 11)

This particular example illustrates Uma's conflicted emotions of flattery and frustration with respect to being perceived by others as smart in math, but also feeling invisible to other students otherwise. Uma comes to the realization that she is both invisible, but also noticed by White students for their own benefit or perceived by them for her 'usefulness'. It speaks to what Coloma (2013) describes as the paradoxical subject position of Asian Canadians as un/wanted racialized minority group, where they are needed and rejected at the same time, desired, and undesirable for inclusion and integration in educational and social institutions (p. 580).

Parental pressure

The second theme unveils the students' negotiation between parental pressures and expectations from the model minority discourse. This finding is substantiated by existing literature that suggests Asian students will experience the tandem pressure to succeed academically from the model minority narrative and from their parents and family members (Lee, 1996). The participants pointed out that their parent's expectations seem to coincide with the model minority narrative that Asian students excel in math and sciences and will pursue careers in medicine, engineering, business or law. This often resulted in more added pressure and stress for the students.

Several of the participants described the immense pressure and the stress they endured to do academically well. Parental pressure was felt by students with respect to making decisions about academic courses and post-secondary choices. For example, several of the participants felt their math grades were not high enough, or that they had to be university bound. For example, one participant called Long claimed that he was not "a typical Asian" student. He struggled between the expectations from others to be "a typical Asian" and being himself. He admitted as a strategy to maintain aspects of "who he is" he hid certain aspects about his academic life at school from his parents to lessen the pressure to perform academically. He expressed frustration that when he did not meet his parents' expectations, they perceived it was because he was not working hard or studying enough. He also felt the pressure to be a model minority narrative was unrealistic and frustrating because he had differing academic goals. The pressure to adhere to the terms of a model minority in addition to trying to meet his parents' expectations resulted in him feeling compromised with regards to his own sense of himself and who he wanted to become:

> I always feel like there are more expectations even if I try my best…There was this time when I decided to drop my advanced functions class because I was struggling and there was no point in getting a 50 or 60 hindering my chances of getting a scholarship. Their mindset is that if you don't understand it, you go home and study it for another five hours...it's ridiculous, it changes who I am. (Long, Grade 12)

He further explained:

> ...even if I did do well, it's not well enough. I don't tell them if I drop a class. To
> be honest, I forge their signatures.

> A participant called Beth (Grade 11) similarly described hiding aspects about her
academic difficulties and sometimes her report card from her parents and siblings for fear
of embarrassment and shame on her part: I know it's kind of dumb but I don't want my
family knowing that I'm struggling in school. Another participant Mia also talked about
hiding aspects of her academic decisions from her parents as a strategy to avoid
confrontation:

> I talked to my guidance counsellor first, so then if my parents argue about
> anything, I'd say my guidance counsellor advised me on this and we both agreed
> on this. That's the only person I talk to about my courses. I don't tell my parents
> anything unless it's an emergency. (Mia, Grade 12)

Similar sentiments were articulated by other participants, who talked about the pressure
to conform to the model minority stereotype and feeling "worried" about their parents'
reaction to how they are really doing in school. Long claimed that he and other
Vietnamese students at his school did not have the grades or the aspirations to pursue the
types of careers that were expected of them:

> I know of other kids in my high school that are Vietnamese, that always have this
> sense of pressure that they shouldn't do something that isn't academic. They
> always struggle with their Vietnamese identity as in just because you're
> Vietnamese or Asian that we should have a strong academic background and
> honestly, I think I only know one Vietnamese girl in my high school who actually
> has a strong academic background but she herself feels like she is not meeting
> expectations and everybody else is struggling and kind of figuring out what they
> want to do and they're scared of what they want to do because of how Vietnamese
> people are going to react and how their parents are going to react. (Long, Grade
> 12)

A participant called Stella (Grade 12) also talked about wanting to go to college but her parents were adamant that she attend university. She explained that she was hesitant to tell her parents that she wanted to attend college in September so that she could explore this as a possible option without upsetting her parents:

> The other day I didn't have school, so I told them that I was going shopping with my friends but I actually just hopped on the bus and went to the local college campus to just roam around pretending I was a student on campus. I didn't tell them that because they would be mad. (Stella, Grade 12)

Consistent with other studies (Lee, 1996; Samura, 2015), Kelly (Grade 11) was among a few participants who experienced both external and internal pressure of adhering to the model minority discourse which resulted in her internalizing the pressures her parents imparted on her.

> Because my parents were really wanting me to go into university like maybe mostly sciences or math or like business and that area. So I felt like I needed to do it, even though I didn't really want to. I did it anyway. I did have physics this semester but I ended up dropping physics because it was too hard for me. I feel like... I don't even know why I chose it, to be honest. When I was in that class, I didn't feel like...interested in the subject. My dad kept telling me to take it so that's why I took it. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Kelly's narrative is an example of how the model minority stereotype intensifies the pressures in which some of the parents place on their children. Other participants like Kelly described the anxiety and pressure they experienced because of these preconceived ideas of which types of careers are acceptable for them as Asians. For some participants, these pressures and expectations were "unrealistic". Wong (2015) and Samura (2015) both found in their respective studies that Asian parents often do not recognize their children's aspirations as viable or promising pathways.

Mia (Grade 12), like several of the participants, were undecided in their post-secondary plans. Mia discussed the possibility of teaching or travelling and going into the

area of social justice. More importantly, she emphasizes the importance of finding out what she is passionate about but is unsure because her parents have different ideas for potential careers:

> Mia: I want to travel. I want to go into social justice. I haven't even looked into the programs yet. This was just decided two days ago. I don't know how to break it to my parents. They don't think it's a career. I don't know if I think it's a career.
>
> Vi: What do you think your parents would say?
>
> Mia: Yeah, you can do that when you have a job and extra money

When I asked Mia which career her parents expected her to pursue. She indicated a pharmacist or doctor, which were not her own goals:

> Recently, my dad said he wants me to be a doctor. I don't think he has the right to say. He doesn't have the right so tell me what to do. He doesn't even know what I like. I don't need that kind of pressure. He said he thinks I should be a doctor but I can't. It's too stressful. I don't want to do that. (Mia, Grade 12)

Chloe felt that the widespread circulation of the model minority narrative, Asian parents, have internalized ideals around which courses their children should study, and professions they should pursue, and thus have dictated their children's aspirational pathways. Chloe explained that she felt a lot of pressure from her family members to pursue a career in medicine:

> It affects you because your family affects you a lot because my family they try to make me become a doctor or become a dentist and I think that's been spreading around a lot and nowadays people tend to think what Asians should be, you know? (Chloe, Grade 12)

As a result of this narrowing expectation, some of the participants talked about feeling the pressure to pursue a career in the fields of medicine, engineering, law, or business. A few of the participants bemoaned the fact that their parents expected them to follow certain academic streams and focus on certain academic courses that contrasted

with their own interests and aspirations. Like Lee's (1996) findings from her ethnographic study, she found that the students also felt the need to fulfill these expectations. A few of my participants claimed they withdrew from extra-curricular activities to focus on their grades and ensure that they get into university.

For Stella, her goal to become a social worker was not a career path that her parents supported, and it was always a point of contention:

> My parents want me to go to university and become a doctor because my sister went to university for business which, no offense, *all* Asians go into business and get into math and stuff. My parents and I got into a really big fight. I feel like they see me differently now because I want to go to college. They think it's like lower than university. I always tell them it's different now. It might be different schooling and they teach differently. I always tell them I'm more of a hands-on learner. They still want me to go to university. They'll always ask me like, "Oh so when do you think you'll transfer to university? How are you doing in math?" Whenever I bring up college, they get really mad. (Stella, Grade 12)

Stella was among the few participants who internalized their parents' expectations in such a way that they became their own. This finding resonates with existing research on children of immigrant parents who feel significant pressure from their parents to pursue certain career paths (Lee, 2009; Zhou & Xiong, 2005).

Chloe also talked about her talent and interest in music and lamented that her parents did not recognize music as an area that could potentially lead to a career path. As a compromise, she gave up on her aspiration to be a singer to focus on her grades to get into university so that she could become a doctor:

> Before it was something I really wanted as a career but then my parents are like, it's very slim to be lucky to be an actual singer. So then it kind of turned into my hobby. (Chloe, Grade 12)

She went on to explain that her parents are only concerned with her grades in science and math while other courses are deemed as insignificant:

My gym, music and French, the ones that weren't really important to them, like they think science and math, just science and math but like I scored really low grades in those ones and I knew that and I never wanted to show them. I think in grade 10, I got a 100 in art, but then I got like 70s in the other courses and they got pretty mad. They completely ignored the 100. They're like what are you going to do with that in your life? The only thing they look at is my science and math marks. (Chloe, Grade 12)

The expectations and emphasis on high grades was normative for some of my participants, and for a few of these participants they received less recognition or praise for their achievements which Wong (2015) similarly found was particularly stressful for the students in his study. Some participants described feeling frustrated for not receiving any praise or recognition from their parents for their achievements. High academic achievement was just expected of them. I found this to be particularly evident when the participants talked about how their achievements/accomplishments were often downplayed or ignored by their parents:

They [parents] have such high expectations for me, so when I do get bad marks they just yell at me or something. When I do get a 90 or 100, they don't say anything, they don't say good job. They just say okay. (Hannah, Grade 12)

I tried really hard last year with the WE team and I've never worked so hard before that year, grade 11 and... I got the highest average I've ever received in high school which is a 92 average and I received a silver medal for it. They [parents] didn't say anything about it. It was really annoying. And this year I stopped trying. I didn't stop trying. I haven't been working my best...I hate stressing. I was so stressed last year. I thought I was doing well because grade 12 was coming up. That's why. They didn't say anything about it. I had to ask them to come to the awards ceremony. On awards night, they didn't say I'm proud of you or anything. I don't know why. (Mia, Grade 12)

Although the participants did indicate that their parents played an important role in their schooling, most of the participants indicated that they never felt pressured from their parents, but that rather it was implicit (Samura, 2015).

Perpetual foreigner

The third theme that emerged from my study was the presence of the perpetual foreigner stereotype. Many of the participants had to contend with both the foreigner and model minority stereotype. Several of the participants talked about being perceived by others as "outsiders" and having poor English skills. This finding highlights the racial implications of both narratives where Asian students are depicted as successful, hardworking, adept in math and sciences yet they are also assumed to have trouble with English and are not as inclined towards the social sciences and humanities. When the students are viewed as "foreigners" their identity as Canadians are essentially denied and questioned (Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Chou and Feagin (2015) found that while Asians are often viewed positively with respect to educational achievements, most discourses about Asians are framed around an "anti-Asian imagery" where they 'don't speak English well,' and 'have accents'. During the interview, many of the participants claimed they never experienced discrimination by other students at school, however, the reality of anti-Asian racism, and white hostility was evident in their coded words and anecdotes.

Grace was one of several participants who talked about how she came to understand the way Vietnamese people were positioned based on the negative portrayals of Asians in society:

> I guess like I kind of grew up like having in my mind like they [Whites] kind of think they're more superior… like in Canada the White people are more superior than Asians so they kinda think they're better than us so I feel like if I say something they might judge me for it. (Grace, Grade 12)

According to Bernal (2002), students of colour usually feel as if their culture, experience, language and history are not valued or are omitted in formal educational settings. It makes it seem that the education system seems to only value White ideals. Stella was

among a few participants who shared that they were "bullied" for being perceived as a foreigner. She explained that students assumed she could not speak English really well:

> I have trouble saying the letter r. So instead of rabbit I would say wabbit so I went to ESL and speech therapy and kids would make fun of me and call me a "FOB" and call me "so Asian"… I always played alone. They called me a loner. The kids would lock me in the closet. (Stella, Grade 12)

In keeping with a tenet of a CRT lens, several CRT scholars maintain that it is within these experiences, that racism manifests itself. It is these innocuous forms of racist behaviour that constitute racial microaggressions (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). It is these everyday racialized incidents that students experience and impede their feelings of acceptance and integration (Solórzano, 1998). Marten, another participant, for example, was similarly bullied for his accent in elementary school:

> Over the years and during elementary school, I've somewhat been bullied, just because they perceive me as 'a typical Asian', but maybe they perceive me as being from mainland China. (Marten, Grade 12)

Alice and other participants felt they were constantly stereotyped to be like East Asian students (i.e., Chinese, Korean) which made them feel that they (as Vietnamese students) are invisible and unknown. These students' voices corroborate Poon and Hune's (2009) findings that the model minority stereotype narrative reinforces the stereotype and contributes to the invisibility of lesser known groups, such as Vietnamese students, where Southeast Asian students are generally lumped in with East Asian students. Wallitt (2008) found that Cambodian students also felt invisible in school because of a lack of recognition for their ethnic identities. Teachers and other students would assume that these students were Chinese, which was one of the ways in which the model minority stereotype affected the perceptions of teachers and other students. The participants in my study also shared that they felt others would assume that they were Chinese.

Alice, for example, indicated that she felt alienated from other students at her elementary school and was harassed routinely. The students called her "Chinese" to cast her as an outsider:

> When I went there it was mostly full of Caucasian people. So, I was, I think one of the only Asian people there and people always thought I was Chinese and they'd be like, "Oh hey Chinese girl" (laughing). I'm like, "I'm not Chinese" (laughing). It was just not a good time for me. I feel like I was never really, I guess, like at home there…At my elementary school, I never felt like I really belonged, I guess. Like no one was really accepting as they are here. (Alice, Grade 12)

She reflected on the way Asian people were portrayed in society at that time which she believed was the reason other students alienated her in school:

> … it was a really negative experience for me. There was this stigma around Asian people. The way we were perceived was yuck [sic]. That was the mentality I was around other people. They thought I was yucky. They would call me "Chinese girl". I felt like there was a stigma around, I guess, Asian people and how they acted and how people thought they acted and I guess, just them in general, and I think, partially because my school was full of Caucasian people so I didn't feel like I really belonged there. (Alice, Grade 12)

When I asked her how the negative perceptions of Asian people impacted her, she replied that she felt embarrassed being Vietnamese and disassociated herself from anything that would reveal her Vietnamese identity to other students at school.

While Alice noted that her feelings about being Vietnamese has since changed, and that she is "proud to be Vietnamese" now, her narrative illustrates the fluid and situated racialization of these students (McCarthy, 2003) and illustrates how understandings about ethnic identity and race are constructed through interactions with other students at school (Coloma, 2017; Dei, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1998):

In elementary school, I was embarrassed to be Vietnamese just because of that stigma. I didn't want people hearing me speak Vietnamese or to associate me with anything related to Asian culture. I would speak to my mom in English and I would just do things that would not associate me with the Vietnamese culture… (Alice, Grade 12)

...like my mom used to pack my lunch. I told her not to give me any rice, any noodles, not to pack me any chopsticks, just like any foods that were related to Asians I guess. Also, there are certain clothes that Asian people wear like those matching jumpsuits that little kids wear (laughing). I told my mom not to buy me anymore of those. (Alice, Grade 12)

When I asked her how these experiences made her feel, she replied:

It made me feel really... bad, I guess. It's just...because of that I didn't really want to go to school anymore just 'cause I felt like every time I was there they would kinda pick on me like that, "Oh look, it's the Chinese girl" like they wouldn't say it in like a joking way, it was kind of like in a mean way, little kids kind of just pick on each other like that. And I didn't feel comfortable being in that environment. (Alice, Grade 12)

Alice explained that these experiences evoked negative feelings for her about being Asian:

I used to want to be... I used to *wish* I was Caucasian that I wasn't Asian anymore… (Alice, Grade 12)

Stella had similar sentiments and experiences. She explained:

I used to not tell people that I don't go to Temple or sometimes stupid stuff like what I eat at home. (Stella, Grade 12)

My mom would always dress me in *áo dài* [Vietnamese traditional dress] or random clothes she got from Vietnam. People thought it was weird. I'd always change at school or made it look different. (Stella, Grade 12)

Sam shared that he also felt like he had to hide his Vietnamese identity at school:

> I used to be embarrassed that I had to like bring Asian lunches to school like 'cause sometimes they look kind of weird to people who are not used to it so I used to be scared or like hide my lunch. So, I usually eat...like I have my Tupperware and then I have the lid for my food and I'm just holding it over and just sneaking bites… (Sam, Grade 11)

Long (Grade 12), as early as elementary school, felt that Asians were not as accepted and in high school, although there were more Asian students, he continued to feel different and less accepted by other students:

> ...the other kids kind of pushed me to the point, where being Asian, Asians are a minority, not accepted, but different, and then going to high school, turns out there are not a lot of Vietnamese, there are Asians, but they are Koreans, but from Korea and they are separated. (Long, Grade 12)

Long felt that other people solely saw him as "an Asian person" and did not recognize that he is also Canadian. It illustrates how the heterogeneity in Asian ethnic groups are masked under the model minority and foreigner discourse.

The recognition that Asians have historically been cast as both the "unassimilable alien" and the "model minority" (Espiritu, 1997, p. 108) is important to understand why students continue to be cast as outsiders. This issue impacted Long's feelings of being invisible to other students at school which were sentiments echoed by other participants. He questions the notion of what makes someone *a real Canadian* if not by birth? And *who* 'can be' Canadian during our interview:

> It doesn't bother me that they don't take into account that I'm Vietnamese. It bothers me that they don't take me into account that I'm another category. I don't care if they remember or take into account I'm Vietnamese, it offends me that they don't take into account that I'm not just Asian...it's funny because I was born here. I take offense to that. I can be even more Canadian than some of the kids. If

I was, let's say Chinese, or Japanese, I'm something further into the Asian category. (Long, Grade 12)

This was a significant factor contributing to Long and several of the participants' isolation and sense of estrangement from other students at school.

To further explore this theme, I asked the participants whether they have encountered the question "where are you from?" to which all the participants responded that they have been asked this question on numerous occasions. I could relate to the participants in the sense that I have and continue to be asked the same questions, "where are you from?", "where are you *really* from?", "where are you *originally* from?" And if my answers did not satisfy the person asking, in other words, they were not able to conclude that I am foreign, I would be asked "where are *your parents* from?". In my experience, these questions are seldom asked of my White peers even when they are children of immigrants too. My claims to being Canadian were and continue to be challenged. It is important to note that most participants identified as Vietnamese and not Vietnamese Canadian initially, and not Canadian even though they are all Canadian-born. Other studies have found that racialized groups will rarely identify themselves as 'American' or 'Canadian'. They equate "American" / "Canadian" with "White" and often use these two terms interchangeably (Tuan, 1998).

The question "where are you from?" seemed to stir up feelings of frustration for several participants. It is a constant reminder to these students that they are not viewed as having an identity outside of being "Asian", and that they do not "look Canadian". Kelly shared:

Okay, well actually yesterday, I went to dance club which is a club at school. There are some new people there. One of them asked me, it was really random, I wasn't even talking to him, but he just looked at me and was like, "Oh are you Thai?" I'm like, "Oh no I'm Vietnamese." They always question...they either ask me what I am or they question...um, they ask if I am this ethnicity. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Kelly felt troubled when people would list the different Asian ethnicities and Vietnamese would usually not be listed. She felt Vietnamese people were regarded as less significant than other Asian groups and unknown to the general populace. She was among several participants who talked about the tendency for other students to view them as the same as every other Asian:

> It sometimes bothers me when they would always ask me, like they always ask if I'm Chinese first. And then I'm like "no" and then they start saying a bunch of ethnicities like Japanese, Korean and stuff and it's like they are listing it all. It kind of makes me feel...I feel like I'm unknown, it's not as....I'm not as important as Vietnamese....they are listing all these places. Sometimes I tell them I'm Vietnamese, they have never even heard of it or know where it is. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Kelly interpreted these experiences as a message that Vietnamese people are not as important. A few times during the interview, she asserted her pride of being Vietnamese but also felt like it was not viewed as positively. She felt she was resented by some students at her school and recalled one significant experience:

> Like I'm really comfortable, I love being Vietnamese. I'm really proud of it. But I remember last year, the hallways are kind of like... there are a lot of students so everyone is bumping into one another and stuff. The bell rang, me and my friend, he is Korean, and we're walking and this guy, I think he's in grade 12, he's walking and then I think he bumped into us and we're like, "Oh sorry" and he kind of turned around and he's swearing "F-ing Asians! They're everywhere! They're always in the way!" I'm like, "Okay calm down". (Kelly, Grade 11)

Kelly was not alone, as other participants from Parker Secondary alluded to a particular anti-Asian climate at their school. This was one of several experiences that informed her feelings about being Vietnamese, and her sense of belonging at school and relationship with other students who were non-Asian, particularly White students. This particular experience was significant in contributing to her feelings of alienation and disengagement. The contradictory messages that several of the participants received

because of their race and ethnicity made it difficult for them to create a positive self-image of their racial and ethnic identities (Teranishi, 2002).

Long also felt that he could not identify as Vietnamese or Asian Canadian because non-Asians would question his "Canadianness".

> I think they have a very perceived image of what it means to be an Asian Canadian, a very ignorant way of thinking that because I don't have this, or I don't eat this or I act like this, apparently I'm less Canadian than another student. (Long, Grade 12)

Long was critical of his school experiences. In retrospect, he felt that schools did more to exacerbate and perpetuate the image of Asian students as being "foreign" and "different" by celebrating multiculturalism and streaming students like him into ESL classes. Similar to Lee's (2006, 2009) studies on immigrant youth, regardless of citizenship, generation, languages spoken, and ethnic origin, the participants were racialized through their school experiences. The participants were surrounded by hegemonic messages about race, where whiteness and Canadian are synonymous, and the standard in which many of the participants measured themselves and others. Not surprisingly, they had internalized the idea that White students are the 'only authentic Canadians'.

In the Canadian context, the multiculturalism discourse is problematic for disrupting the model minority narrative (Pon et al., 2017). Its emphasis on culture perpetuates the widespread belief that problems faced by racialized students are not linked to structural barriers such as racism, but instead to cultural differences (James, 1995). From this perspective, race is equated with ethnicity and culture, thus overlooking the salience of skin colour as a negative impact on the educational experiences of students (Dei, 1997). Pon (2000a) argues that the model minority and multiculturalism discourses work to essentialize a static and ahistorical notion of 'Asian culture' (p. 90). In doing so, culture is not seen as hybrid and dynamic (Hall, 1990). Furthermore, it serves to reinforce the liberal belief of meritocracy, which some of the participants upheld. The two discourses, Pon (2000a) argues, are not only hegemonic devices that maintain White domination, they are also mechanism of control at the disposal of liberal democratic

governmentality (p. 91). This understanding underscores the importance of examining how the model minority discourse is influenced by migration, and politics (Pon et al., 2017) and not just solely through the lens of racial relations (McCarthy, 2003).

An example of the problematic aspect of multiculturalism and the racialization of students on the basis of linguistic competency is reflected in Long's response below:

> I think the way the school board, tries to make it culturally diverse and accepting. What they do in reality is that they put cultures on the spot. They try so hard to be accepting, they end up singling out people… they tried so very hard to be culturally accepting, they look very ignorant doing it, they purposely put someone on the spot, and they ask ignorant questions to learn more. I think a lot of elementary schools are racist in that they put a lot of kids in ESL, and I was put in ESL but I was born here and I look back, I was insulted. (Long, Grade 12)

Long was not the only participant who shared being put into ESL classes despite being able to speak English. Dei's (1997) study of African-Canadian youth's schooling bears some similarities to my own findings in this respect. He notes that the placement of students into ESL classes is interpreted by the students that they are perceived as inferior by the education system and contributed to their sense of belonging at school and self-identification as Canadians (Dei, 1997, p. 251).

Racial stereotypes as jokes

The fourth theme focuses on the normalcy of evoking the model minority stereotype. The topic of the stereotype inevitably led to discussions about racism to which I had asked participants about whether they knew about the origins of the model minority stereotype. While the students were not aware of the origins, they noted that they believed it came from the media and popular culture. As McCarthy (2014) points out the importance of examining the popular culture as a site of power to understand how Asians have been invented and reinvented in the media, and in television. The rapid change in globalization and the transnational flows of cultural and economic capital including the flow of the model minority discourse within the United States and into the Canadian

context incites new challenges for the reproduction of this imagery (Coloma, 2017; McCarthy, 2013; McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood, & Park, 2003; Pon et al., 2017). Apart from a few participants, many would downplay the notion of racism when describing these incidences of racialization by other students and admitted that these incidents are embedded within the cultural ethos of high school (Raby, 2004). This finding highlights one such way that the model minority narrative maintains its permanence in schools and in the participants' lives, making it difficult for them to problematize it. The participants would use the following two rationales/responses to explain the pervasive stereotyping of Asians at school: 1) students are "only joking"; and 2) this is a "normal part of high school".

By depoliticizing race and labelling these exchanges as "joking around" Whites are re-inscribed as racially innocent (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). In other words, the effect of this is that it maintains White racial innocence – i.e., when confronted with the history of colonialism and racism and its effects on racialized people, Whites tend to claim racial innocence and take up the role of admirer or moral helper (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014, p. 109). DiAngelo and Sensoy employ Dion's (2009 as cited on p. 109) concept of 'perfect stranger' which refers to when Whites 'don't know anything about racism,' how could they be held accountable for their investments in and enactments of it? Yet in reality, rather than 'knowing nothing,' these students have learned a great deal from dominant narratives that position racialized people in a range of problematic ways. In effect, DiAngelo and Sensoy would argue this stance closes off any examination of their own implication and attachment to racism and colonialism (Dion, 2009 as cited on p. 109).

Similarly, Dei (1997) articulates that "whiteness is a sort of commodity or property that one can carry around and trade for particular benefits or rewards. Whiteness can also confer on a social group the right to accord penalties and punishments" (p. 243). He explains that some members of the dominant group can easily deny their complicity in racial subordination and or social oppression, whereby there is no room for imagining ways of rupturing the image of White normalcy. The privilege of whiteness refutes the existence of racism and is protective of the source of sanctioned privilege (Dei, 1997, p.

243). Although all the participants framed these racial microaggressions as simply "jokes", and claimed to engage in similar behaviour, they were not passively accepting it. Rather, this practice of deflecting and diminishing the seriousness of these interactions helped to make their social interactions and experiences at school less alienating and "bearable".

Long was not the only participant who admitted "I say it too". He claimed that he made "jokes" by stereotyping other students as did everybody at his school so "it's okay". He recognizes that it occurs all the time but it is not a concern. He states, "I can't even single out any group of kids. Everybody does it. I do it". Most of the participants explained that they also engaged in stereotyping other Asian students or made "jokes" about other racial groups therefore the same exchanges and remarks from other students were considered "harmless" and not offensive. Many participants suggested that if the student "meant to be funny" when making the remark then there was no reason to "take it seriously". From a CRT framework, racism is a normal, common everyday occurrence. Therefore, for the participants, while racism may occur, the students may not realize it because it is normalized. While the majority of participants minimized or dismissed the notion of experiencing racism, when prompted further, they recalled incidents of racial microaggressions but insist that this is not really what is happening by explaining that it is the culture of high school and is not anything "serious". Several participants talked about these experiences in very individualist terms as if these comments from other students are a reflection of personal sensibility rather than racism. However, based on the participants' responses, it is evident that there is a pattern of jokes that are laden with racial stereotypes about Asians revealing the pervasiveness of the model minority and foreigner discourse, and also revealing the dominant perception of Asians as being the same, foreign, and math and science nerds (Chou & Feagin, 2015).

Kelly's comment is illustrative of the frequency in which the model minority stereotype is brought up at school. She stated, "I hear it every day". Her response also reflects a desensitization to these comments:

When I hear stereotypes, it's always a joke. "Oh it's because I'm Asian" but it's a joke and we'll all laugh about it. I've never really heard someone be racist for real. I know that doesn't make sense but it's kind of being playful. We all know we don't mean it when you say, "Oh it's because you're Black" and we'll say, "Yeah it is" and we'll all laugh because we know it is a joke. I've never heard anyone say a real racist remark. I'm sure I have but I can't recall it and if I can't remember it means that it doesn't happen a lot. It happens every day because all my friends are Asian. Like even today, this student said to me, you should play chess against this other student, and I asked him, "why?" and he said, "because you're Asian and you're smart". I took it as a joke. I just laughed. I don't care. I don't think anyone takes it seriously. I think that's really a big thing among people my age, we all say these jokes, and no one takes it seriously. (Kelly, Grade 11)

When I asked whether these jokes bothered her, she responded:

It doesn't bother me. Sometimes I think it is annoying. It's been said so many times. It's hilarious but when people say things like that I'm like it's not even funny. It's annoying because I hear it so much and I think that's why I don't care because I hear it so much. I just shrug it off. It doesn't hurt me but it would hurt me if they were being serious. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Other participants echoed similar sentiments that jokes about the model minority are innocuous because it is a "positive" stereotype, and racial banter is normal teenage behaviour.

I hear that a lot. It's usually a joke in a joking manner. So usually I just laugh along (laughing). Usually it's funny (laughing). (Alice, Grade 12)

I mean, I don't see nothing [sic] wrong with stereotypes. I don't take complete offense to them when I think about them…there are a lot of positive stereotypes like Asians being smart, that's not bad, right? Like Asians have bad eye sight or

how Black people are tall or athletic. That's not something you should be
offended by. (Long, Grade 12)

Yeah, they don't take it as seriously because you know we're teenagers and we
understand that we're just joking around. (Chloe, Grade 12)

It's just a small harmless joke here and there saying, sometimes it's even said by
the Asian person… I even do it myself. Like when people ask, "Did you get an 80
in that?" I'd say, "Do you think I'd get a high mark in that because I'm Asian?"
(laugh). I don't have any hard feelings, just a little joke to lighten up the mood.
Usually people would ask the person, "is that okay? Sorry, if I offended you." It's
completely harm free, I think. (Leah, Grade 11)

Leah: People are quite comfortable with the Asian stereotypes. They would joke
about it a lot. If people don't like it, they wouldn't say it. Just everyone is really
relaxed about Asian stereotypes here. (Leah, Grade 11)

Contrary to Leah's suggestion that "if people don't like it, they wouldn't say it", several
participants recognized that it was easier to be complacent than to say anything to
challenge these jokes and comments. While the participants had different reasons for not
challenging the remarks from other students, it was evident in their responses that their
avoidance in addressing these comments was a protective strategy so that they do not
continue to be a target of these jokes and to make the situations less uncomfortable. Long
admitted that he and other Asian students at his school often just "go with it" and was
conflicted by this common response. By not saying anything to refute or reject these
remarks he also felt he and other Asian students were inadvertently agreeing with the
stereotype and allowing others to continue to think that it is okay to make those
comments and stereotype Asians as model minorities.

...they don't take it seriously in that we're not taken seriously. If you start
agreeing with it, I think that those kids don't realize that they are agreeing with it.
Sometimes, I know in reality none of those are true. (Long, Grade 12)

He also commented:

No one says anything or stands up. It's pretty bad when you look at it. I'm not afraid to say anything. Some kids just sit there and watch. If kids were to say anything, they are viewed as overreacting or sensitive. (Long, Grade 12)

While many of the participants would indicate that racism was not seen as a problem at their school, there was a discomfort in naming racism and identifying the model minority stereotype as "racist". Chloe felt conflicted and questioned whether making these remarks were offensive if they are shared between friends. She commented:

Ok I know sometimes for fun, they would tell stereotypical things about that race to that person. And it's very offending but then that person and the other person who is saying it are really close friends but it's still considered as racism right? (Chloe, Grade 12)

I think it's because like, you know, they hear it all the time and they don't want to cause big trouble out of it and push it aside and they got used to it. Especially with your friends, and if your friends say something racist towards you it's like, "Oh okay whatever". (Chloe, Grade 12)

Mia described the difficulty in reacting to these remarks because they occur all the time.

Yeah, it like always happens, right? It's high school. They joke around, they don't mean it. You can't yell at them you'll look stupid because they don't mean it. You can tell they're just saying it for laughs. (Mia, Grade 12)

Whereas Alice felt that if someone challenged these stereotypes they would be "ruining the fun":

There are some instances where that joke could be perceived in the wrong way. Usually people do take it as a joke. I feel like, on the one hand, they don't want to kill the vibe. They don't want to be like, "Oh hey guys, that's not cool, what you said there was racist. It wasn't funny." They don't want to kill the fun for everyone else. They don't want to be that person that intervenes and makes everything a buzz kill. (Alice, Grade 12)

Alice's comment highlights the embeddedness of racial banter and stereotypes in conversation between students in her high school. She explained that racist remarks have become acceptable and normalized because they are used by others to be comical rather than hurtful.

> …I think racism now, it has kind of turned into a joking thing, which it should not, but it has turned into a joking thing. People just joke around a lot and people throw around racist comments and people just take it as a joke. (Alice, Grade 12)

This sentiment is also shared by Long and Chloe:

> Yeah. You hear it all the time. It happens at all schools. Racial slurs are thrown everywhere. I think racial discrimination and jokes are a problem. I mean, in comedy, you see a lot of racial jokes here and there, they are before the line is crossed. You need to learn to laugh it off and some of them are completely not okay. (Long, Grade 12)

> Yes (laughing). I think it exists everywhere it's just that in that moment you don't really think about it much and we adapt to that racism unless that racism is *really bad*, then someone would say something. (Chloe, Grade 12)

For example, Long explained he usually did not respond to any of these comments unless it was "really serious" and suggested that the only circumstance under which he would ask a teacher to get involved into such matters is if there was a fear or threat of being physically attacked at school:

> I mean as a high school student, unless it's really, *really* serious, you don't say anything, unless it's unsafe. If you were going to bring a teacher in, you would feel like if you came to school you would you get jumped. (Long, Grade 12)

Lee (2009) described a similar environment in which students at her research school engaged in a practice of making jokes or derogatory comments regarding someone's race or ethnicity, which the participants described as "busting" on each other. While Lee stated she observed racial slurs being directed at Asian and African American students,

she never witnessed racial slurs being directed at White students suggesting that "busting" was a unidirectional activity that left White students untouched (p. 100). Like the participants in Lee's (2009) research, my participants also reported rarely challenging these comments, and even laughing the jokes off. Lee found that in doing so, these students accepted that Whites were at the top of the social hierarchy inside and outside the school and often colluded with the Whites in their racial jokes about members of their own race. Some of the students referred to themselves as "chinks" in order to make people laugh. For instance, Lee said that some Asian students busted on other Asians in order to make it clear that they are different from other Asians. Lee (2009) explains that humor, self-mockery, and clowning are self-protective and resistant strategies that racial minorities use to deal with the dominant group but also those in power often come to expect self-effacing behaviour from racial minorities. Interestingly, Lee (2009) found that many White students befriended Asian students who actively participated in self-busting. And students who refused to participate in self-busting were often accused of being humorless. The participants in my study were accused of being sensitive if they reacted to these racial jokes and they feared being isolated by other students if they did react. In contrast,I found that a couple of participants engaged in making derogatory comments about other Asians which helped make them popular and feel accepted among their White peers.

While the students all explained that the racial jokes were essentially harmless and innocuous, the prevalence of these "jokes" in actuality reinforce and strengthen stereotypical and hegemonic notions of race and perpetuate simplistic understandings of Asian students and communities. This finding points to the need to seriously question these types of exchanges between students, especially when they go unchallenged by teachers and other students.

"Asians hang out with Asians"

The fifth theme focuses on the impact of the model minority stereotype on the participants' relationship with other students at school. A recurrent theme that many participants talked about was their friendships at school and the recurring statement from almost all the participants was that "Asians hang out with Asians". The participants from

Open Secondary and Manner Catholic Secondary described that they had a good relationship with other students and did not feel tension with other groups at their school. These students did not think the division between groups of students was a bad thing and would comment that for the most part "everyone gets along but no one mixes". Participants from Parker Secondary noted that the segregation at their school was "very obvious". Distinct from the other two secondary schools, the participants from Parker Secondary indicated that they intentionally avoided having White friends.

Dei's (1997) research is helpful in understanding the conscious decisions that students make to forge strength in hanging out with students from the same racial background. He found in his study that Black students made a conscious choice to hang out with other Black students because they felt they were able to be themselves and there was a feeling of comfort and support that they did not get elsewhere in the school (p. 250). Similarly, many participants indicated that forming friendships with other Vietnamese and Asian students made school a more bearable experience and helped them get through the day as a coping strategy, especially for the participants from Parker Secondary where some of the participants indicated that they were not able to be themselves around White students out of fear of alienation. Linda and Uma, who are in the same peer group, explained that their friendship with other Asian students became "a support group" because they all had similar experiences of feeling alienated at school, and had a mutual understanding of their racialized position. They shared that they forged a friendship group together in part because they believed they provided support to each other and were able to talk about their experiences of racialization and alienation by the White students at their school:

> Yeah, they feel the same (laughing). That's what mostly made us a clique. "Oh my god, this happened and this happened" and they'd be like, "that happened to me too". Alright, we can do this. (Uma, Grade 11)

The participants from Parker Secondary characterized the racial climate at their high school as having intense racial and social class segregation. One significant difference in the three secondary schools was the racial and social class diversity of the

student population at each school. Open Secondary and Manner Catholic Secondary have a diverse student population in terms of race, ethnicity and social class. Parker Secondary, by contrast, historically has a predominantly White, middle- to upper-class student population with a minority of students from different racial, social class, and ethnic backgrounds. When compared to the students who attend Parker Secondary, I found that Open Secondary participants did not face the kind of pervasive exclusion and isolation that characterized Parker Secondary participants' experiences at school. During the interviews, I asked the participants questions about their friendship group and relationship with peers at their school. Several participants alluded to certain perceptions that they felt non-Asian students had about Asians students which influenced the friendships many of the participants forged with other students and also impacted certain types of students that they consciously avoided. Similar to Oiyan Poon's (2011) study of Asian American students on college campuses, these students generally did not have a "sense of belonging", even on campuses where there was a high numerical representation of Asian American students. These students still experienced racial marginalization as a result of racial micro-aggressions.

Many of the participants talked at length about friendship and the importance of friendship. For many of the participants, the social experiences, specifically, friendships and relationships with other students were integral and equally important, as their academic experiences, to their overall experience at school. To elaborate when students shared their experiences and stories about school, very few mentioned their interactions and relationships with teachers, staff or administration at school. More importantly, many of the students indicated that they did not share or discuss their social experiences and friendships with their family or teachers. The students indicated that they did not share or discuss their social experiences and their friendship problems or conflicts with others (e.g., adults) for a variety of reasons (e.g., the notion that their social experiences are not relevant, parents would not understand, fear of reprisal from other students and criticism from their family members). Some students indicated that their academic experiences and concerns usually took precedence over their social experiences and sometimes the desire and pressure to achieve high grades and do well in their courses was at the expense of their social experiences and relationships at school.

Some of participants described the model minority stereotype that Asian students are nerdy, quiet, socially inept, focused on studying and do not know how to socialize or only socialize exclusively with other Asian students. The impact of these misconceptions was evident in the participants' relationship with non-Asian students at school as most of the participants described that non-Asian students usually did not initiate friendships or interact socially with them insider or outside of school. A recent study on the relationship between media representations of Asian students such as the model minority and people's interactions with Asian students at one university in the United States, Zhang (2010) found that the stereotypes about Asians did impact people's interaction with Asian students, in particular, they found that Asian students were more likely to be left out and excluded than other racial ethnic groups (i.e., Hispanic, Blacks, and Whites) in social interactions, and the least likely group that others would initiate a friendship. The same study found that Asians were more likely than any other racial ethnic group to be perceived as nerds and lacked appropriate social and communication skills.

Grace described the perception she felt non-Asian students had of her and Asian students in general:

> They're always really studious and like, all they focus on is school only and they don't really socialize. They're kind of like "goodie too shoes" kind of thing. Just really good in general. (Grace, Grade 12)

Alice commented that the media and popular culture impacted and reinforced the stereotypical portrayal of Asian students as being focused exclusively on studying at the expense of having fun. She was among several of the participants who cited examples of how Asians are portrayed in popular culture and in the media as a way to make sense of how they may be perceived by their peers at school:

> I think they portray Asians as a studious, nerdy group of people that studies all the time and kind of doesn't know how to have fun. (Alice, Grade 12)

However, Alice found this perception of Asian students to be untrue.

I think they portray Asians as a studious, nerdy group of people that studies all the time and kind of doesn't know how to have fun. But especially recently, (laughing) I found out that there are a lot of Asian people, especially Vietnamese people, that just party a lot and they don't care about school, whatsoever… (Alice, Grade 12)

Here, my finding is consistent with previous research on the impact of popular culture on youth from immigrant families (Lee & Vaught, 2003; Olsen, 1997; Pyke & Johnson, 2003) as many of the participants made references to popular and consumer culture about what it means to be "Asian" and their understanding of the model minority. Stella (Grade 12) commented that Asian students who are always studying and doing academically well are described as "weird" by White students at her high school. While the Asian students who are perceived as not doing academically well are labelled the "cool Asians".

Stella: I've heard a lot of White people say, "Oh, are you coming to the party? The cool Asians are coming." I'm like, "what are you talking about?"

Vi: How does that make you feel when people talk about Asian students in that way?

Stella: It kind of sucks and I find it rude but I'll laugh along because they're my friends too but at the same time I'm also like you shouldn't say that. It sucks 'cause we all know who they are talking about when they say, "the weird Asians" and "the cool Asians".

Vi: How are the cool Asians "cool"?

Stella: I guess the clothes they wear. They would wear True Religion jeans, they would walk around wearing all black and look really mean. I guess the way they talk and I guess the way they hold themselves up.

Here, Stella's comments highlight how dress and mannerisms signified degrees of closeness to "whiteness" and thus, approval and acceptance by White students. Additionally, her example illustrates the ostracization of Asian students based on the

perception of Asians as model minorities (e.g., being studious), and as foreigners (e.g., having an accent). Stella was the only participant in my study who did not hang out with other Asian students. She boasted that she was not like the Asian students at her school in terms of academic performance, courses taken, and career aspirations. Stella talked about her desire to distance herself from "the weird Asians" and admitted that she preferred to socialize with White students. During the interview, she described the Asian students as "dumb". When I asked her to clarify why she said they were "dumb", she explained that because "they are not like the White students". Stella suggests that White students at her school intentionally interacted with Asian students who they perceived as not conforming to the model minority stereotype. Stella indicated that she made a conscious effort to move away from the model minority and foreigner image of Asians and strived for whiteness in terms of dress and mannerisms to feel accepted by her White friends.

It was apparent that Stella was concerned with the way her White peers viewed her and Asian students and wanted to distance herself from the stereotypes about Asians by not appearing too Asian. Lee (2009) described these Asian students in her study as "peer-oriented" students where the most important thing was social acceptance and these students were the antithesis of the Asian model minority (p. 44). Kevin (a student from Lee's study, 2009) criticized his Asian peers for not being able to get along with non-Asians. He believed that studying and doing well in school prevented Asians from being accepted by non-Asians. Like Kevin, Stella wanted to be accepted by non-Asian students as well. (p. 73). Thus, to be accepted by her White peers, Stella tried to "not be like the other Asian students" and denigrated them and anything that was perceived as "being Asian". Bic Ngo's (2006) study found some Asian students construct racial identities that distance themselves from the stereotypical images of Asians because they have internalized the dominant society's message that they are inferior and different. In some instances, Ngo found that some Asian students developed negative attitudes and behaviours towards other Asians in an attempt to 'belong' (p. 61). One such way I found was that some participants made reference to international students or immigrant students from Asia as a way to distance themselves from stereotypes about Asian students, by placing the international students into these stereotypes instead. It was a way in which

some participants disassociated from the dominant discourse and portrayal of Asian students as model minorities.

Most of the participants from Parker Secondary talked about the uneasiness of situations at school where they felt they were cast as being the same as other Asians but different from White students. Being perceived this way resulted in feelings of alienation, resentment, sadness and even anger. These students described their school as "cliquey" and reported unease about their relationship and interaction with the "popular" (i.e., White) students. In Long's words:

> At Parker Secondary, you actually get different cliques of people, if you're athletic, you're with the athletic people, if you're academic, you're with the academic people, if you're not doing much, you're a slacker, you play video games, you have your own crowd, the average kids, race...there is a difference between race.....the White kids hang out with the White kids, like at my school, every kid hangs out with each other, some of them hang out with the White kids, you can see Korean kids hanging out by themselves, so it's pretty separated here. (Long, Grade 12)

The participants from Parker Secondary mentioned avoiding interactions or activities with other students who they perceived as hostile. For example, Uma and another participant Beth discussed the factors that they considered when choosing their courses for the following year. A huge factor in their decision was whether one of their friends would be taking the same course. These participants wanted to avoid feeling alone in their classes. For Long, he admitted that he did not have many, if any friends, for that matter. He considered himself to be a loner. Long found refuge from other students by frequently going to the nurse's room to sleep or going home during his lunch and spare breaks. For Long, he felt he did not fit in at school with any group of students including other Asian and Vietnamese students. His narrative will further be explicated in the last two findings.

Most participants discussed a level of comfort in having friends who are also Asian. Grace attributed this comfort and tendency to hang out with other Asian students based on the racial division of students at Open Secondary:

> There's a lot of groups. The Asians, the White people, the Black people. Yeah since there are a lot of groups, we mostly socialize amongst our own group if we talk to other people from another group, it does get awkward. (Grace, Grade 12)

When asked to elaborate on why it gets awkward to interact with other groups of students. She explained:

> I guess like it depends on the person from the other group. Like for some people, I'll look at them and I'll be like, "Oh they're kind of intimidating to talk to" so I find it harder to relate to them but like for other people in certain groups I can talk to them easily. (Grace, Grade 12)

I asked Grace to clarify which people she found intimidating to talk to and she indicated "the White people". Kelly echoed similar sentiments:

> All of my friends are Asian, well not all of them, well they mostly are Asian. I don't know why, since elementary school there was not a lot of Asians in my grade, there was like maybe four, five? I had a lot of Canadian friends, and then I went to high school, and then there are so many other schools coming in, and then I started hanging out with so many Asians. Even my mom noticed, and she said, "All your friends are Asians now." I don't even know why. I think it is because they connect with you better. But sometimes they understand things better like maybe the foods you eat or something, or when they come over to your house, you can make jokes like my mom does this because she's Asian and you can make jokes. When you look around, you can really tell they do stick together. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Further probing Kelly about her comfort with other Asian students compared to White students, she explained a sense of comfort and preference for forming friendships and hanging out with Asian students:

I don't think they [White students] don't want to be friends with me because I'm Asian or anything. Sometimes I do feel like the odd one out. If I'm sitting with a bunch of Canadian or Americans, I can feel it. It's not very obvious. I'm not thinking about it constantly. I feel like if the person, if they're Asian, I feel like I can talk to them more easily. It's like a natural instinct. It's like we can immediately connect on something. It's that immediate connection. I do think about that when I'm making friends, if they're Asian or something. (Kelly, Grade 11)

I think with Asians I would talk more kind of like Asian interests...not Asian interests (laughing), like Asian food. I know some White people like Korean music too but I feel like I can talk to it more with Asians. (Kelly, Grade 11)

For instance, many of the participants from Open Secondary indicated that while there were students from different cultural and racial backgrounds at the school, they felt more comfortable hanging out with students from the same racial background. Interestingly, some of the participants who acknowledged this comfort in hanging out with students from a similar racial and cultural background, could not quite articulate exactly why they felt a connection but mentioned that they just "have a feeling" that it is easier to socialize with students who are Asian. Consistent with other studies, Asian students often remain largely invisible to the majority of White students. Furthermore, White students and Asian students rarely formed friendships together, and when they occupy the same spaces, they have little meaningful contact (Lee, 2009).

Like Lee (2009), I also found that my participants generally associated solely with other students of Asian descent and rarely interacted with non-Asians inside and outside of school. My participants also expressed the same sentiment as the students in Lee's study in that they were "most comfortable around other Asians" because they shared similar cultures. In particular, the participants at Parker Secondary shared that they felt their school to be alienating. Because they felt different from the general student body, they shared that they felt emotionally isolated; therefore, having friends who understood their cultural values and struggles was very important. These participants found comfort

and formed their primary friendships with other Asian students. They found comfort in the likeness of their peers, and they felt more comfortable in that their Asian friends could also relate to their feelings of isolation at school.

Intersection of social class, gender, and sexuality

The second section of my findings will detail more about the experiences of the participants at school through the focus of the intersections of social class, gender and sexuality. It points to the need to question the dominant discourses about Vietnamese students and the taken-for-granted assumptions and essentialists and reductionist perspectives that gloss over their differences, struggles and experiences in school.

Social class and cultural capital

The sixth theme is focused on the impact of social class and cultural capital. Social class seemed to be more central to the students' identities, experiences and relationships with other students than their ethnicity and race. Ngo's (2006) study on Hmong students revealed that often parents of Southeast Asian students lack the educational experience, knowledge and capital to help their children through the educational process, hence, children negotiate their experiences at school on their own. This was the case for most of the participants in my study. Most of them expressed that their parents did not complete any formal education in Canada as most participants' parents came to Canada as refugees. Some of the students mentioned the need to work to help their families financially. This was a normal part of their experience – additionally, most of the participants had to fend for themselves as their family members had lack of familiarity about the education system and about the process for applying for post-secondary. These struggles are invisible in the sense that the participants did not reach out to their teachers and administrators, per se, but they did seek alternative means to finding information and support through peers and other adults in their lives. In this sense, the challenges that some of these participants experienced going through school continue to be invisible in research and may contribute to the belief that students of Asian descent do not have academic difficulty or problems.

I also found in addition to negotiating their experiences at school on their own, social class is an important aspect for the participants, especially in their interactions and feelings about other students. Social class influenced the participants' experiences at school in several ways (e.g., academic opportunities and aspirations, social interactions with other students, involvement in activities at school). Uma was acutely aware of the representation of Vietnamese in certain occupations and discussed the impact of this representation on her future career aspirations and plans after high school:

> There is this post that went around Facebook, it's like Vietnamese people are the business people, the ones who do nails, Korean people are the people who film movies and stuff, the Chinese are talented and sing and dance. (Uma, Grade 11)

When I probed her to discuss the significance of this representation, she explained that Vietnamese people usually do not occupy high-paying careers or are known to have any remarkable skills and talents. She suggested that they are often found in menial jobs being labourers and working in pizza or nail stores. Particularly coming from a working-class family, she did not perceive that she had many opportunities available to her which also made it difficult for her to imagine the possibilities of pursuing a career outside of being a business owner:

> We don't have the qualifications. We don't play sports. We don't have anything really. (Uma, Grade 11)

Uma explained that it was difficult to see other opportunities that would be available to her in the future especially when she did not have anyone in her life to provide her guidance and help in pursuing different options. She was clear that she wanted to find other career alternatives. Growing up seeing her family members struggle with their small businesses, she explained that she "did not want that life'. Rather she shared that she wanted to do something new and pursue a career that not many Vietnamese people have chosen. Although she does not have anyone to help her forge this future career path, she insists that she will "figure it out" on her own. She shared that she hopes to do something artistic in the future, telling me about her passion for hip-hop, dancing, and making YouTube videos.

Uma was one of many participants who shared that their parents were not involved in their children's schooling experiences because they had a lack of the knowledge about the educational system here to help their children navigate and make decisions about their current and future academic decisions. Long also explained that while his parents support him financially, he has had to learn things on his own. Rather than blame his parents for their lack of involvement in his education, he does empathize with their reasons for not being involved. Long was not the only participant who felt this empathy for their parents' level of awareness and involvement in their children's experiences at school. From a CRT perspective, these students felt the burden of expectations from the school system that their parents should be more involved (Ngo & Lee, 2007) as they point to the lack of understanding from the education system for their parents' positions and circumstances of being working class, immigrant parents. For many of the participants, their parents did not possess the cultural capital and knowledge to help their children through schooling, and often their parents were also busy working to provide for their children and most did not complete or attend formal schooling in Canada. Often the participants felt they had to learn and navigate school on their own but understood that it was through no fault of their parents:

> With school, I never kept my parents in check with it, they wouldn't understand because they're from a different time and country. I don't inform my parents about many things. The reason why I do that is that they don't completely understand… (Long, Grade 12)

> I feel like Vietnamese come over here, they get money for their kids but they don't raise their kids. There are a lot of things they didn't teach me that I learned on my own. In my own circumstance, I can't let anyone say how I am reflects on my parents, that has nothing to do with my parents. (Long, Grade 12)

Mia also came to a similar realization about her parents' involvement in her school life and recognized that it may not be easy for her parents to attend things and be involved. To avoid making her parents feel uncomfortable, she confessed that she did not always ask them to be involved. Many of the participants felt their parents were in a

sense, outsiders, of the education system, and the participants intentionally withheld information from them to protect them from feeling like outsiders and also not to burden them with the expectation of being involved:

> I invite them to things. So far they have said no to everything I've wanted them to come. I wish they were more involved. It'd show that they were proud of me. I feel like it's a lot of pressure for them. I guess they're not that comfortable. My mom doesn't speak English and she doesn't do it that often. I don't know how they feel so I don't ask them that often. (Mia, Grade 120

Many participants pointed out the reasons for not involving their parents in their social and personal experiences at school by citing generational issues, language difficulties, cultural differences, availability, and work commitments.

The following narratives illustrate other aspects of the participants' experiences at school in which they did want to involve or tell their parents. Hannah indicated that she was dealing with friendship issues and bullying at school but kept those from her parents because she did not think they would be able to understand or relate to these issues. She was also worried about her future and whether she would be able to find a good job after university but also did not share these worries or feelings with her parents.

> Because our generation is different from their generation. Their stress is different from our stress. I mean, I'm pretty sure they had friendship problems but probably not this extreme. They didn't have computers so they didn't have cyber bullying. Nowadays we do. Now it's so competitive to get jobs. So yeah. (Hannah, Grade 12)

Sam similarly admitted that he did not share his social experiences and issues at school with his parents. He felt that they would not understand certain nuances about relationships and friendships in high school, so it would be uncomfortable to tell them about it. For these reasons he confessed that his parents did not know he has a girlfriend:

I just think it's really awkward since there is a language barrier it's hard to explain stuff. I feel like if I told them, I think they'd say that's weird and it would be awkward so I just keep it to myself. (Sam, Grade 11)

Stella was among two participants in my study who talked about dealing with depression and mental health issues. Other than telling their guidance counsellor, they did not divulge this aspect of their personal experience and health to their parents. Stella explained the differences she saw between her and her White friends with respect to her relationship with her parents:

No. I feel like they [her parents] would look at me differently. I don't think it's like major depression. It's nothing big but at the same time it's still depression. I'd love to tell them. I get jealous whenever I talk to my friends and they tell me that they can tell their parents anything and they're really close with their parents and I can't really do that with mine because they don't really get it. There is a huge culture difference. (Stella, Grade 12)

Here, Stella again refers to her White friends and their experiences to explain what is considered 'mainstream' and to explain her experience growing up in an immigrant family. Stella suggested that her parents would not understand the concept of depression and her ability to effectively communicate in Vietnamese about this issue to them was very limited as she was not as proficient in speaking Vietnamese to her parents which prevented her from disclosing her depression to them. She indicated, like many of the other participants, that they were not as fluent in Vietnamese as their parents and often they were not able to communicate with each other effectively. This made it difficult for many of them to talk to their parents about their experiences at school. Stella (Grade 12) explained:

Stella: I think that's one of the major reasons why my parents and I fight because when I'm trying to express how I feel, or what I'm thinking, I can't say it [in Vietnamese]. On top of that I can't talk to my parents in general because they don't get it. They don't get it in both ways like they don't understand and they

really don't understand what I'm saying. That's part of the reason I'm always fighting with them and I'm not close with my parents.

Vi: Do you think your parents would understand the idea of depression?

Stella: No. My dad and I, we like to watch documentaries together, like animals, assassinations and stuff. One time we were watching one about teen suicide, they were talking about this girl who was committing suicide because she was bullied, and she was going through a mental illness. The entire time, he was shaking his head that this is so stupid so that's when I realized oh ok I can't tell you.

For several participants, rather than perceiving their parents' lack of knowledge to help them with their schooling as a deficit or barrier, these students found other ways to seek help and guidance. These participants were resourceful and found help or guidance from others. Long confided in his hair stylist who he identified was like a mentor to him. A couple of participants noted that they would attend drop-in math help or use YouTube to find help. Mia explained she sometimes needed math help but would never ask her parents for it. Instead, Mia was one of many participants who looked for help from friends and classmates at school:

I never go to my parents. I don't think they understand what I'm learning right now. I don't know what I'm learning myself so I wouldn't want to explain it to them. My sister is already stressed out. I don't really ask my sister. She will help. The questions I have, I can usually google. It's usually easier if I ask a classmate. (Mia, Grade 12)

Marten echoed a similar strategy to ask his friends for help:

Since I don't have an older sibling, whenever I have homework at home, I ask my friends. Since my parents don't know high school things at all, so they can't really help me at all. (Marten, Grade 12)

The guidance and advice that participants received from their parents varied. There were a couple of participants who did not have anyone in their life to ask for help

and guidance regarding their education. Other studies point to these same barriers faced by Southeast Asian students in their pursuit of education (Lee, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Um, 2003). Grace will be the first person in her family to attend university next year and she discussed how it was not easy going through high school without someone to provide help and guidance to her. Although she admitted she could not ask anyone in her family for guidance about her own educational path, she was encouraged that she will be able to provide the guidance to her younger siblings when they go through high school, so that they will have an easier time than her going through school:

> They're a lot younger than me so I can advise them. With my advice, it'll be much easier for them. For me, my older sister didn't go to school, so I have to decide everything on my own and my dad is usually like do whatever you want to do. And I'm kinda indecisive myself so with no advice, it was a struggle for me when it came to picking courses and applying for university and stuff like that. (Grace, Grade 12)

Long comes from a working-class family and lamented the reality that his parents did not have the knowledge to understand and identify with his experiences at school and provide him guidance and advice on his educational path. He reflected many times during our interview about the value his parents place on education and having a stable career which he characterized as a universal desire among all Vietnamese immigrant parents. However, he was skeptical because he did not think the value they placed on education materialized into helping their children fulfill those ambitions and succeed. Long was keenly aware of the importance of having and doing more than just valuing the importance of education. For example, he felt that his parents, like other Vietnamese immigrant parents, did not have the cultural and social capital to help get their children ahead. He was also critical of the importance of post-secondary education seeing that other second-generation Vietnamese youth were not successful in pursuing prosperous careers or doing better than their parents:

> I think the problem with me in my family is that Vietnamese people always want the best for their kids. …I grew up seeing the first-born Vietnamese here. The 20

to 30-year-olds: some of them end up in a factory, some of them end up in jail and some end up nowhere. (Long, Grade 12)

Chloe was also critical of post-secondary education, but in a slightly different way than Long. She understood that even with a university degree, it is not easy to get a job afterwards. Chloe learnt the importance of social and cultural capital from her uncle in the sense that she will need "good connections" and at least a graduate degree in order to become successful and have a good career in the future:

As I got older, it switched. I was more academic and I focused more. You can't do much with an active life unless you're passionate about one thing and like my parents told me that academics is everything in this world. Even if you have a bachelor's degree, it's hard to get a job. You have to have a *really high* degree and like good connections to get a well-paid job. (Chloe, Grade 12)

Alice also comes from a working-class background and described her mother as "very involved". Although her mother did not complete any formal education in Canada, she tried to provide support to Alice by regularly attending parent teacher interviews and asking the teachers for advice about what she could be doing to help Alice succeed. According to Alice:

My mom has always been a really prominent figure in my school life, especially. She always comes in for parent teacher interviews. She always asks to see my report cards. And she always follows up with the teachers especially if I'm not doing well in a subject. She'll call and ask them like, "Oh why is Alice not doing well in this? Can you tell me some recommendations like what I should do?" Based on their recommendations, she will recommend me to either go to tutoring or like some other method to help me with that subject. (Alice, Grade 12)

Kelly (Grade 11), who comes from a middle-class background, sought guidance from her father about academic related decisions. She explained that since he works at the local university, he is very knowledgeable about many post-secondary programs and the process of applying to them. Kelly noted that her father has been supportive and

instrumental in her career plans and has been able to use his connections and resources to provide her with an advantage in terms of educational opportunities and planning for post-secondary.

> Vi: Is there a certain career path or field or occupation that your parents want you to go into?

> Kelly: My dad's been asking me to go into maybe nursing or something like that because we've done research and everything and there's a program where you go to college first and then university, it's like a collaborative program so he thinks that will be really good for me.

> Vi: So you and your parents have been doing research about the program?

> Kelly: Yeah. And I talked to my guidance counsellor. I told him and I told him my courses I am taking and he told me he thinks it is a really good choice and a good job. He thinks it will beneficial for me if I have that job. Yeah.

Kelly alluded to the importance of cultural capital and was keenly aware that her father is able to use his connections at the local university to help her and her brothers gain relevant work experience there during the summer which she believed was more beneficial than working at a fast food restaurant or the mall. She recognized the advantage of having these work opportunities which she explained that she would be able to add to her application for post-secondary and build on her educational experiences, which in turn could potentially broaden her opportunities in the future:

> My dad is always getting my brother good connections. For the most part, he helped my brothers a lot. He helped me with the job at a department in the university and she wouldn't have considered me if I wasn't part of the family. (Kelly, Grade 11)

Chloe (Grade 12) was another participant who had a family member provide guidance and advice about her career path. In her case, her uncle had briefly attended university for a couple of years but never finished his program for financial reasons.

However, having attended university and living in Canada since he was 19, Chloe identified him as being instrumental in informing her and her parents about what they and she needed to do to be successful. Chloe was one of two participants who shared that she was involved in a number of extra-curricular activities outside of school.

> Vi: Why did your parents put you in so many things?

> Chloe: I think it's my uncle's idea first. Like he asked [her parents], "What happens if she grows up and she's not an academic person? You will need something to back her up as a second plan." He wanted me to major in piano, swimming and karate. And the rest just came along.

Chloe admitted she felt a lot of pressure and anxiety because she was involved in so many activities and she was also expected to obtain high marks. She was involved in so many things to the point that she felt burnt out. Chloe's family is from a working-class background and she admitted that her parents could not afford for her to participate in all these extra-curricular activities but at the advice of her uncle, they were worried she would not be successful if she did not participate in all the extra-curricular activities. Chloe acknowledged that her extra-curricular activities would be valuable for her when she applies to university and could provide more opportunities to her in the future. However, she was also very stressed out about it because of the financial burden on her parents to pay for her extra-curricular activities. She admitted that she wanted to quit playing piano so that her parents could save money:

> I realized my mom spent tons of money on my piano. I can't make a definite decision yet because she put me into this position but right now she is debt, and lately, I've been having too much work and she got frustrated and I got frustrated, I almost fell asleep in class because I was so tired. (Chloe, Grade 12)

Chloe explained that she and her parents learnt about "middle-class, white" attitudes from her uncle. According to Chloe, her uncle felt the only way to gain social mobility was to strive to be like the white, middle-class. For Chloe's family, the ability to pursue extra-curricular activities was a marker of class difference which they felt would set Chloe

apart from the other Asian students, even if it meant her family was in financial burden. Additionally, Chloe mentioned that her uncle advised her to not socialize with other Asian students, particularly the Chinese students because they were considered "foreigners" and "made other Asians look bad" which he felt could hinder her social mobility. Rather she was instructed to socialize with mainly White students. This finding resonates with Lee's (2009) study who found that Korean parents wanted their children to distance themselves from other Asians because of the negative perceptions of Southeast Asians and "to get closer to White people" to further their social positioning and opportunities (p. 33).

Leah (Grade 11) was the other participant who was involved in several extra-curricular activities at the advice of her parents. As her parents both completed university in Canada, Leah explained that they placed a lot of emphasis on extra-curricular activities and were knowledgeable about the cultural capital that she would need to enrich her learning experience and broaden her career opportunities. Leah agreed that being involved in many extra-curricular activities will make her a better applicant to university programs and a more well-rounded candidate for jobs in the future:

> Leah: They also feel responsible of my education and stuff like that. That's why they register me for those extra-curricular things. It's part of my education, just the learning. They care a lot about the learning process. They know how learning affects a person. They have experienced it themselves. And they want me to have a better learning development so then I can be somebody who is an improved person of them. So, they feel like they are in my shoes, and they just want the best for me.

> Vi: Do you know why your parents put you into these activities outside of school?

> Leah: To make me smarter and more valuable too. Because having those skills, they just told me just recently before their excuse was it'll make you smarter, it'll make you a better person, it'll improve you, just like that. Now they go into future reasons so it's, "You're going to enjoy it in the future and you can show it off in the future that can make you more valuable as an employee, as a citizen, you have

more job choices, it's something better to do than just sitting around at home." It makes me really busy so I like it.

Most participants were not involved in extra-curricular activities for different reasons such as affordability, transportation and time. The priority for most of them was to complete high school with grades good enough to hopefully go to college or university. Marten (Grade 12) and Alice (Grade 12) noted that they had to spend time helping their parents because of their language barriers. The two participants felt an obligation to help their parents and in doing so they feel it has prevented them from being involved in extra-curricular activities at school. This is consistent with other studies that have found that within immigrant families, the children have to help their parents because they usually have greater English-language skills than their parents, and thus become responsible for helping out with tasks such as taking their parents to appointments, interpreting for them, and performing various chores to support the family (Kibria, 1993; Lee, 2006; Song, 1999):

> Sometimes it does get in the way of my other school work and I feel like I would be better off if I didn't do it but at the same time, I feel selfish that I think that 'cause there's nothing that my mom can do right. She can't understand 100% the English so in a sense, I don't like doing it but I know that I have to do it kind of thing and in the end I do it for her. (Alice, Grade 12)

> Sometimes I take my parents to the hospital for check ups. Help my grandma at home and really just take them around to places. And translating some stuff for them. And answering phone calls for them. (Marten, Grade 12)

Money was a significant issue for many of the participants. A few mentioned that they needed to work part-time, and others noted that they were contemplating their decisions about post-secondary and future careers based on their family's socioeconomic circumstances. Stella (Grade 12) noted that she would need to apply for OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program) for when she goes to college because money has been an issue for her family. She mentioned that she started working part-time out of necessity and she did not disclose to her friends and teachers at school that money was an issue that

also prevented her from participating in activities at school. She stated, "I don't like pity so I don't let people know":

> Stella: Going to school, money has always been a problem. Whenever my parents fight, I'd always try to listen in and money has always been brought up.

> Vi: Has it impacted your experience at school because of money?

> Stella: Yeah, sometimes I can't go on school trips or I pretend. I lie to my friends that I don't feel like going out. I usually get money from my mom since my dad doesn't have a job. I recently got hired at a fast food restaurant so I'm trying to work but my dad doesn't want me to work 'cause he thinks it's going to lower my grades which it has but I really need the money. Money has always been an issue.

Sam (Grade 11) also witnessed his parents struggle financially through the loss of jobs. He explained that he is repeatedly told that he will have to take care of his parents when they get older. He indicated that he was undecided about which career to pursue but noted regardless it would have to be a financially stable and well-paid career so that he can take care of his parents:

> Sam: …my parents are always are like, "You're going to work hard and go to university to take care of us." I feel pressured to live up to that…Growing up I know my parents are always like, "Yeah when you get older you're going to take care of me" and all that stuff. I can't tell if they're serious but I'm pretty sure they are serious. I think they will have to work their whole lives. Often times when I say "sorry" or something or I owe them something, they'll be like, "Don't worry about it just when you're older just take care of me." So I expect myself to be able to and I expect that they expect me as well.

> Vi: Does that create a lot of pressure for you?

> Sam: Yeah actually it does just because I really want a well-paying job that I really like. I know that I'll have to take care of me and if I have a family, I'll have to take care of them too. Financially, my parents it's another thing. When they're

older, I don't know if they'll be able to work. I want to make a lot of money just so I can take care of them. I don't know. I feel like they've given up so much that maybe when I'm older I want to do something special for them. Like I've always want to give my dad his own car.

Sam shared that his main career goal is to find a job that is stable and well-paid and that it does not have to be a prestigious job (e.g., doctor, lawyer). He indicated that he did not want to end up in precarious work like his parents because of the stress of worrying about losing a job and being financially unstable. As a result, he indicated that it was more important for him to have a secure, and well-paying job in the future, and that it was less important to him and his parents which career he pursues, and whether he goes to university or college.

Mia (Grade 12) also explained that she had witnessed her parents go through precarious work over the years and this was often a source of tension and stress at home. For this reason, she explained she wanted to find a secure job that she could financially support herself and her family:

Oh, I just try hard in school academically because I want to be able to support myself and my family. Maybe because my mom and dad don't have a job right now and I don't want to be like that. I really want a stable job. But they're happy so I can't really say I don't want to be like them. But it's true I want a stable job. I think that's what's motivating me too. (Mia, Grade 12)

Mia stated that, "I feel so bad asking them for money" referring to asking her parents for money for school fees. While Mia indicated that she is going back to Manner Catholic Secondary for another year after grade 12, she indicated feeling relieved about her decision because she and her parents would not need to worry about university tuition for at least another year:

I know that money is not an issue right now but I'm worried about next year. I think that's why it was a good decision that I decided to stay back a year. I can

work second semester. Go to school first semester, work second semester. (Mia, Grade 12)

Alice (Grade 12) also echoed the importance of a stable career and income in the future because of her mother's own precarious work over the years. This has been a motivation for Alice to stay focused on her education and also for her mother in trying to provide support to Alice in her educational endeavours:

> Um she doesn't tell me why but the way that she handles it, I guess I can understand why she does it, because I'm the only child, and when she was younger, she didn't really like to go to school, she didn't like to learn and that impacted her in the future and right now, she doesn't really have a stable career, and not a stable income, so she doesn't want me to go down that path, I guess, and she wants me to understand how important it is to get an education, and just to put your education above games, friends, fun kind of things, so that in the future when you have a job and an income, then you can have, I guess, your fun (laughing). (Alice, Grade 12)

It was evident in the interviews that many participants made academic decisions and plans based on financial necessity and the financial circumstances of their family. Many participants who were planning to go to university or college next year admitted that they will be attending a university or college near their community or in their community. The idea of staying home served two purposes: it lessened the financial burden on their family, and the students could still help out their families. This finding is reflected in previous studies (Ngo & Lee, 2007; Teranishi, 2002).

Another aspect of social class, which impacted the experiences of the participants was their sense of belonging at school. The participants from Parker Secondary were keenly aware of their own socioeconomic position by viewing the middle-class students at their school as the normative measure of acceptance and belonging. For Long (Grade 12) and Uma (Grade 12), they articulated a feeling of isolation from other students because they did not fit in with the middle-class, White students. Their early schooling experiences informed them about their social class positioning prior to attending Parker

Secondary. Long and Uma both attended two different elementary schools in terms of the SES backgrounds of the student population. They both originally went to an elementary school that served a predominantly working-class community, where most of the students were children from immigrant and working-class families. It was not until the later years that they transferred to another elementary school that served children from a more affluent, middle- to upper-class neighbourhood and who were mostly White. These experiences set the stage for their continued feelings of isolation and alienation in high school because they could not relate to these students:

> Well, the kids from my elementary school were from middle to upper middle-class backgrounds, versus my former elementary school where they were more lower-class to middle-class, I kinda felt I fit more with the kids from that school [lower- to middle-class]. (Long, Grade 12)

> Well coming from my elementary school, there were a lot of Asians and brown people and we were all connected because all our parents came over at the same time and we lived in the same townhouse community so we all went to the same school together…It was racially, there's a lot of cultures and things like that, and then… when we went to the new school it was basically all high class White people… and all the kids would talk about how "Oh my god I got these new shoes and I got all this"... (Uma, Grade 11)

Most of the participants identified as being from working class backgrounds, and like Uma and Long, they were acutely aware of how social class positions and status were associated with different racial groups (i.e., students of colour were often from working class backgrounds, while White students often came from middle-class backgrounds). Many of the participants shared that they felt a particular closeness to other students, particularly Asian students from the same SES background. Many of the participants were cognizant of how social class was signified through one's behaviours, language, clothing, attitudes, and behaviour. For example, many of these participants would describe Asian students who came from a middle-class background as "whitewashed" because they were "not like the stereotypical Asian" who they know to

come from an immigrant or working class family. Interestingly, the participants claimed the use of the label whitewashed could either be considered derogatory or complimentary. However, in reality the term whitewashed is a negative identity that was originally constructed around racial stereotypes about Asians to denigrate them as being "too assimilated" (see Pyke & Dang, 2003, p. 149). These participants indicated that certain behaviours, traits, and attitudes are associated with whiteness (e.g., middle-class status) and that whitewashed Asian students espoused different values and had different experiences that made them different from other Asian students.

For instance, Stella (Grade 12) was not the only participant to deploy the term whitewashed to denigrate and apply it to Asian students to suggest that there are some students who are and who are not "really Asian":

> There's this Asian girl in our grade. I guess she takes dance classes and she's like really out there, and her mom and dad had a really good education and stuff like that, so they live in, I guess, a good house and stuff. I guess her way of living is like a typical Canadian White family, so that's why a lot of people say [to this Asian student] "Oh, you're not really considered Asian, you're kinda like whitewashed" and stuff like that. (Grace, Grade 12)

Grace described that Asian students whose parents have a good education (i.e., university educated), and live in a good house and put their children in extra-curricular activities are considered as trying to live like a "typical Canadian White family". Here she implies that having this type of cultural capital is associated with White families, and not associated with Asian families. In a way, Grace explained it to me in that this particular student does not represent a typical upbringing in an immigrant Asian family like hers where she does not have these same opportunities and experiences in her life. In this case, it illustrates how some of the participants are not able to self-identify, and are forced to define themselves in relation to the white dominant society. Pyke and Dang (2003), in their study of Korean and Vietnamese Americans, argue that Asians face immense pressure to assimilate in order to distance themselves from the stigma associated with their racial group (i.e., racial stereotypes about Asians). However, they

argue that Asians who display "an assimilated status" distance themselves from other Asian students in the process of trying to disassociate from the negative perceptions of Asians (Pyke & Dang, 2003, p. 151). The term whitewashed, then, is used to maintain intraethnic boundaries and serve as the basis for monitoring and controlling the social behaviour of Asians (Pyke & Dang, 2003). The narratives from the participants illuminate the intersection of social class and race, and how the dominant discourses and racial stereotypes about Asians impact their interactions with others, and further add to the complexity and multilayered dimensions of their social class positioning, identities, and educational experiences.

Gender and sexuality

The last theme illustrates the gendered and sexualized aspects of the model minority stereotype (Chou & Feagin, 2015) and the impact of gender and sexuality on the participants' identities and experiences at school. Many of the participants described the idea that Asian men and boys are often made to feel emasculated in terms of their masculinity and Asian women and girls are often exoticized as sexual objects. They articulated their strategies and also their discomfort in being perceived via these stereotypes about Asian men and women. The interactions that the female students had with their peers were very different than their male counterparts.

Mia (Grade 12), for example, branded her Asian friends and peers as "more White" or "whitewashed", for being sexually promiscuous. Mia ascribed these labels to her Asian friends because she felt they had assumed the sexual mores of White women (Espiritu, 2001, p. 426). In characterizing her Asian peers in this way allowed her to symbolically reject the stereotype of Asian women as 'exotic', and in the process, she upholds the narrative of Vietnamese sexual virtuosity and White female sexual promiscuity (Espiritu, 2001). According to some of the participants, Asian girls who veered from acceptable behaviours were deemed as whitewashed, because they have adopted the sexual mores and practices of White women. Espiritu's (2001) study of Filipino immigrant females found that they would use the gendered discourse of morality (e.g., demonizing the morality of White women) as one strategy to decentre whiteness and to locate themselves above the dominant society and as a form of resistance to the

racism they experienced. In my study, not only being Asian but being an Asian female was an important dimension of the female participants' identity. In this section, I highlight the participants narratives about being infantilized and their authority being questioned due to their race, gender, and other social markers of identity.

Many of the female participants asserted that their gender identity was more significant in their lives than race. I found for many of the participants that their gender identity intersected with issues of social class and race. Grace explained that there is a pressure to "look good". Clothing, hair style, make-up were important markers for "whiteness" and what is considered "nice" and the desire to imitate the style of clothing worn by the White students (i.e., popular, rich White girls). Many of the female participants described that having a similar outward appearance as the White female students (i.e., popular students) at their school helped influence approval by the White majority (i.e., White girls). These participants would also describe the performativity of their racial-ethnic identity through labels such as FOBs (Fresh Off the Boat), and (as previously mentioned), whitewashed. Grace explained:

> I just feel like that term [whitewashed] is associated with people who dress a certain way too. If you're dressed more like laid back kind of thing, they wouldn't say that to you but if you're keeping up with the trend, I hear sometimes, "Oh like your style is so White" but they won't be like "oh you dress so Asian" or something like that. Not necessarily you dress so Asian…They'll compliment on what you wear and stuff like that. The White people will be like "oh I like what you are wearing". It's kinda like their approval… like that sounds kind of mean but they like it so I guess they kinda consider it something that they would wear. I see it kinda like that. (Grace, Grade 12)

> I hear some of my friends say this girl dresses FOB. I guess when you look at her clothes, you can tell it's not a typical modern style that typical female shops from. It's from their home country. I feel like people categorize people if they dress whitewashed or FOB. (Grace, Grade 12)

Grace is mindful of how she portrays herself to other students and the importance of feeling accepted and receiving approval from the popular kids at school (i.e., White students). Grace is not the only participant who discusses the importance of feeling accepted by the dominant group. Many of the participants used certain coded language and words such as the labels whitewashed, FOB, and even immigrant, to label certain behaviours, dress codes, and attitudes, and to ascertain who does and who does not belong. This is evident in phrases that Grace used such as "keeping up with trend" was associated with whiteness, in contrast to the phrases "foreign", and "not the latest modern style" and "their home country" to describe the way that different groups of students dressed. Participants were quick to point out that when an Asian student mirrored the same type of aesthetics, dress, behaviours or attitudes as a White student, they would be labelled as "whitewashed". In contrast, students who prescribed to the imagery of the model minority (i.e., nerdy, quiet) or if they dressed or behaved in a certain way that opposed White-normativity (Kumashiro, 1999), these students were characterized as FOBs (i.e., Fresh off the boat). Grace's narrative reveals how the Asian body becomes read by others and how racial constructions are inferred from their bodies (Mayuzumi, 2015). It illustrates the racialized and gendered constructs of Asian women's bodies.

Grace, like many of the female participants, emphasized the importance of "dressing nice" (i.e., like the White students) including clothes, hair and make-up for females as an important factor for whether someone will think they are approachable or will talk to them. She addressed the expectation for females like herself to place more attention on appearance than males because females are judged by it:

I guess it's like you have to dress like nice I guess. I feel like it's mainly like dressing nice. It's the clothes that covers you. That's what captures the attention kind of thing. For girls, sometimes I guess it's make-up and hair. It's much easier for guys 'cause guys can dress either way, sloppy in sweat pants, they still wouldn't really get judged by it but for females, it's harder for them to dress nice. If they don't, they'll be like oh this girl is lazy and stuff like that. (Grace, Grade 12)

I feel like now the clothes have evolved to be shorter and shorter (laughing). When girls wear crop tops, they're considered like cute or they look hot. I feel like if girls, the more girly they are, that's kind of better. For guys, not *too brand name*. For me, preferably, I don't like when guys go out with brand names. I like the laid back look. It's more easy for them but for girls, I guess you have to glam up and stuff. (Grace, Grade 12)

Grace suggests that it is important to not only dress in a way that would be approved and accepted by the White students but also to be "a girly girl" to also gain approval and acceptance from the popular kids. She noted that she felt more confident when she did have her make-up on. However, when she did not have any on, she tried to avoid being seen at school. Grace was not the only participant who talked about the need to have make-up on in order to feel more confidence. Hannah (Grade 12) and Alice (Grade 12) both echoed similar sentiments:

Like it's just that I think that when I wear make-up I feel more confident. If I don't wear make-up...sometimes when I have tests, I study like crazy that I just come to school without make up. When I do I would try to hide myself, walking down the halls I would duck down and that just doesn't make me feel good. (Hannah, Grade 12)

It makes me feel more confident… And I don't feel confident talking to people but when I do have make-up on, it just almost gives me like a barrier between myself and the other person, I feel like I can be more outgoing and talk to them more and approach people instead of letting them approach me, kind of thing. (Alice, Grade 12)

Chloe was also concerned about the way she dressed and talked not wanting to show portray a bad image of herself which was referred to as dressing modestly so that she is "not too showy" and the need to be "lady like":

And I think that the way I dress or anyone dresses, shows who you are, so I don't want to, you know, show off a bad image. (Chloe, Grade 12)

Alice shared similar ideas about the importance of appearance and looking physically attractive to feel acceptance by others socially:

> I feel like appearance does play a role in how people perceive you but I don't think it has anything to do with race. I think it's more of are they considered physically attractive or not. I think that does have something to do with how especially your peers treat you because when they see someone, and I don't agree with this, but, if they see someone who is more physically attractive than I guess, someone else, who is not considered physically attractive, then they would probably not talk to that person who they don't think looks a certain way to them. They don't look cool. (Alice, Grade 12)

She further explained that she noticed a difference in behaviour from other students when she changed from dressing like a tomboy to dressing more like a "girly girl":

> I think the way we dress or the way we portray ourselves, it really like...it affects how people see us and how people treat us so when I dressed like a tomboy, I felt like people didn't really I guess like see me as a person, kind of. They were just like "Oh, it's Alice" Like I was the wallflower. And then when I started dressing more like a girly girl, I felt like people noticed me more. They were more willing to talk to me. (Alice, Grade 12)

Stella (Grade 12) also shared that she was bullied for dressing like a tomboy which motivated her to dress differently: I got made fun for that. I dressed like a tom boy. And just the way I looked. Stella and Alice both felt isolated by others for dressing like a tomboy at school and they both changed the way they dressed as a result. In doing so, they found that other students began to talk to them and were more likely to approach them. Uma (Grade 11), in contrast, expressed critical views about the expectation that girls had to dress and look a certain way (i.e., feminine). She asserted that she intentionally tried to dress differently than the White girls to distance herself from these girls at school as well as from her own "identity" and reiterated that she did not want to "look" like other Asian girls. She also recognized the contradiction in her approach because trying to look differently than what is "expected" of Asian girls would be

perceived as being "whitewashed". She admitted that it is hard being different from the majority because she already felt alienated for dressing differently:

> In grade 9, I dressed differently than them [White/popular girls] because all the girls were wearing the same outfits, the same jeans, the same sweaters. But then for me, my goal was to dress hip hop so I came in [wearing] sweatpants. My goal was to look like a dancer. I had these high tops. I wore hats and beanies. I knew that the girls, they're really girly. I knew that they would talk behind my back. I was used to it by then. I was like "okay whatever" but it just affected me one day, because just one day I just thought of everything. What am I doing? That day still didn't change me. I tried to be different. I try my best not to hang out with those girls. (Uma, Grade 11)

Uma's choice to deploy a different type of femininity – one based on style and dance – was an outlet in which she could express and build her confidence, although it was difficult for her because she felt that the other students made fun of her. While Uma admitted that she wanted to distance herself from these girls, she also admitted that she wanted to feel accepted by them.

> They only talk to me if they need something. They're like, "Hey Uma, can I borrow your note?" In my head I want to say no. But I know if I say "no" they would say "Oh Uma is such a b- word" so I'm like, "okay sure you can have my note". (Uma, Grade 11)

Leah also rejected the expectation that females are supposed to dress a certain way. She came to the realization that these societal expectations of females are sexist and explained that she made an effort to not conform to society's expectation of what females should and should not wear:

> When I was in elementary and middle school, I would just accept the dress code just unconsciously, follow it obediently, and now I feel like it was a stupid idea. Now I realize that it had an underlying meaning, it was sexism. You know how they have to say, girls have to wear really short shorts or they can't wear that, that

would distract the boys, now I think that's really annoying. Why would the girls be the ones to blame for the guys being distracted? It doesn't make sense. It's their fault for being distracted. (Leah, Grade 11)

Many of the participants made reference to the ways Asians are depicted in popular culture. Often these representations emphasized stereotypical images of Asian females. This following excerpt illustrates how these ideas about Asians impacted the way some students view themselves. Grace mentioned an internet image that she recently saw online of an emoji face that had lines to depict the eyes. She stated under the caption it read "90 per cent of the Asians":

Vi: You found that offensive?

Grace: Yeah. Although Asians probably do have smaller eyes, it's still kind of mean to point it out. I know some people who get offended by it. I used to get offended by it. A lot of girls they go through double eye lid surgery just to look more modern with that double eyelid look. I know one girl who has done it before and my mom herself did it too.

Vi: Do you feel pressured to do that too?

Grace: At first, maybe when I grow up I want to do that procedure but now I think about it I should embrace what I have and what I have naturally so I shouldn't go through any changes just to be considered *nice*.

Here Grace uses the words "nice" and "modern" as coded words for conforming to society's beauty standard of whiteness. Other participants talked about this hierarchy of beauty where whiteness (e.g. "looking white", having Caucasian features) is considered most desirable and beautiful:

Hannah: Yes, they make White people look perfect and like not really the Asians. I find that people say that Asians have chinky eyes and no eye lids and flat noses. I know people who have triple eye lids and tall noses so I don't know.

Vi: Can you expand on that, what do you mean by "perfect"?

Hannah: Their life and their looks cause I don't know, but I can't deny it, I kinda think it's true. A lot of White girls have long lashes, they have really big eyes, and tall noses. But yeah... that's what I think.

Vi: You compare yourself to White girls?

Hannah: Yeah.

Vi: You wear make-up to make your eyes look bigger?

Hannah: Yeah. Well I wouldn't say I'm pretty but I wouldn't say I'm ugly. So (laughing) I personally think that a lot of people would talk to a prettier person more. If a pretty person asked someone for help, they would help them but someone who is not, I think they would push it aside. I don't know how to say it. Not necessarily pretty, but confident woman? Yeah.

This excerpt shows how some participants wanted to create a better sense of self (e.g., to feel pretty, confident, approachable, and acceptance) using make-up, and plastic surgery to strive for whiteness. Hannah (Grade 12) admitted she was really consumed with how she looks, particularly about her nose and body image. She talked about the idea of possibly saving money for plastic surgery in Korea one day. Hannah was not the only one who thought that the depiction of Asian women was being less beautiful and whiteness as being the "ideal standard". Several of the participants suggested that there is a lack of respect for women who are not "White".

Mia (Grade 12) talked extensively about the way she was (mis)treated by her friends and peers for the way she looked. Her narratives illustrate the onslaught of racist and sexist comments that she had to deal, and the different stereotypical portrayals of and messaging about Asian females and bodies that she had to contend with on a regular basis at school.

My [male] friend showed me a picture once. *The reason why [Asian] girls have small boobs is because their parents expect nothing but A's*. [caption in the picture] (Mia, Grade 12)

This example highlights how the picture is used to denigrate Asian females by evoking the model minority discourse and perpetuating stereotypical images of Asian women. When I asked her to talk about her feelings regarding this incident she explained:

> It makes me more confident. Like it makes it stand out for me, that stereotypes for Asian girls that we're smart, we usually have small boobs, no butts…it made me more confident with myself because I've accepted it. I don't find it offensive anymore. (Mia, Grade 12)

Mia mentioned that she used to get upset about being teased for her physical appearance (i.e., being small, and short) but she accepted the way she looks. To deflect comments about her size and physical appearance, Mia explained her strategy to alter the way she looks:

> I used to cry about it. I know I'm not going to grow anymore. It's funny. People laugh. Um, a guy in my class, he spent all of business class researching out what's the requirement for a legal midget is and now he calls me a legal midget. I cried. It killed me. It was so funny. I cried laughing. I don't get offended anymore. It's something I have to live with. I'm going to wear heels for the rest of my life and I've accepted that. I have these boots with hidden heels in them so you can't tell. I tried walking up the stairs but it was a struggle so I stopped wearing them. I was tall for a bit. (Mia, Grade 12)

Although Mia claimed that she has accepted the way she looks, her narrative illustrates how she also tried to alter the way she looks to avoid being teased about her height. Furthermore, Mia's reaction to these comments through laughter can be seen as a self-protective strategy. Another time, Mia shared that some male friends asked her whether she could move her breasts to highlight the fact that she is small-chested. She explained that her immediate reaction was laughter.

> Yeah actually, last week, they asked me if I could move my boobs, like, you know, pecs, because they're so small. I was staring at them like "what are you talking about?". "Because you know how guys can do that because they don't

have boobs?" I'm like "excuse me, I know I don't have boobs but I still can't do

that". (Mia, Grade 12)

During the interview, Mia mentioned some male students at school would occasionally

address her as a "thottie" when passing by her in the hallways at school. According to

Mia, "thottie" means "whore" or "another word for slut". Mia rationalizes this behaviour

and explained that she was not offended by it because thottie is a "trending word". Mia's

narratives illustrate how she was denigrated for the way she looks and being Asian, but

also how she was not able to escape the negative stereotyping of Asian females at school.

Several of the female participants shared that they felt Asian women are not respected.

> The media at the time portrayed Caucasian people as the beautiful race, almost.
> And just everyone's, I guess, ideal woman, which was a Caucasian woman, so I
> kinda wanted to fit that stereotype and be considered beautiful or pretty, and I
> guess, also partially, I wanted to be respected as well because people portrayed
> Caucasian women as being respected as opposed to Asian women which they
> were not respected. They're almost not even a person so if you were Caucasian,
> you would be considered a person, if you were not Caucasian, then no one really
> cares about you, kind of thing… the media portrays it as tall, blonde hair, blue-
> eyed beauty kind of thing, and I used to think that too… (Alice, Grade 12)

Alice also commented:

> I feel like the media has started to almost portray Asian women in this exotic light
> like, "Oh get yourself an Asian girl, they're so exotic (laughing), they're
> submissive, like they'll do whatever you want, like they have an exotic beauty,
> they cook good food' (laughing), just all that stuff. (Alice, Grade 12)

Alice rejected this notion that Asian females are "obedient" and "submissive" but was

cognizant of the juxtaposition of Asian women and White women. Like Alice, many of

the female participants also cited the portrayal of stereotypical images of Asian women as

being "exotic" and also feeling pressured to be "physically attractive" to feel accepted

and approached. Many of the participants constructed their gender through a racialized

lens (Pyke & Johnson, 2003), where the gendered behaviour of Asians were seen as racially distinct, while White femininity was regarded as superior (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). In doing so, some of the students would denigrate certain features that they deemed to be distinctly Asian, such as having narrow eyes. Many of them indicated that whiteness was considered the "normative" beauty standard for what is considered "nice" in terms of behaviours, dress, and attitude. This was illustrative in the ways that the students talked about femininity through a racialized lens, by invoking terms such as "whitewashed" and "FOB" to describe themselves or other Asian girls at school. Another way in which the students were "doing gender" (Pyke & Johnson, 2003) was shifting their gender performance with shifting expectations (e.g., doing gender at home and at school) which Pyke & Johnson (2003) describe as how gender is seen as a racialized feature of their bodies, where some of the students indicated that being quiet was required to confirm an Asian identity and speaking out would be considered "not Asian".

For instance, Uma considered herself not be like the other Asian/Vietnamese girls at school because of her choice to deploy a different type of femininity based "a hip hop style". In another way, she also criticized other Asian girls for dressing like the White girls at school, labelling them as "whitewashed" and "not really Asian". This desire to want to "fit in" was described by many of the female students who indicated that it was important to dress a certain way that would gain the approval of their White peers and counterparts, even if it may be labelled "whitewashed". In contrast, the label "FOB" was used to denigrate certain features of being Asian implying a particular superiority of "doing gender" that was closer to "being White".

Mia (Grade 12) was one participant who compared herself to other Asian girls. Mia described one of her Asian friends as not being a typical Asian female because she had curves and was outspoken. Here Mia's narrative reveals the intersection of the model minority discourse and the racialization of Asian women. She suggests that Asian women are supposed to look a certain way and if they transgress from it they are considered "whitewashed". It underscores that femininity is a relational category, one that is co-constructed with other racial categories (Espiritu, 2001). When Mia mentioned that she was also outspoken, she was considered rude yet when this other Asian girl was

outspoken, she was considered sassy. However, this other Asian girl was considered "whitewashed" so it was okay. The implicit message here is that traditional Asian women are supposed to be quiet and passive. The following excerpts highlight how Mia compared herself to this other Asian student.

> Mia: She's Vietnamese. She's like a Megan Fox. She's like an Asian Megan Fox. It's crazy. It's not fair.
>
> Vi: So people compare you to her?
>
> Mia: Yeah they just don't understand how it works, because we're both Viet, yet one is like Megan Fox and one is not. I'm like I don't know what happened to her. Well she's got that high voice. Like you know that voice that is annoying but like it's attractive. She's got a nice voice. She can also talk to guys like nothing. She's like legit, she's like one of those popular White girls, except she is rude and sassy. She is like the weirdest Asian girl, like nowhere near typical, you know. She's funny.
>
> Vi: So she's not like a typical Asian?
>
> Mia: Yeah because I think she gets hit on a lot so her attitude has changed or something.
>
> Vi: So she doesn't look like it or sound like it?
>
> Mia: Not even her marks. Her marks are like not typical Asian marks. I think that's why she's friends with me because I tutor her, which is funny. She's funny
>
> Vi: You wouldn't consider her a typical Asian girl?
>
> Mia: No she's like one of those extremely popular girls that you bow down to, you know.

In this instance, Mia had referred to the idea that being like White popular girls was in contrast to being a typical Asian. She suggests that there is a particular hierarchy with the

"extremely popular girls" (i.e., White popular girls) are at the top. Mia had cited the label "whitewashed" and even used it to characterize herself. When I asked her to elaborate on this, she explained:

> Vi: You mentioned you are whitewashed...
>
> Mia: I'm not whitewashed in the sexual way. I don't talk about dramas. I don't know. I don't talk about Pokemon. I talk about normal stuff. Things that are happening now. Not in Asia.

In the above statement, Mia rejects being whitewashed as well as rejects being a FOB. When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by "whitewashed in the sexual way", she responded that it referred to having sex and being sexually promiscuous and that there are Asian girls who are but she was not like one of them:

> Mia: I think they're all whitewashed, honestly. It's not even like a racist thing. If you're Asian and you do all that stuff, then you're not a slut. You're not considered a slut because a White girl does the same thing and they're all friends with each other and do the same guy. I just don't understand.
>
> Vi: You use that term whitewashed, what does that mean?
>
> Mia: Meaning like you act White. For me, I cannot have sex until marriage. But like these Asian girls, they can have sex and they don't care and they don't tell their parents, like that's whitewashed. Their morals are not the same as our parents. My parents are strict but I'm not sure about yours. I'm not having any of that. No. If I get pregnant I'm done. (laughing) They're all on birth control, like all these girls are on birth control, there are Asian girls too and they had to have a talk with their parents, and they had to tell them it's for pimple or period regulation. I don't judge them. I don't care anymore.
>
> Vi: Because they already do that, that's kind of like a White thing?
>
> Mia: I know their Asian parents aren't going to let them but White parents they're like don't get pregnant, it's not a big deal if you take birth control.

Espiritu (2001) has argued that historically the sexuality of racialized women has been systemically demonized and disparaged by dominant groups. Here, Mia criticizes the morality of White women as both a strategy of resistance and a means of asserting a morally superior position (p. 416). This illustrates how some of the participants emphasized being virtuous to assert superiority over White girls, who are constructed as sexually immoral (Espiritu, 2001). Mia's statement "whitewashed in the sexual way", also reflects how some students understood their gender and sexuality through a racialized lens (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Mia saw Asian girls who were promiscuous as "whitewashed". It was apparent that gender and sexuality was complicated by issues of race and influenced the experiences of the participants at school in very different ways.

In the next section, I focus mainly on Long's narratives as he shared at length the impact of gender and sexuality on his experiences in school. Wayne Martino's (1999; 2000a, 2000b) work is particularly useful here in drawing attention to the discursive practices that boys learn and deploy in displaying their masculinity and sexuality, particularly within a peer group context. Long in particular felt that the stereotype of Asians as being quiet/passive and usually small in stature exposed him to increased harassment and isolation by other students as he explained he was seen neither as a model minority or "straight". Long used a number of practices to deploy an 'acceptable' masculinity and sexuality at school. He expressed his desire to appear "bad' to enact a desirable masculine identity but felt he also struggled with the feminization of the model minority discourse and its impact on his masculinity (Kumashiro, 2001). It has been found in other studies that the emasculation of Asian men has led to bullying in educational settings (Lei, 2006). Archer and Francis (2005) found from their study that Chinese students engaged in particular forms of style and appearance to embody "harder" masculinities. In order to minimize the alienation and bullying Long experienced, he tried to enact a 'cool popular' hegemonic masculine identity as a protective strategy at school.

Long had a lot to say about this issue. He was what Kumashiro (2001) would describe as "doubly oppressed". Sam (Grade 11) and Long (Grade 12) talked about this expectation that they had to be athletic to be accepted, but being Asian, it was not simply about being athletic. Sam felt like his small stature made him vulnerable to being judged

by the other boys at school when he was playing sports. He mentioned that regardless if he is better than some of the other boys, he would still be judged harshly:

> I think it's just 'cause the fact that I'm really skinny. And when you're playing as well even if they're awful too, they'll still be like "oh you suck" obviously as a joke but I don't like it… it's just intimidating sometimes because there are a lot of people who are *really good* at it [playing hockey] and then if they watch you and you're not as good as them, they'll be like, "Oh my god this kid really sucks, why is he even playing?" Usually I don't care what people think but when I play sports I do care what people think. (Sam, Grade 11)

Unlike Sam, Long confessed that he was never into sports but there was an expectation that he would be athletic and play sports and join the athletic teams at school. His lack of interest in sports and athletics was one of the reasons he attributed to feeling alienated by the popular students and male students at school. He mentioned that he felt ostracized for not being social and athletic, because the other Asian boys at his school who did hang out with the popular students were both social and athletic. He also described these Asian boys as being "more Canadian" who "didn't have an Asian background" suggesting that these students "acted White" and did not show their ethnicity which he felt were reasons why these Asian students were also accepted by the popular students at school. Long indicated that he heard disparaging remarks about Asian men being small and weak, which he seemed to believe was true. Long also felt that he neither conformed to the model minority stereotype nor the hegemonic masculine image which made him feel alienated at school and within his own Vietnamese community:

> I feel like I don't follow the stereotype and that's why I get singled out. (Long, Grade 12)

Long recounted an incident where he was picked on by one of the "cool kids" (i.e., popular White students) which he felt was racially motivated. Long felt that this student picked on him because of his height, and because he is Asian despite Long's effort to enact a "more aggressive masculine identity" (Martino, 1999).

I felt like he was racially picking on me. Him picking on me, made me more aggressive. Because how I was in elementary school I didn't want anyone to pick on me. I was pretty aggressive in grade 9. He would touch the top of my head and ruffle my hair because he was taller he would do stuff like that. The problem with that is a lot of people told me to let it go and laugh at it. For me, I didn't want to just get picked up, I was pretty aggressive. I got into a little fight with him. After that, everyone kind of talked about it and it eventually died down. He still ended up being popular because people didn't take it seriously. He was being unfair to me. So I got the short end of the straw. (Long, Grade 12)

Long explained he was further alienated by other students at school because of this incident. Although this other male student continued to maintain his popularity (Martino 1999), other students perceived Long to be oversensitive about the situation and further alienated him:

I think they just think I'm flamboyant and that's where my sensitivity comes from because I do have a lot of masculinity attacks on me where just because I sound or talk like I'm uncomfortable with something, I'm not as masculine as the other person. People always have this defined image of masculinity. (Long, Grade 12)

Long had mentioned that he was never aggressive before high school. He decided to become "more aggressive" in high school as a strategy to avoid being bullied because he was picked on in elementary school for his size. Long confessed he also changed his name as he felt resentment towards both mainstream Canadian society and the Vietnamese community:

Going to high school, I wanted to give myself a new name. It was also resentment towards Canadian as well. But I also, I was angry against Vietnamese culture. Throughout the years, I've....like I don't mind if anyone calls me by my given name but I don't like people calling me by that name either because it sounds flamboyant, whereas Long sounds more sharp and unique, so that's good (laughing). (Long, Grade 12)

Long admitted that over the years he struggled to adopt a valorized form of masculinity, as he was not into sports, he tried to assert a "more aggressive" masculinity by taking up smoking.

> In high school, in grade 9 I was more of an aggressive person, I thought smoking would give me a better image, I regret it and don't regret it. (Long, Grade 12)

However, he felt hostility and received backlash from other students as well as others within his Vietnamese community for smoking because he did not conform to the expectations of a "proper Asian". He felt that his parents were judged by it too based on the racial and cultural assumption that his parents did not raise him properly. He felt that this would not be the case if he was not Asian.

> As a Vietnamese male, I shouldn't be smoking.... the fact that I'm Vietnamese, their thought is how could his parents let him do this... With someone like me, I feel like the odds are against me in this community, with not even being a Vietnamese that smokes, with a Vietnamese male that dresses like me... (Long, Grade 12)

> Long explained that he was also teased for the way he started to dress. He described his sense of dress as "more feminine" which made others attribute this to being gay. He felt judged by mainstream society and also within his Vietnamese community because he did not measure up to what is considered appropriate manly behaviour (Martino, 1999) and what is considered appropriate for an Asian male (Kumashiro, 2001). Although he was conscious about being placed on the 'outside' and being a target for harassment, he was also resolute in trying to be himself and exploring his masculinity:

> Growing up, I started to dress better, wore fitted clothes, had my own sense of style, I always felt unique about that even now today. They…well Vietnamese kids they dress thuggish, I don't want to say thuggish, more urban...a bow tie—something ridiculous. I'm in the middle and I want to say I was the first one to do that. Growing up, when I wore anything remotely feminine, I was bagged on, I think I have the most earrings as a Vietnamese male, I wasn't only targeted by

Vietnamese people, I was targeted by people in school, the more masculine guys, always bagged on how I looked. Am I rebelling? Am I homosexual? Always something. I mean like my parents, one time I bought coloured pants, my mom was embarrassed of me… So there's that. The clothes. I think in grade 9 and 10, I wore some pretty…I don't want to say feminine...flamboyant , I loved it… I try not to care. I always felt like I was the sore thumb, the odd one out. I'm wearing tight shirts...fitted, not even tight. Different types of jackets that like...because there is a sharp image and a flamboyant image, I had fun, I loved it. All the things I used to like, I want to be a more sharp image. I mean, I was even told that because I dyed my hair, I was an embarrassment to the Vietnamese community. (Long, Grade 12)

Similar to Kumashiro's (1999) finding that Asian American boys are not always able to find support, affirmation, sense of belonging, and empowerment that heterosexual Asian American boys and White American queer boys are traditionally able to find in their respective Asian American and queer communities. Long is neither able to turn to the Vietnamese community for support and empowerment against racism and the homophobia he experiences instead he feels ostracized from the community and viewed as being "an abnormal Asian" (Kumashiro, 1999, p. 505). Long explained that people accused him of being effeminate for the way he dressed. Every time he would dress "more feminine", he felt his sexuality was being questioned. As a result, he felt rejected for being presumed gay by students at school, and others in his Vietnamese community. Martino (1999) draws attention to this as the practice of feminizing and sexualizing boys who do not measure up as 'other' (p. 245), where sexuality functions as a mechanism for policing the masculinity of boys. Long explained that he was treated differently as a result and felt it was unfair that he was perceived as "being gay" because of his display of more feminine traits and aesthetics. He also felt frustrated that he was considered an embarrassment and judged harshly from both students at school and within his own Vietnamese community. In addition to feeling confined by notions of being an Asian, his narrative highlights the particular negotiation and resistance of being Asian and masculine. He felt there were only two options for being a male: if he did not appear to be "masculine" (i.e., interested in sports, wearing baggy clothes), he must be gay then:

> You get the masculine guys and you get the guys people assume who are homosexual and I have been put in the homosexual side. I question why, what good reason is to put someone in there. I'm not saying it's a bad thing. I was always an artistic Vietnamese person just because I have some flamboyant tendencies, that somehow makes me look homosexual. (Long, Grade 12)

Long mentioned that he was teased by different groups of boys at school who he felt were "homophobic". He explained that other students felt like they had to make jokes about him as a subtle way of telling him, as he states that, "there is something wrong with me". When Long confronted one of his school friends for making fun of him, he explained that this particular friend was "watching out for me" and "looking out for me". This incident was not an isolated one. Long interpreted these exchanges as a way that other boys at his school wanted to tell him that "being gay was wrong" and they wanted "to protect him" from further ostracization. It illustrates the ways in which the role of homophobia and normalizing regime of heterosexist practices are used in the construction and maintenance of dominant versions of masculinity (Martino, 1999):

> Vi: What do they mean when they say protect you? Protect you in the sense, that…?

> Long: It will be hard. In a jokingly way. That, and, they are very...their culture is very homophobic at the same time, maybe that's why I never really got close to them, that's why they didn't want to accept me in their group after school hours. I mean they say they're trying to do me a favour but I mean, like, they're not.

Long had to also contend with disparaging remarks from people within his Vietnamese community as well who felt obligated to tell him that "being gay is wrong" and that Long "looked gay" and even if he was not gay, they implied he "shouldn't look gay":

> I've had Vietnamese people tell me the same things. Basically being homosexual is wrong. Vietnamese culture is very homophobic. I'm sure there are some cases where people accept it but otherwise, I think it is a taboo topic. I've been told that

> in Vietnam, more people are coming out. I think over here, there are that one or two odd teens that don't want to come out. I don't think the culture over here... It's a subculture. It's not the same over there. We're a little bit different here. Whatever happens over there might not necessarily come over here for 10 years. So Vietnamese people have a weird sense of homosexuality to the point where because I have earrings I'm frowned upon. I've had an uncle, get mad at me and say I shouldn't dress like a homosexual because homosexuals have a hard life. I took offense to that. It doesn't matter. It shouldn't matter. (Long, Grade 12)

Long does not explicitly come out to me during the interviews but neither confirmed nor rejected the assumptions from other students that he is gay. In talking about being perceived as gay, Long challenges the dominant discourse about questioning ideas about what girls and boys can do:

> I like to keep myself hygienic, so I do my hair, or I do my eyebrows, right? (laughing). I get told that that is what girls do and there's this masculinity in the Vietnamese culture, only guys do this and only girls do that...so I'm not afraid and I bring up the question, "What if I do like guys?" (Long, Grade 12)

When I asked Long about whether these experiences have prevented him from participating in school activities, he mentioned that he did not go to the high school dances:

> I don't think people are comfortable with me to go there to have a good time, dancing wise or socially or it's a "hey how's it going?" It doesn't really carry on. I've been told that a lot people think I'm gay I don't feel like conversing with the girls at my school. (Long, Grade 12)

When I asked him to elaborate on his relationship with the girls at his school, he explained:

> I think they think I'm more flamboyant and I don't really have enough to connect with any of them… Some of the girls in my life tend to give me an image being emasculated to the point where I can't defend myself, where I have to call

someone else or even a girl to defend myself. At school, it's 50/50. Some people think I can't handle myself. Some girls, some of my friends think I have a loud voice so when I say something it's too much for them. It's in their face. (Long, Grade 12)

For Long, certain social situations that bring classmates together was a reminder for him that he does not fit in, which Long has found has impeded his ability to develop close relationships with other students. Long was one participant who felt discouraged from affiliating closely with all students as he admitted to avoiding spaces in school and staying home during his spare breaks to avoid the social alienation and hostility he felt from other students. Ocampo and Soodjinda (2016) found that Asian gay students will take advantage of aspects of their racial identity and strategically capitalize on the model minority stereotype to evade harassment. Long, however, did not and could not capitalize on the model minority narrative to evade the harassment and the social isolation he experienced because he did not conform to the model minority. This instance highlights how the model minority stereotype is used as a mechanism of control and transgressing it can leave Asian students subject to isolation.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the key findings from the study. The findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the students' experiences and identities in school and their negotiation of the model minority narrative. Considering the racialization of Asians in Canada (Coloma, 2017), it is not surprising that the students encountered the model minority narrative in their daily experiences at school. The students were often positioned vicariously between two positions, being 'invisible' and racialized at school. It was apparent that they were not exclusively or simply perceived as being "model minorities". It highlights the fluidity and disposability of the model minority (Bradbury, 2013; Gillborn, 20008) whereby students can move in and out of 'model' status and whereby the model minority is strategically evoked in certain contexts and spaces. The findings revealed how the students' own racial identity and sense of belonging were informed by their racialization by other students. Their experiences

illustrate how the pervasiveness of these narratives continue to frame them as model minority and perpetual foreigner.

It was evident that issues of gender, social class, race, ethnicity and sexuality, overlapped and were not easily teased out. The complexity of race and racial identity was compounded by issues of gender, social class and sexuality. It was also apparent that social and cultural forces were at play that shaped the schooling experiences and identities of these students. One of the significant findings was that gender issues played a crucial role in the way that the students experienced school and related to other students. The issues and themes that emerged from the study underscore the complexity of race, gender, and social class informing students' racial identities and experiences at school. The findings underscore the importance of intersectionality and the complexity of students' identity, which illustrate the tension within existing studies on the model minority discourse of disrupting the model minority narrative and also recognizing the real impact of this myth on the lived experiences of racialized students (Bradbury, 2013). The following chapter will provide an overview of the study and include a discussion of the implications and the limitations of the study. It will conclude with a discussion of possible future research directions based on the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This final chapter provides an overview of the study and a summary and discussion of the key findings. Implications of the research are discussed in terms of its contributions and significance for the field. An overview of the limitations of the research and potential future research directions is also provided.

Overview of the research

The primary purpose of this qualitative research was to examine the experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth in school and to understand their negotiations of the model minority stereotype. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 Canadian Vietnamese youth residing in two cities in Ontario, Canada. There were 11 female and four male participants between the ages of 16 to 18 who volunteered to be part of the research. Participants were recruited through "snowballing" technique (Glesne, 2011) and the justification for using a small sample size was to explore their narratives in depth (Creswell, 2012a). The data collection phase took place during the Ontario academic school year from November 2013 to April 2014.

The research is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT), Intersectional and Cultural Studies frameworks and scholars. The impetus for focusing on racism and the significance of race in education is the denial of the significance of race and racism in educational discourse and practice and the trend towards the use of strictly class-based or gender-based criteria in formulating equity policies today (Dei, 2009; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). Having said this, the presumption that guides much of the educational discourse and debate around educational equity is that equal educational opportunity now exists; therefore, continued (low) levels of achievement on the part of minority students must be a function of family, culture, or a lack of effort and will. The prevailing view is that if students do not achieve it is through their own fault. The other impetus for focusing on racial inequality and the significance of race on Vietnamese youth's experiences was based on the predominant trend in research on the experiences of Asian students, in general, and Vietnamese youth specifically, to offer only cultural explanations. This approach overlooks an important reality that racialized students

experience very different educational realities. Nevertheless, the dominant belief is that it is students, their culture, and family, not their schools, classroom circumstances or teachers' perceptions of them, which are the sources of unequal educational attainment and opportunities (Gillborn, 2008).

My research needs to be understood as a response to the problem of lumping Vietnamese students together with Southeast Asian students and with other Asian ethnic groups in the majority of existing research on Asian students. As I have pointed out, the limitation of this methodological decision has meant that such research continues to homogenize Vietnamese youth and other Asian youth as being all the same and as sharing the same experiences at school. This approach has overlooked their differences and complexities in terms of ethnicity, social class, gender, citizenship, generation, and sexuality. Therefore, certain nuances and subtleties in their experiences have been not clearly understood.

In addition, my research was also a response to the call from a growing number of scholars for a theoretical shift in the framing of research concerning the model minority and Asian students (Lee, 1996; Lei, 2006; Ng et al., 2007; Ngo, 2006; Ngo & Lee, 2007; Omi & Tagaki, 1996; Omi & Winant, 2005; Poon et al., 2015; Razack, 1995). As such, my research moves away from relying on cultural frameworks and explanations (Razack, 1995) and embraces critical race theory (Kumashiro, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to explore Vietnamese students' experience in school and to understand the complexity and troubling, yet enduring nature of the model minority narrative.

CRT thus played a central role in the methodological approach that I adopted. One of the central tenets of CRT is challenging the dominant discourse through a focus on voices of populations that have been subordinated or silenced (Delgado, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The necessitated the need to incorporate a focus on students' own perspectives and accounts of their educational experiences, goals and aspirations, interactions with and relationships with peers and teachers and other issues related to their academic and social experiences at school.

In the following section I provide a summary and discussion of the key findings based on the participants' narratives.

Summary and Discussion

In this section, I highlight the key findings from the study and discuss the overall significance of them. To begin, it is important to revisit the research questions: What are the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian students in high school? In what ways does the model minority stereotype shape their views towards schooling, other students and overall educational experiences?

I think it is important to note that my discussion of the key findings here is not to romanticize the narratives of these students nor is it to find deficits in their narratives about how they understand and think about the model minority stereotype and how it has impacted their overall educational experiences. It is within the spirit of CRT that I acknowledge the importance of these students' lived experiences and alternative knowledges. This research was also not concerned with demonstrating how Vietnamese youth are not a model minority or trying to establish an argument about who they are. Hall's (1990; 1996b) work remind us about the importance of cultural identities in contemporary life. For Hall, identity is not fixed but in constant transformation. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. By emphasizing the notion of becoming as central to our identities, he speaks to the possibility of identity as generating meaning between 'how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves'. In keeping with a CRT lens and drawing on Cultural Studies scholars, I wanted to illuminate how the model minority narrative is not an illusion or an irregularity that we can transcend in political, popular and educational discourses today (Omi & Winant, 2001); rather I hope I have shed insight into how it has been taken up, understood and experienced in school by the students in this research.

Experiencing and negotiating the model minority

Being racialized and perceived as a model minority was a common experience among the participants. The students' responses and feelings about being perceived in

this way varied significantly, from feelings of ambivalence to anger, and were illustrative through their interactions with their peers at school. While the majority of participants did not embrace the stereotype, most of them experienced the pressures associated with the model minority narrative. For several students, being ascribed as a model minority caused them to feel distress, but the majority of participants felt conflicted or apathetic about it. Many of them felt that this type of racialization was simplistic and limiting. Several of the students, claimed the stereotype had no impact on them and their experiences at school. However, I found that essentialist representations were rampant in the students' discussions of their experiences at school but they challenged these essentialist representations that homogenized them and many rejected the notion of the model minority because they knew Asian students who were "not very smart" and many of the students claimed "I'm not good at math". The students responded to the racialization they experienced in multiple and different ways. While some did internalize some of these messages, others hid aspects that they assumed would be judged negatively. In a sense the participants' responses need to be viewed as a form of resistance (Lee, 2006) and an attempt to create their identities in response to the conditions they experienced at school and in society (McCarthy, 1990).

While many of the students did not see themselves as being "a typical Asian" the key point here is that they were acutely aware that they were often positioned and perceived by others, particularly at school as being a model minority regardless of their own feelings about the categorization itself. The students therefore were not able to truly escape the model minority narrative even if they did not identify with it or believe it to be true. In particular, the cultural ethos of the schools where students were constantly confronted with jokes about being a model minority made it difficult for students to escape the narrative because it is so normalized. In this sense, it was difficult for the students to challenge these remarks and exchanges. Another important finding revealed the issue of parental pressure and the extent to which it impacted on both the students' academic performance and their aspirational trajectories. In fact the research highlighted how parental pressure coincided with the model minority narrative in ways that suggested the parents themselves may have also internalized the model minority narrative.

The research also drew attention to how being racialized as a model minority impacted students' experiences at school in that they had very little interaction with White students unless it involved group work or help on math work. Several students noted that they felt socially isolated from other students at their school, namely White students. Social class was also found to have impacted their experiences as well. Since, most of the students were from working class backgrounds, they shared that they often were not able to communicate with their parents about their experiences at school, and often had to navigate the education system and make choices on their own. Rather than view this aspect as a deficit, some of the students expressed empathy and understanding for why their parents were not as knowledgeable and involved in their schooling experience. The impact of these issues was not uniformly experienced, and the way the students negotiated these issues were very different. Overall, the students described having a "good" overall experience at school, but this was not universally shared as some of the students described feelings of isolation and alienation from other students at school.

Perpetual Foreigner

Many of the students were cognizant that there were other perceptions of Asians. While the model minority discourse was part of their experiences, there were other types of categorizations that they encountered. It was apparent that they were not exclusively or simply perceived as being "model minorities". Many of the participants were positioned as foreign (that is "not a real Canadian"). Such a finding highlights the fluidity and disposability of the model minority category (Bradbury, 2013; Gillborn, 2008) whereby students can move in and out of 'model' status and whereby the model minority is strategically evoked in certain contexts and places. As such, the findings revealed how being racialized informed the students about their own racial identity and sense of belonging, and their experiences at school. Many of the participants' comments alluded to this notion that they are not allowed to just be 'Canadian'.

The students were surrounded by hegemonic messages about race, where whiteness and Canadian are synonymous, and the standard in which the students measure themselves and others. For all the participants, they alluded to the notion or view that

White students were the only authentic Canadians. They frequently referred to and identified White students at their school as being "the Canadian students" and one participant, even identified the White students at her school as "American students". Interestingly, all the Vietnamese Canadian youth in my study are Canadian born, yet when asked about how they identified they all invoked their Vietnamese ethnicity. Although they were born in Canada, they did not view themselves as Canadian. However, only bringing attention to the fact that they are Canadian-born citizens, some of the students recanted their original response and stated that they also identified as Canadian, second to Vietnamese.

My study has highlighted that such accounts are significant in terms of understanding the ways in which the model minority discourse and multiculturalism discourse is deployed in education, and how Vietnamese Canadian youth construct, articulate and/or understand their racial and other social identities, as well as, their interactions and relations with others at school. It has demonstrated the insidious ways in which the model minority narrative and the discourse of multiculturalism mutually inform and buttress the belief that we live in a meritocratic and/or "post-racial" society Moreover, my research has shown that the model minority discourse and the everyday discourse of "multiculturalism", particularly in Canada, continue to inform and reinforce common and, sometimes, unquestioned beliefs and ideas that we live in a meritocratic and "post-racial" society (James, 1995). While both discourses, on the surface, appear to be "positive", my research has illustrated that they continue to pose problems for engaging in important discussions about racial inequities, identity and racialized experiences of Vietnamese students in ways that are nuanced and more critical. In short, my study exposed how both the model minority and multiculturalist discourse, persist in ways that make it difficult to address salient issues of race, racial identity and racism, thereby tacitly denying and erasing the true significance of racialized identities and relations in schools and the broader society.

Gender and sexuality

The research also highlighted that some of the students did not find school to be a particularly affirming or safe space. For one participant, Long, he was berated by others

for the way he dressed and for his lack of interest in sports. As a result, his sexuality was constantly questioned by others. He acknowledged that he did not fit any of the stereotypes of being a model minority, an Asian male or the hypermasculine male and was consequently picked on and ostracized from students at school and from people within his Vietnamese community. In this sense, my study illustrated the troubling reality of gender policing and homophobia that male students (who are perceived to be gay or are gay) experience and how such embodied realities need to be understood in intersectional terms for racialized students.

The research also revealed that many of the female participants had learned that whiteness was considered the "normative" beauty standard for what is considered desirable in terms of behaviours, dress, and attitude. Many of them cited the portrayal of stereotypical images of Asian women as being "exotic" but also feeling pressured to be "physically attractive" to feel accepted and approached by other students. They constructed their gender through a racialized lens (Pyke & Johnson, 2003), where the gendered behaviour of Asians were seen as racially distinct, while White femininity was regarded as superior (Pyke & Johnson, 2003). Such intersectional insights into the racial identities of Vietnamese students position my study as making an important contribution to the field.

Significance of the Research

The study's analytic insights into the racialized identities of Vietnamese students in schools is an aspect that has not been extensively elaborated in the existing research in the field that has focused on this specific population. In fact, my research highlights and illuminates further salient aspects of these students' racialized lives in schools and provides further insights into the persistence and toxic effects of the model minority categorization and how it specifically impacts on Vietnamese students.

Limitations

Given the small sample size, it is important to acknowledge that there are certain limits imposed in terms of generating knowledge about Vietnamese students in any

representative sense. This is in spite of the fact that my purpose was not to generalize across a population but rather to seek to generate insights into the experiences of a group of Vietnamese students. As a result, it is important for further research to continue to be committed to documenting a range of different voices and perspectives that are committed to investigating the variegated positionalities and intersectional locations of this student population.

One specific limitation pertaining to the execution of the research related to the students' availability to participate in the research. Since the participants were in high school, many of them indicated that their time was limited to be interviewed. Therefore, in order to accommodate the students' schedule, the length of interview times varied which meant that some students had more or less time to share their narratives than others depending on their availability and class schedule.

In addition, my role as the interviewer being a second generation Vietnamese female may have had some impact on participants' responses as some participants could have responded to interview questions in a way that they might have thought was favourable to me, as a fellow Vietnamese.

Research Contributions & Implications

The research findings are relevant to the fields of Education, and critical race studies. Findings from my study can potentially enhance the understanding of specific stressors affecting the lives of Vietnamese Canadian youth, such as their experiences with discrimination, reactions to stereotypes, and family pressure to succeed academically.

This research contributes to the field of education by providing a more in-depth understanding of Vietnamese Canadian youth's experiences in high school. I hope this research will help to inform teachers, administrators, and other researchers to question their current perceptions, assumptions and understandings of Vietnamese youth, and to critically reflect on the dominant discourses about Asian students that may impede our understanding about their experiences and identities in school and may contribute to their visibility/invisibility, and sense of belonging inside and outside of the school system.

In response to growing anti-Asian sentiments in Canada (see Gilmour et al., 2012; Pon et al., 2017), I propose that educational research concerning the model minority discourse needs to draw on critical race theory, as an analytical framework for reconceptualising and understanding the impact of it.

This research contributes to a small but growing number of studies that have looked at the representation and experiences of Asian students as racialized beings and its affect on their schooling experiences (Jo, 2004; Kiang & Kaplan, 1994; Lee, 1996; Palmer & Jang, 2005; Ng et al., 2007; Quach et al., 2009). It also expands on a small number of studies that have examined the intersections of race, gender, class, and power relations that are reproduced in these students' day-to-day social interactions in school (Kumashiro, 2001; Lee, 1996; 2006; Lee & Vaught, 2003; Lei, 2003; McKay & Wong, 1996; Ngo, 2006; Pang et al., 2004; Quach et al., 2009).

Lastly, in terms of research on the model minority, the tendency of prior research on the model minority stereotype to approach race, gender and class separately has potentially obscured important differences in how the model minority narrative is experienced, maintained, negotiated, and understood, undermining efforts to challenge and talk about the model minority in more complex ways. There is a need to draw on 'new' and more critical frameworks for a more critical and sophisticated reading and understanding of the impact of the model minority stereotype on students' identities, relationships and experiences at school.

Future Research Directions

In terms of future research, it will be important to continue and expand on this research and others in the field by engaging with the challenging theoretical and conceptual ideas of race and racism and to be aware of the pervasive discourses that shape our framing and understanding of these issues.

Since this research was exploratory into the experiences of Vietnamese youth and the main focus of the research was on race, the findings on gender and sexuality here can be entry points to interrogate further or focus in more detail the impact of gender and

sexuality on Vietnamese students' experiences in school. Furthermore, there is a paucity of queer analysis examining the experiences of students of colour (Kumashiro, 2001) so a focus for future research could be to examine in-depth the sexually marginalized lives of Vietnamese youth. Another study that focuses on boys/girls would also be helpful to capture a more detailed understanding of their experiences by examining the complexities involved in the way they enact their masculinity/femininity.

My study contributes to a very limited number of studies focused on Vietnamese students and their experiences with race. In order to expand on these findings and determine the extent that these experiences are shared by other Vietnamese youth, a future study could increase the number of participants and locales studied. Future research could include parents of these students to enrich the data and provide different perspectives.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form

Western⊞Education

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS - ETHICS APPROVAL NOTICE

Review Number:	1306-2
Principal Investigator:	Goli Rezai-Rashti
Student Name:	Vi Vo
Title:	*Interrupting the "model minority" narrative: Voices of Vietnamese Canadian youth*
Expiry Date:	July 31, 2014
Type:	Ph.D. Thesis
Ethics Approval Date:	July 16, 2013.
Revision #:	
Documents Reviewed & Approved:	Western Protocol, Letter of Information & Consent, Advertisement

This is to notify you that the Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board (REB), which operates under the authority of the Western University Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the date noted above. The approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the REB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or information/consent documents may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB, except for minor administrative aspects. Participants must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation. Investigators must promptly report to the Chair of the Faculty Sub-REB any adverse or unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected, and any new information which may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study. In the event that any changes require a change in the information/consent documentation and/or recruitment advertisement, newly revised documents must be submitted to the Sub-REB for approval.

Dr. Alan Edmunds (Chair)

2012-2013 Faculty of Education Sub-Research Ethics Board	
Dr. Alan Edmunds	Faculty of Education (Chair)
Dr. John Barnett	Faculty of Education
Dr. Wayne Martino	Faculty of Education
Dr. George Gadanidis	Faculty of Education
Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki	Faculty of Education
Dr. Julie Byrd Clark	Faculty of Education
Dr. Kari Veblen	Faculty of Music
Dr. Jason Brown	Faculty of Education
Dr. Susan Rodger	Faculty of Education, Associate Dean, Research *(ex officio)*
Dr. Ruth Wright	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*
Dr. Kevin Watson	Faculty of Music, Western Non-Medical Research Ethics Board *(ex officio)*

The Faculty of Education   Faculty of Education Building

Copy: Office of Research Ethics

Appendix B: Letters of Information and Consent

Interrupting the "model minority" narrative: Voices of Vietnamese Canadian Youth

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Introduction
My name is Vi Vo and I am PhD student at the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Purpose of the study
The aims of this study are to understand the academic and social experiences of Vietnamese Canadian youth in high school.

If you agree to participate
If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to meet twice for a face-to-face interview that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. Location of the interviews will be in a mutually agreed upon place such as a public library, your community organization venue, your school, and/or at your home. Interviews will be audio taped. You will be asked to review your interview transcript and make any revisions or corrections. If you would like to participate in this study but are unable to meet for one or two interviews, alternative arrangements may be made to conduct the interview over the telephone or through e-mail.

Confidentiality
The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. You will be given a pseudonym to protect your identity. Any information such as names of people, schools, locations or events will be changed to protect your identity. The data from the interviews will be stored and locked in a secure place for 5 years and will be destroyed after this time.

Risks & Benefits
There are no known risks to participating in this study.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Questions
If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, Western University
If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Sincerely,

Vi Vo

Western Education

Interrupting the "model minority" narrative:
Voices of Vietnamese Canadian Youth

Vi Vo
Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario
Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti, Professor
Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree that my son/daughter may participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

_____
Name of Student

_____   _____
Student's Signature   Date

_____
Printed Name of Parent/Guardian

_____   _____
Parent/Guardian's Signature   Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide & Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Interview Guide & Semi-Structured Interview Questions

A. Introduction to study and completion and/or collection of consent form. At this point, the student will be asked if they have any expectations, questions and concerns about participating in the study. I will provide any clarification and/or answers to their questions at this time. I will also provide the student with more details about what they can expect during and after the interview stage of the research.

B. My script as interviewer: *I would like to begin this interview by asking you to tell me about your life story. You can share and provide as much detail as you want. I am interested to know what events, experiences, people or factors in your life has shaped who you are and your academic and social experiences at school. I may ask for more detail or clarification and please feel free to further elaborate if you feel comfortable or able to do so.*

C. The following questions are designed to elicit responses from the students about their experiences at school and how the model minority stereotype impacts and shapes their experience at school, relationship/interaction with other students and teachers, perceived and real opportunities in school, and their racial and other identities. The student may answer some of these questions in telling me about their life story (such as birthplace, age, grade, and so on), therefore, there is no particular order in which these questions will be asked and some of these questions can be returned to in the follow-up interviews.

Please tell me about yourself, your name, age, grade.

Where were you born? If you were born outside of Canada, how long have you been living in Canada for?

What language(s) do you speak most often at home? At school?

How would you racially/ethnically identify yourself?

What would you tell me or someone who is meeting you for the first time about yourself?

Why are these things you have mentioned about yourself, important to you?

Tell me how long you've been going to _____ school and what courses you are currently taking.

What are your interests inside and outside of school?

Tell me about your long-term academic goals and aspirations.

Have you thought about what you will do after you complete high school?

Has anyone influenced your decision? In what ways have they influenced you? Please provide some examples.

How would you describe yourself as a student?

How do you think teachers perceive you? How about your peers? Friends? Family? Please provide examples.

Has this posed any issues for you at school? Please provide examples.

What part does family play in your life in terms of your school experiences, course selections and opportunities?

What encourages you or makes you participate in school? What motivates you in school?

What are the opportunities for you to participate in school, such as groups, clubs, extra-curricular activities? Can you provide some examples?

Is there anything that prevents or keeps you from participating in school? Put another way, is there anything about school, family, friends, or peers, that makes you avoid certain types of academic activities, or social events at school? (e.g. athletics, clubs). Please provide examples.

Are there any challenges you experience at school? Can you tell me more about these challenges? Can you provide some examples of these challenges?

Are there any positive aspects of school for you? Can you tell me about these positive aspects?

Tell me about your peer group and friends at school? What role do they play in your academic and social experiences at school?

Have you experienced or witnessed any discrimination at school? Please provide examples if possible.

Do you think the media or general public portrays Vietnamese youth in a particular way? Please provide examples.

What do you think of these perceptions or stereotypes?

Do you think people at school have these perceptions of you? What effect (if any?) do these views have on you and your experiences in school?

Thinking about what we talked about today, what do you think is most important for you?

Is there something that we did not talk about today that you would like to talk about now or next time we meet?

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Vi Vo
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Doctor of Philosophy The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2010 – 2019
	Master of Education The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2008 – 2010
	Bachelor of Education The University of Windsor Windsor, Ontario, Canada 2007 – 2008
	Bachelor of Arts The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2003 - 2007
Honours and Awards:	Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) 2012 - 2014
	Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) 2011
	W.A. Bishop Townsend Gold Medal in Education 2010
Related Work Experience:	Research Assistant The University of Western Ontario 2010 - 2015
	Teaching Assistant The University of Western Ontario 2011 - 2015