View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by YorkSpace

THE CHANGING FACES OF CHINESE CANADIANS: INTERPELLATION AND PERFORMANCE IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE MODEL MINORITY DISCOURSE

HARMONY KI TAK LAW

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HUMANITIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

December 2018

© Harmony Law, 2018

ABSTRACT

The history of Chinese settlement in Canada is one that closely parallels the evolution of the Canadian state's own racial and immigration policies. As policy shifted from covert and overt forms of racial exclusion and discrimination, including the *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1923 that attempted to ban immigration from China altogether, to the introduction of an official multicultural policy and a points system that admitted prospective immigrants based upon their academic and economic credentials, the portrayal of Chinese Canadians has centred on two predominant stereotypes: the Yellow Peril and the Model Minority.

While it is easy to retroactively assume that the Yellow Peril discourse has been superseded by that of the Model Minority – particularly in light of Canada's official multiculturalism policy, the increased economic and social capital of Chinese Canadians, and China's own recent economic boom – this dissertation argues instead that both discourses have co-existed since the beginning of Chinese immigration to Canada, and continue to do so today.

Using a combined examination of Chinese Canadian history and life writing, I argue that the Model Minority discourse is not a recent phenomenon; rather, it is an example of the complex relationship between external interpellation by mainstream Canadian society, and the agency and affective performance of Chinese immigrants and their descendants. While the Model Minority discourse has been used as a tool to maintain the Eurocentrism of mainstream Canadian society by placing Asian immigrants, including Chinese, upon a pedestal in contrast to other racialized minorities, it has also found footing in the desire of Chinese Canadian communities to be accepted and acknowledged as desirable citizens by the Canadian state and the public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank-you…to my Graduate Supervisor, Dr. Eva C. Karpinski. Throughout the long process of fulfilling all the requirements of my PhD studies, you have been a warm and patient guide and mentor. Every single time we meet to discuss my work, you are prepared with extensive notes and comments, suggestions for scholars to add to my theoretical framework, and – on more than one occasion – new books to help me start my own library of resources.

Thank-you…to everyone who has taken part in various supervisory committees over the course of my PhD studies. While real-life circumstances have meant that my team of advisors has been in constant flux, I am glad to say in hindsight that this has offered me a far broader range of perspectives on my work than I could ever have imagined. My thanks, therefore, to Drs. Eve Haque and Nalini Persram, who were present for my oral comprehensive exams; Drs. Lily Cho and Sailaja Krishnamurty, who oversaw the creation of my dissertation proposal; and Dr. Leslie Sanders, who joined this committee in the process of finally putting this project to paper.

Thank-you…to all the course directors and lecturers whom I worked for as a teaching assistant. You have all been amazing mentors for me: Drs. Peter Stevens, Jon Sufrin, Sailaja Krishnamurty, Andrea Medovarski, and Karen Ruddy. We have survived a great deal together – including two strikes! – and I truly hope that the friendships I have formed with each of you as colleagues can last a lifetime.

Thank-you…to my family. Your decision to come to Canada from Hong Kong is what started me on this entire journey to begin with. Thank-you, also, for supporting your daughter/sister/aunt in a career path in the Humanities that falls so far outside the “Model Minority” stereotype. I love you all so much, and could not have done this without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii
Acknowledgments iii
Table of Contents iv

Introduction 1
Research Question 7
Chapters Outline 13

Chapter 1: Canadian Multiculturalist Discourse and its Critics 20
1.1 Multiculturalism as Part of Canada's National Imaginary 25
1.2 Critiques of Canadian Multiculturalism 31
1.3 What to Do with Multiculturalism? 47

Chapter 2: Chinese Canadian Life Writing as Subjective Acts 51
2.1 Why Life Writing? 52
2.2 Chinese Canadian Literature and Its Common Themes 59
2.3 Methodology and Data Corpus 70

Chapter 3: Interpellation and Affective Performance: Chinese Canadians in the Exclusion Era 72
3.1 The Yellow Peril and Chinese Exclusion 74
3.2 Chinese Responses to Exclusion: Chinatown Communities 85
3.3 Chinese Responses to Exclusion: Brokering Citizenship 89
3.4 Beginnings of the Model Minority? Interpellation and the Performance of Assimilability 96

Chapter 4: Chinatown Narratives: Giving Voice to the Silenced 100
4.1 Surprisingly Unwelcome: The Writing on the Wall 102
4.2 Choosing to Come, Choosing to Stay – First-Person Accounts of Exclusion 105
4.3 Growing Up Chinese, Growing Up Canadian – The Chinatown Narrative 117
4.4 Coming Around Full Circle 132

Chapter 5: Opening Policy and the Rise of the Model Minority Discourse 135
5.1 "Open" Doors – Repealing Exclusion and the Points System 136
5.2 Making It Big – Asian Success and the Model Minority Discourse 142

Chapter 6: Performing the Model Minority Discourse in Chinese Canadian Life Writing 150
6.1 Achievement in the Face of Adversity – Selecting Success 152
6.2 Changing Canada from Within – Chinese Canadians in Politics 157

Chapter 7: Collapsing from Within: Asian American and Canadian Criticisms of the Model Minority Discourse 174
7.1 Not All Asians: The Inaccuracy of the Model Minority Image 175
7.2 That's So Asian: The Model Minority Discourse's Reflection on Cultural Character 177
7.3 Divide and Conquer: The Model Minority Discourse as a Counter-Resistance Tactic 185

7.4 Should We Be Grateful?: Negotiating the Model Minority Discourse and Its Criticisms 190

Chapter 8: Speaking Up and Breaking Rules: Refuting the Model Minority Discourse in Chinese Canadian Life Writing 192
8.1 Speaking Up Through Art – Chinese Canadian Cultural Activism 193
8.2 Breaking Under Pressure: Consequences of Model Minority Parenting in Evelyn Lau's *Runaway* 200
8.3 The Price for Speaking Out: Writing as Activism in Jan Wong's *Out of the Blue* 207
8.4 Refusing to Conform 214

Chapter 9: Too Much of a Good Thing: Negotiating the Yellow Peril and Model Minority Discourses in Present-Day Canada 216
9.1 Poised to Take Over: "Too Many Asians" in Canadian Schools and Neighbourhoods 218
9.2 Refusing to Apologize: Performance and Self-Actualization in *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* 230

Conclusion: Finding a Balance: Is It Possible? 242
Further Research and Next Steps 245

Works Cited 248
Primary Sources 248
Secondary Sources 249

Introduction

Growing up in Toronto as a Chinese Canadian immigrant from Hong Kong, I have come across no shortage of stereotypical images. In my experience, these ideas can fall into two main categories. On the one hand, some stereotypes evoke China's vivid, millennia-old history: the serenely flowing brushstrokes of Chinese calligraphy; the crack of firecrackers and the glow of paper lanterns during the Lunar New Year; the smells and aromas of China's plenitude of diverse cuisines; the glisten of red silk *qipao* encrusted with luxurious golden embroidery. Complementing this set of traditional cultural stereotypes is another that claims to represent the present-day: the hustle and bustle of accountants, real estate agents, and stockbrokers; the near-perfect grade averages coupled with prestigious degrees in the maths, sciences, engineering, or business; the plethora of wealthy immigrants from mainland China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan[1] populating mansions in the suburbs or plush condominiums in the downtown core. Both sets of stereotypes combine into an imagined story of success, in which Chinese Canadians have excelled academically and economically whilst maintaining ties to their ancestral traditions: a poster child case of Canadian multiculturalist[2] policy at work.

Yet, this success story is not the only one that must be told. It is imperative that Canadians never forget the years of Orientalist and anti-Asian discourse and policy. Although Chinese migrant workers were desired as a cheap source of labour in the mid-19th century, their

[1] I distinguish between these three locations (mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) in particular due to their distinct cultures and histories. This distinction is in no way meant to be a comment on the political relationship between them. Furthermore, because I use "mainland China" to refer to a geographic and cultural space, any mention of "the People's Republic of China" refers to the specific nation-state that was founded by the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

[2] I use "multiculturalist" here rather than "multicultural" to emphasize the ways in which Canada's official multiculturalism policy functions as an ideological discourse. I also use it to refer to multiculturalism as a discourse, as opposed to multiculturalism as a mere descriptor of ethnocultural diversity.

racialized features, their distinctive cultural practices and values, and their apparent willingness to work under dangerous conditions with little pay earned the burgeoning Chinese Canadian community the fear and ire of the surrounding mainstream European Canadian society. Populist agitation for the sanctity of a “white Canada” and an emergent labour movement that saw Asian migrants as a threat to their goals led to Parliament’s passing several anti-Chinese laws that marked the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This included, among others, the imposition of a mandatory head tax on Chinese immigrants in 1885; the Chinese Immigration Act – known commonly as the Exclusion Act – barring most Chinese immigrants in 1923; and the continued disenfranchisement of Chinese Canadians – immigrant, naturalized, or Canadian-born – until 1947.

To this day, there is still substantial proof that anti-Chinese sentiment continues to exist, including the resurgence in recent years in response to growing housing costs in cities such as Vancouver and Toronto. Yet, this goes almost unseen in official and popular opinion, even among members of the Chinese Canadian community itself. Instead, an official public discourse has developed that paints racism as a relic of the past, and Canada as a repentant nation that has embraced a more enlightened path. Evidence used to support this claim includes the revocation of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947; the progress made by the Civil Rights movements in Canada and the United States during the 1960s; and the ultimate establishment of Canada’s official multicultural policy, all of which indicate a shift in public racial attitudes in the latter half of the 20th century. According to this narrative of Canadian racial history, whereas official policy had once marginalized non-Western European immigrants, including Chinese, due to assumptions that they would never successfully assimilate into Anglo- and/or Franco-Canadian culture, the official multiculturalism policy now calls upon these same communities to embrace

their cultural uniqueness and share their customs and histories with their fellow Canadians. Only then, according to official multiculturalist rhetoric, could racism and prejudice be well and truly eradicated and a new Canada – one composed of a vibrant cultural mosaic – could emerge and spread its light to the rest of the world. Thus, for example, an op-ed published in the *Toronto Sun* in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017 claims that "we can be proud that people now take pride in not being racist" and "we have become even more enlightened since [the time of the Underground Railroad during the United States' Civil War] and remain far ahead of the U.S. in race relations" (Hassan).

As one of many affected racialized groups, Asian Canadians, including Chinese, were at the centre of these changes in policy. In the midst of the Civil Rights movement in the United States, a new image of Asian North Americans emerged: the Model Minority. Although it is important to make clear that the specific term, "Model Minority", is used far less in Canada than in the United States, the same set of stereotyped expectations of Asian immigrants and their descendants appears on both sides of the border (Ty 4-5). According to the Model Minority discourse, Chinese Canadians, endowed with traditional Confucian values promoting hard work, perseverance, and a deference to authority, were able to rise above oppression and attain educational, economic, and, ultimately, political success:

> Another example of the transitory nature of Asian America is the contemporary notion of the "model minority," founded upon the supposed persistence and rearticulation of "*traditional* Confucian values" in Asian Americans, whose success lies in their ability to adapt Asia to America as well as to transform America through the application of a "Confucian" ethos. (Palumbo-Liu 21, emphasis original)

It is this Model Minority discourse that connects us back to the aforementioned dual image of Chinese Canadians as a community filled with a rich historical cultural past and brimming with

fervor in the present, existing alongside a celebratory discourse of multiculturalism in Canada that paints the perceived success of Chinese Canadians as evidence of the official multiculturalism policy's success in eradicating racism. In essence, the industry, perseverance, and submission to authoritative figures including the government become, under the multicultural policy, part of the supposed heritage that Chinese Canadians are encouraged to share with the rest of mainstream society. Thus, although he spoke in reference to the United States, Frank Wu's statement on the role of the Model Minority discourse in a broader context also holds true here:

> In the view of other Americans, Asian Americans vindicate the American Dream. A publicity campaign designed to secure the acceptance of Asian Americans could hardly improve perceptions. They have done better here than they ever could have dreamed of doing in their homelands. They are living proof of the power of the free market and the absence of racial discrimination. Their good fortune flows from individual self-reliance and community self-sufficiency, not civil rights activism or government welfare benefits. They believe that merit and effort pay off handsomely and justly, and so they do. *Asian Americans do not whine about racial discrimination: they only try harder.* If they are told that they have a weakness that prevents their social acceptance, they quickly agree and earnestly attempt to cure it. If they are subjected to mistreatment by their employer, they quit and found their own company rather than protesting or suing. (*Yellow* 44, emphasis mine)

These strategies are purportedly the ones that would help marginalized Canadians to overcome discrimination and find security and success: not through activism or agitation; but through peaceable endurance, study, and enterprise within a system that is already tailored for their benefit. While it is important to note that this is a gross oversimplification of both the place of racialized discourses in 21st century Canadian society, and the specific location of Chinese Canadians within it, what matters for my purposes here is the degree of resonance these myths continue to hold.

Yet, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that a host of critical voices have emerged; scholars and activists have strongly interrogated both Canada's multicultural policy and the Model Minority discourse in connection to it. In regards to multiculturalism, many of the critiques fall within three main categories: those like Neil Bissoondath and Salim Mansur, who argue that multiculturalism encourages division along ethnocultural lines to the detriment of a unified Canadian society; those like Himani Bannerji and Sunera Thobani, who argue that multiculturalism allows the continued existence of systemic barriers preventing racialized minorities from true equity in Canadian society; and those like Gérard Bouchard, Glen Coulthard, and Bonita Lawrence, who argue that multiculturalism maintains a system of settler colonialism that continues to marginalize the sovereignty of the Québécois and Indigenous peoples. Adding further nuance to this model of scholarly criticism, one could also consider an intersectional axis that seeks to take distinctions based on gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc. into account. Thus, for instance, there exist critiques of multiculturalism from multiple sides of the debate that utilize feminist and anti-racist approaches. The former, including scholars like Susan Moller Okin, argue that multiculturalism allows ethnic minorities to maintain their patriarchal values, whereas the latter, including scholars such as Yasmin Jiwani, argue that multiculturalist discourses need to consider that practical inequalities between men and women vary across races due to a sustained racialized hierarchy.

Just like multiculturalism, the Model Minority myth has strong critics, both from the dominant culture and from within Chinese Canadian communities. For example, the publication of an article titled "Too Asian?" in a 2010 issue of *Maclean's*, a Canadian news magazine, as well as the recent blame on rising real-estate prices in cities like Vancouver and Toronto on Chinese immigrants and investors suggests that some members of the public would argue that the

Model Minority discourse has already done too much to put Asian Canadians upon a pedestal. However, a significantly different form of criticism actually comes from Asian Americans and Canadians themselves. Scholars such as David Palumbo-Liu and Frank Wu, both from the United States, argue that the Model Minority discourse is one that further marginalizes them by its suggestion that they have already achieved success and full acceptance in the mainstream society when the reality is not the case. Rather than official legislature barring Chinese Canadians from specific jobs, there is now the assumption that their Confucian values make them hardworking, but passive: suitable students and employees, but poor managers: Not only that, the Model Minority myth, by assuming that Asian Americans and Asian Canadians have already succeeded, obscures the plurality of experiences within the actual community. While there are many public faces and figures that reflect this success narrative, many more immigrants from Asia and their descendants still struggle with poverty, lack of access to educational or occupational opportunities, and mental health issues.

Yet these issues, due to the prevalence of both multiculturalism and the Model Minority discourse, are frequently ignored and swept under the rug. Thus, as Japanese Canadian scholar and critic Roy Miki argues, there exists in Canada "a common-sense empiricism in which the not-seen need not be addressed and the unsayable has no legitimacy" due to the state's multiculturalist policy (Miki 98). This has led to the abuse of the Model Minority discourse by those who would use it to argue against affirmative action or other anti-racist legislation, or to drive a wedge between Asian Canadians and members of other marginalized racialized groups. All this, however, is ultimately so that white North Americans could hold onto their perceived position of privilege; the Model Minority, according to Miki, is an example of "externalization" and "orientalization," where despite the appearance of success, Asian Canadians are still set up

as outsiders in contrast to the imagined white Canadian subject (97). Asian Canadians' acceptance into mainstream Canadian society, then, is contingent upon their assimilation and conformance to the Model Minority stereotype; any other form of inhabited experience and representation entails a failure to succeed and a slippage into the inassimilable Other: the Yellow Peril stereotype.

Research Question

Yet, in spite of my own agreement with anti-racist activists' critiques of both Canada's multiculturalist policy and the Model Minority stereotype, as a Chinese Canadian who is now a PhD candidate at York University, I cannot pretend that I have not been one of the beneficiaries of both discourses. Regardless of whether I perceive myself to be a marginalized Other in Canada, I must acknowledge that for those looking at me and my fellow Chinese Canadians from the outside, we do appear to have attained social, economic, and political success. In addition, as a scholar, it is imperative that I examine the Chinese Canadian community within its broader social, cultural, and political context. This entails analyzing not only the ways in which Chinese Canadians have interacted with official and dominant constructs such as multiculturalism and the Model Minority discourses, but also in relation with other racialized and marginalized groups in Canadian society. In my viewpoint, examining these imagined constructs and the stereotypes that stem from them will enable me to obtain, in the words of Robert Lee, "an understanding of racial representation as a social practice" (12-13).

To begin, my views on privilege and success in the context of the Model Minority discourse are indebted to the work of Linda Martin Alcoff and Sherene Razack, two scholars who have sought to complicate feminist anti-racist theory in different ways. Alcoff interrogates

American racial discourses that operate upon a White-Black dichotomy, arguing that scholars and activists should instead acknowledge a racial hierarchy that also includes Hispanic, Asian, Indigenous, and interracial Americans. Meanwhile, in her book *Looking White People in the Eye*, which discusses the intersections between racist, sexist, classist, and ableist discourses, Razack devotes a chapter towards ableism, in which she states, "In this chapter, I am the imperial gazer rather than the gazed upon, the one who engages in a politics of saving other women" (131). Her comment, along with Alcoff's discussion of the gaps in racial discourses that emphasize a White vs. Non-white binary, leads me to wonder whether Chinese Canadians, too, have a position as simultaneously "the imperial gazer" and "the gazed upon": both the subject of racial oppression and complicit in the oppression of other racialized groups whom the Model Minority discourse has constructed as beneath them in the hierarchy. Along with that came the question as to whether this trickling down of marginalization and oppression could be broken, not solely by critiquing the hegemonic "white" structures on top, but also, to use Razack's method, through a form of self-interrogation and self-reflection.

Thus, in this study, it is my intention to examine the Model Minority discourse not only through the lens of oppression, but also through that of agency and privilege. Since Chinese Canadians are constructed as Model Minorities anyway, despite scholars' and activists' arguments to the contrary and regardless of their own desires and self-identifications, I am interested in the double-edged nature of the stereotype. As already noted, the Model Minority discourse, acting within a neo-liberal political and economic system, has hitherto been used in a divide-and-conquer strategy that placed racialized Canadians on a hierarchy and fomented

competition between them by planting the Japanese and Chinese Canadians[3] as an imagined exemplary group for others to follow in order to become "deserving immigrants." For instance, Roy Miki notes that Japanese Canadians were compelled by racial discrimination to perform assimilative Canadianness on a broad scale:

> In the dispersed sites of forced relocation, living among white majorities, we were consistently framed as Japanese, even though we were Canadian by birth. At the same time, as Japanese Canadians whose loyalties were always suspect, we encountered the internalized pressure to disavow relations to Japan, even though we had familial and cultural ties there. The pressure to disavow – "I am not Japanese" – in the face of the social condition-"You are Japanese" gave rise to the *qualified drive to excel at becoming Canadian, becoming, in this sense, more than Canadian in what became a model minority syndrome*. (209-210, emphasis mine)

Such a performance, as previously noted by Frank Wu, creates the illusion that Asian Canadians have found an all-encompassing solution to racism and other forms of discrimination, with the result that other racialized and marginalized groups' struggles for equity are dismissed as too confrontational by the mainstream majority. In addition, the Model Minority discourse's narratives of Asian Canadian – including Chinese Canadian – success obscure the truly diverse range of experience along gender, sexual, and socio-economic lines.

However, despite these flaws within the Model Minority discourse, there have also been instances throughout Chinese Canadian history where conforming to the stereotypes has been a significant strategy for survival, and even a means to strive for and obtain the franchise and full recognition as citizens and valuable members of Canadian society. Thus, the question I intend to examine in this dissertation is how Model Minority discourse functions as a combination of both

[3] Although my focus in this study is on the Chinese Canadians, in both Canada and the United States, early forms of the model minority discourse stemmed out of the construction of Japanese Canadians and Americans as ideal citizens who had stoically persevered despite being labelled as "enemy aliens" during World War II. It was only later, as Chinese Americans and Canadians came to be seen as icons of capitalism and democracy through their presence in North America as opposed to the Communist People's Republic of China, that the term came to apply to the Chinese as well. Subsequent expansions have allowed the model minority discourse to describe Korean and South Asian diasporic communities as well.

the interpellation of the Chinese Canadian subject by the Euro-Canadian majority culture and society, and the affective performances from within the Chinese Canadian community that result. To what extent, then, is the perceived economic, social and political success of Chinese Canadians the product of their own agency?

Thus, it is my plan to analyze life writing accounts of Chinese Canadians who have attained both socio-economic success and significant public profiles in order to understand, examine, and assess the diverse ways in which they have negotiated these forces of interpellation, performance, and agency. Although studies of Chinese Canadian identity could be achieved via methodologies drawn from history or the social sciences[4], I choose to utilize an interdisciplinary humanities-based approach because my interest is in life writing as an act of subjectivity on the part of its producers.

As overtly constructed texts, memoirs, autobiographies, diaries, and other life writing genres reveal much more about their creators than simply what is disclosed via the words on the page or the composition in the image. According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, reading autobiographical subjectivity requires a complex act of comprehending constructions of memory, identity, experience, embodiment, agency, and space (21-2). There is necessarily an invention of the self that informs the narrative process; the author attempts to create a persona for him/herself through choosing which stories to tell:

> Readers often conceive of autobiographical narrators as telling unified stories of their lives, as creating or discovering coherent selves. But both the unified story

[4] I myself utilized a methodology drawn from social linguistics in a study on Chinese Canadian identity for my Master's Thesis. At the time, I compiled a corpus of Chinese Canadian autobiographical texts, and then extracted utterances that referenced linguistic and cultural practices as well as statements of identity to use as tokens. Then, using their age, immigration/citizenship status, and place of residence as dependent variables, I conducted a multivariate analysis to determine which factors were the most significant in affecting a Chinese Canadian's cultural identity.

> and the coherent self are myths of identity. For there is no coherent "self" that predates stories about identity, about "who" one is. Nor is there a unified, stable, immutable self that can remember everything that has happened in the past. We are always fragmented in time, taking a particular or provisional perspective on the moving target of our pasts, addressing multiple and disparate audiences. Perhaps, then, it is more helpful to approach autobiographical telling as a *performative act*. (61, emphasis mine)

In this way, because the author is never a single monolithic self, but rather a composite of multiple selves scattered across time and memory, the act of narrating one's experiences through life writing automatically is an affective performance: the invented persona(s) in the text comes to stand in as facsimiles of the author him/herself.

However, this invention is not entirely up to the discretion of the author, for a number of reasons. First, in order for a text to be published at all, the constructed self must conform to a perceived ideal that is dictated by editors and publishing houses according to market demands (Nourbese Philip 39). This ideal, as noted by Marlene Nourbese Philip, is based upon what issues and topics are perceived as most appealing to the mainstream Euro-Canadian culture at the time of writing:

> Works by writers from cultures other than the dominant one often succeed in the publishing world of this culture, not only because they may be well-written, but also because they satisfy certain ideas already in existence in the dominant culture. Authors like V.S. Naipaul and his nephew Neil Bissoondath are both examples of writers who catapulted to fame on the savage and, at times, racist critique of the "Third World."…Alice Walker's mega-success and position as Queen of Black womanist writing in the United States is, in no small way, based on her work *The Colour Purple*, tapping into certain deep-seated traditions in America. Celie and Shug eventually become small entrepreneurs, pulling themselves up by their own efforts. Not to mention the theme of lesbianism, which is more acceptable within the white feminist movement than in African American communities. (161-162)

What this means is that authors of life writing are pressured by market demands to perform a certain subjectivity that, I argue in this dissertation, stems from stereotypes found in discourses like that of the Model Minority.

Secondly, because there is within multiculturalism policy a strong focus on ethnic heritage and culture, there persists an assumption that works by racialized authors will only be of interest to a similarly racialized audience: "Canadian authors of African, Asian or Native backgrounds have a difficult time getting their work published because of the small size of their respective ethnic audiences, except if their works are 'good' enough to appeal to a white audience" (Nourbese Philip 161). This affects how texts by racialized authors are marketed, and further complicates the public accessibility of their works and, by extension, their voices. Finally, even when a text that conforms to this ideal is successfully published and marketed, the perspective from which the reading audience will perceive and thus interpret it also lies beyond the author's control (28). Most notably, for authors who are marginalized and racialized, tension inherently develops between them and their mainstream audience: "It becomes even more complex for the artist in exile – working in a country not her own, developing an audience among people who are essentially strangers to all the traditions and customs that helped produce her" (28).

This tension between authorial intent, publishers' demands, and reader interpretation parallels the tensions that exist between personal agency and the interpellation of others in the formation of one's identity. Such is particularly the case for people who are racialized and/or marginalized, as their self-image forms in negotiation and tension with discourses and systems created by a mainstream hegemonic power. As phrased by Lily Cho in her essay "The Turn to Diaspora", "[It] is not just that power presses upon, hails and forms diasporic subjects. It is also the case that diasporic subjects emerge out of psychic relations to power which do not come from without, but are integral to that which is within the processes of subject formation" (15). Thus, I intend to use the life writing of Chinese Canadians as an experiential lens, through which I can

analyze the diverse means by which the Chinese Canadian community negotiates itself in relation to the Model Minority myth. Like multiculturalism, the stereotype of the Model Minority is the result of a cycle. It is superimposed upon a racialized minority group by the racial and ethnic majority as a means to emphasize social, cultural, and economic difference. It is meanwhile also internalized and performed by many of its constituents: those within the Chinese Canadian community who see the myth's tenets as beneficial for the advancement of either themselves as individuals or the community as a whole, and have thus used it to further personal interests and gain better rights as citizens. It is, however, also disparaged by members of the Chinese Canadian population who find the discourse too performative and constraining in nature, such that those who could not conform to it are considered somehow inferior to their compatriots. Thus, Chinese Canadian life writing, I argue, can both indicate the impact of the Model Minority discourse on the lives of individual Chinese Canadians, and reflect their agency despite, in contradiction to, or because of their interpellation as model citizens.

Chapters Outline

For this study, I intend to adopt an interdisciplinary approach that combines autobiography studies, critical race theory, and immigration history. This allows me to examine Chinese Canadian life writing as constructed texts deeply rooted in and inextricably linked with the socio-historical contexts in which they are set, produced, and consumed. Thus, the first chapter will provide a more detailed critical analysis of official multiculturalism in Canada, from its development to its various criticisms from liberalist[5], anti-racist, and sovereigntist

[5] I use the term "liberalist" here instead of "liberal" in order to differentiate between the discourse I am describing, and the Liberal Party of Canada that introduced official multiculturalism policy. By "liberalist," I mean the discourse that informs liberal democracy: that all individuals have rights and freedoms, and that these should be prioritized over communal and collective rights. For example: a liberalist approach by my definition would be the protection

perspectives. The second chapter will flesh out the literary critical framework of this study; there, I will expostulate further on the theories put forward by Marlene Kadar, whose definition of life writing I will be using as the basis for my data corpus, as well as scholars such as Paul Longley Arthur who, by expanding discussions and definitions of life writing into the digital realm, are shifting the focus towards the ephemeral nature of self-representation through both textual and visual means. This chapter will then feature a summary of the development and common themes in Chinese Canadian literature as a whole, as well as an overview of the primary sources that I have compiled for this study.

As for the Model Minority discourse itself, its evolution, its criticisms, and its applications in life writing will be the subject of the remainder of this dissertation. Due to the interdisciplinary approach in this study, this critical analysis will be divided into four main sections based upon different historical stages of Chinese Canadian racialization, including aspects of the Model Minority discourse. Each section will in turn contain both a thorough historical and/or theoretical discussion of the contextual theme, followed by a more specific discussion of selected examples of Chinese Canadian life writing from my data corpus. These texts will function as experiential evidence of the complex racialization and affective performances of the Chinese Canadian community, including its negotiation with the Model Minority discourse. This approach allows for both the socio-historical context and the textual analysis to be understood in relation with each other: the life writing texts will serve as examples of the historical context and discourses, but will also provide a counter-discourse of their own.

of one's freedom of expression, even to the extent of permitting broad criticisms of particular ethnic and/or religious groups.

The first critical-analytical section will focus upon Canada's Exclusion Era: the time ranging from the passing of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 to its repeal in 1947. Canada's multiculturalist rhetoric now constructs the Exclusion Era as a shameful historical error which both the government and public have rejected in favour of more enlightened approaches. However, the Yellow Peril discourse that was foundational to this period in Chinese Canadian history was also an important foundation for the development of the apparently contrasting Model Minority myth. Primary source documents such as the report from the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration in 1885, secondary research from historians, and the life writing texts themselves reveal both a discourse from within the majority population that counters the Yellow Peril stereotype by portraying Chinese immigrants as industrious and moral workers who should be accepted into Canadian society, as well as a great deal of evidence of agency on the part of Chinese Canadians in the face of overt and systemic discrimination. I argue that both of these factors – the interpellation of the Chinese immigrant subject by Euro-Canadian hegemonic powers and the appropriation and subsequent owning of assimilability as an act of resistance – ultimately form the basis for the Model Minority myth.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth in English-language Chinese Canadian life writing, either in original or in translation, contemporaneous to the Exclusion Era in my corpus. One notable exception, "A 'Prison' for Chinese Immigrants," is a compilation of inscriptions left on the walls of the building where prospective Chinese immigrants were held in quarantine in British Columbia that have subsequently been translated into English by David Chenyuan Lai. In addition, I will examine the accounts provided in two collections of transcribed ethnographic interviews, in which Chinese immigrants who lived through the Exclusion Era responded to questions from historians and social activists about their experiences living under overtly racist

policies and immigration controls: *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community* by Evelyn Hwang and Laurence Jeffrey and *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* by The Women's Book Committee and Chinese Canadian National Council. Although they are not book-length texts by individual authors, these anthologies will prove the multiplicity of histories and experiences within the Chinese Canadian population. To end this section, I will also include some examples of "Chinatown narratives": including those by Wayson Choy, who was only a child during the Exclusion Era; and by Denise Chong, who, although born after the repeal of the Exclusion Act, chose instead to focus on the stories and histories of her mother and maternal grandmother during that period.

The second section will introduce the start of both the Model Minority discourse and Canada's multiculturalism policy, as told by official historical narratives. From the Second World War onwards, discourses surrounding Chinese Canadians have shifted dramatically, oftentimes as a response to their self-representation and actions during the Exclusion Era. Thus, this section will address the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947, the gradual rise in Asian immigration to Canada, the establishment of a points system that purportedly eradicated racial bias in the immigration process, and the development of Canadian multiculturalist discourse. This section will also include a discussion of the development of the Model Minority myth as a parallel discourse to multiculturalism: one that purported to both promote and justify increased Asian immigration and its acceptance by the mainstream society. Canadian multiculturalism, in its emphasis on the preservation and maintenance of ethnic and cultural heritage, made the traits associated with the Model Minority stereotypes key components of Chineseness, which shifted the main component of performed Chinese and Canadian identity

from one of social and political resistance to one of achieving upward social mobility through conforming to the stereotype.

It is this performed conformance that I will examine through the textual analyses in this section. I will begin by returning to the two previously mentioned published collections of ethnographic interviews: *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community* by Evelyn Hwang and Laurence Jeffrey and *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* by The Women's Book Committee and Chinese Canadian National Council. This time, my focus will be on those who were either born in Canada after the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1947, or who immigrated to Canada under the new reformed immigration policies in the decades that followed. In addition, I will examine more thoroughly the memoirs written by both former federal MP Olivia Chow and former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson: two Chinese Canadian women who attained both socio-economic success and significant political influence. Interestingly, both Chow and Clarkson attribute many of their actions and worldviews to their Canadian identity, yet each adopts a very different approach to Canadian policy and her position within it.

This difference, then, allows me to transition to the third section of this parallel historical and literary study, which focuses on critiques of the Model Minority discourse. One area of focus in this section will be the reasons why the Model Minority myth is not representative of Chinese Canadians as a whole, and thus calls for a plurality in our understanding of their experiences. This is also where I will elaborate further on the negative implications of the seemingly positive representation of Chinese Canadians within the discourse. In particular, the Model Minority discourse's history of entanglement between Euro-Canadian interpellation of the Chinese immigrant subject and its subsequent enactment within the Chinese Canadian community as a form of internalized performance mean that the praiseworthy traits within the stereotype have

become a burden that many members of the community now struggle against. Agency and activism within the Chinese Canadian community, then, is no longer about following the educational and career path laid out by the stereotype, but actively resisting and openly critiquing it.

As a demonstration, I will include texts that feature the stories of those who do not conform with the Model Minority discourse on account of factors such as socio-economic status, gender, and mental health. Another focus here will be on activists who consciously choose to reject the Model Minority discourse and its norms, and interrogate the systemic inequalities that it entails. For instance, in contrast to the meritocratic narrative central to the Model Minority discourse, this section will present the life writing of individuals such as Evelyn Lau and Jan Wong. Both are successful Chinese Canadian authors today, yet their texts reveal struggles with depression caused by the Model Minority stereotype: Lau was a teenaged runaway who took to the streets to escape her parents' refusal to allow her to pursue life as a writer; and Wong developed severe clinical depression after publishing an article in *The Globe and Mail* condemning Canada's systemic racism. In these narratives, there is a damning irony at the heart of the Model Minority image: fractious mental health, an apparent contradiction with and disqualification from Model Minority status, is oftentimes caused by that very same discourse as individuals struggle to reconcile their own identities with the expectations imposed upon them.

Yet, in spite of its inherent flaws, the Model Minority myth continues to persist and inform racialized perceptions of Chinese Canadians. Thus, in the fourth and final section of the this dissertation, I will examine the Model Minority discourse in the present day, particularly its uncomfortable intersection with a revived Yellow Peril discourse, in which the perceived positive traits of Asian Canadians double as the reason for mainstream society's fear of the social

and economic competition they present. In addition, I will examine new forms of life writing that have emerged with the increased prevalence of the Internet and social media, adding a new 21st century context and location for Chinese Canadian subjectivity. Specifically, I will feature the YouTube video series *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*, which focuses on the lives of wealthy young Chinese Canadian women in Vancouver. Although the videos have garnered much criticism for their shallow materialistic premise, I understand them as an example of the way the Model Minority discourse continues to apply in the present day. It is thus at this point in my analysis that I will finally arrive at my core assessment of the Model Minority discourse: as simultaneously an act of agency but also a performance stemming from racialized interpellation. From this, it will be clear that although the development of the Model Minority myth was powered in part by Asian American and Canadian agency in the face of discrimination, it must also be dismantled from the parameters of interpellation and performance upon which it is built.

Chapter 1: Canadian Multiculturalist Discourse and its Critics

It is considered a pivotal turning point in Canadian history. On October 8, 1971, then Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced that the federal government would officially adopt a policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Canada 8545). This new approach would "help break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies", since it would allow all of the country's various ethnic groups to maintain their own cultural beliefs and practices even as they integrated into and contributed to Canadian society as a whole (8545). Bilingualism as official Canadian policy had just been enacted in parliament two years prior, in 1969; now, it appeared that multiculturalism would bring about a further broadening of what it meant to be Canadian. This message of hope and optimism did not remain within the House of Commons, but spread throughout the country. Multiculturalism is now one of the "fundamental characteristic[s] of the Canadian heritage and identity", according to a Study Guide created by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government for landed immigrants and permanent residents studying for the citizenship test (*Discover* 8).

As one of Canada's predominant national myths, the official multiculturalist discourse is oftentimes popularly perceived as a turn away from racial marginalization towards cultural pluralism and a celebration of diversity. From this perspective, racist atrocities such as the Indian residential school system, the internment of Japanese Canadians during WWII, and the exclusion of Chinese immigrants are all things of the past. More importantly, Canada's multiculturalism policy gives it an apparent advantage over other countries around the world, such as the United States, that are assumed to promote "melting-pot" styles of assimilation as the means by which immigrants are to integrate into mainstream society. Thus, for instance, as immigrants from

Hong Kong, my parents have told me that they chose to come to Canada instead of the United States because, supposedly, "there is no racism in Canada."

However, to properly understand Canadian multiculturalist discourse, it is important to note that the reality is not so optimistic. Although official multiculturalism policy appears to be a conscious turn away from juridical discrimination and a rejection of scientific or biological forms of racism in favour of an embrace of all cultural groups, its actual history and implementation are far more complex as well as problematic. First of all, legislation can change the laws, but it cannot change persistent ideologies and deeply engrained social prejudices; a federal policy that discourages the public from overt racism does not undo discriminatory discourses, nor does it automatically undo the effects of generations of racial privilege. Indeed, it is possible for the opposite to occur. As Sara Ahmed puts it, "The official desire to institutionalize diversity does not mean the institution is opened up; indeed the wall might become all the more apparent, all the more a sign of immobility, the more the institution presents itself as being opened up" (26). In other words, a legal declaration of cultural pluralism and diversity, such as Canada's official multiculturalism policy, can generate a false sense of security within government bodies; they ultimately assume that a simple performative action can create a new reality, and this blinds them to the fact that systemic inequalities continue to persist in Canadian society.

Moreover, Trudeau's insistence on "multiculturalism within a *bilingual framework*" (Canada 8545, emphasis mine) reveals that although the policy claims that "there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other" (Canada 8545), the reality is that there will be a dominant culture. In other words, although multicultural policy promises that all cultures in Canada will be accepted as part of the social fabric, the foundational roles will still

be granted to English- and French-Canadian culture and language; if all ethnocultural groups are equal, then these two are first among equals. Indeed, the actual policies and practices put in place by the official multiculturalism policy are geared towards easing ethnocultural minorities' integration into mainstream Canadian society: "to assist all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and a clear need for assistance, the small and weak groups no less than the strong and highly organized" (Canada 8546). In addition, the implication that Canada is composed of an English and French base upon which are inserted the cultures of various hitherto marginalized ethnic and cultural groups does not account for the specific place of the Indigenous peoples. Conciliatory gestures such as renaming them as Canada's "First Peoples" do not negate the continued colonial relationship they are subjected to, and an official policy geared towards preserving culture allows Canadians to protect outward markers of Indigenous cultures such as their music, dance, and artwork, while neglecting the real issues of poverty, land loss, lack of infrastructure, violence, and disenfranchisement that they face.

Also, in stark contrast with concerns that multicultural policy does not remove Canadian society's Eurocentric foundation, scholars like Eva Mackey have observed within the Canadian public a worry at the long-term effects of a wholesale embrace of all the myriad cultures within the country. While documenting public festivities held for the Canada 125 celebrations in 1992, she noted the beginnings of a populist backlash against multiculturalism policy, as respondents demanded special consideration for so-called "*Canadian* Canadians" (117-118, emphasis original). This suggests that there is within Canadian society a group that can claim a special right to identify as Canadian – and while not stated explicitly by her informers, Mackey surmises that the group in question is "white, culturally unmarked and assimilated" (119). Such an implied

meaning becomes clear when one notes that the demands for recognition of "*Canadian* Canadians" in the 1990s correlated with the increasing presence of non-white immigrants and their descendants, as well as increasingly overt accommodations that are granted them by virtue of the multiculturalism policy: commercial signs and media outlets in an ever-broadening range of languages, for example.

According to this narrowly nationalist logic, a nation that is willing to adopt and accord equal place to values and practices from all over the world risks the erosion of its own cultural identity. If Canada is a cultural mosaic comprised of elements from many different ethnic groups, then what is there that is distinctly Canadian? As one respondent told Eva Mackey:

> A cultural mosaic results in a picture, and it's not… We've got the squares of the mosaic without a picture [….] Any individual piece, any chunk, doesn't do anything. So I don't like the mosaic analogy because when we get down to it – well what does the picture look like? *We haven't got one.* In which case, it's *not a mosaic…it's a pile of rubble.* (118, emphasis original)

Thus, the question arises as to whether official forms of multiculturalism need to enact limits on what can actually be incorporated into the Canadian social fabric. There is, for instance, consternation at some Canadians' markedly visible religious or cultural practices which appear to contradict the country's foundational liberal democracy and its values. This is not simply a matter of a populist movement against multiculturalism during the 1990s, but also echoes into the present day. For example, a poll conducted by Radio-Canada in January 2017 claims that approximately two-thirds of Canadians surveyed either agreed or "strongly agreed" to testing prospective immigrants for adherence to so-called "Canadian values" (Joseph, *Majority*). Focus groups that were run by the federal government in the summer of 2016 suggest that respondents list "gender equality, fairness, abiding by the law and being open to difference" among these values (The Canadian Press, *Newcomers*). While such evidence might not be much cause for

concern in and of itself, what is alarming is the ways in which these same survey results intersect with other results from the 2017 Radio-Canada study. Only 12% of respondents believed that Muslim communities were "very well integrated into Canadian society", and a quarter "is very or more or less in favour of banning Muslim immigration to Canada" (Kheiridden, *Commentary*). At the same time, Kheiridden's analysis of the poll results suggests that Canadians are becoming increasingly distrustful of government institutions and intellectual elites (*Commentary*); if so, then the 2010s could well see a comeback of populist criticisms of multiculturalism as a form of backlash, similar to those in Europe, should the Canadian government fight to maintain the policy.

The many different sides of the debate and critique surrounding Canadian multiculturalism are worth taking into consideration. Clearly, a policy that was intended to be accepted and welcomed by all Canadians has not been able to achieve its lofty goals. Thus, the question that needs to be asked is whether, in the face of so much controversy, Canada's multicultural policy is a broken discourse that requires substantial revision – and, if so, in what manner. Thus, this chapter will endeavour to address the multiple threads in the political and social debates surrounding multiculturalism in Canada; these threads serve as the historical, social, and political context for the emergence of different forms of subjectivity and affective performances of identity that are available to Chinese Canadians, including those of the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses, which I will return to in Chapter 3. Beginning with a discussion on Canada's official history of racism leading to the rise of multiculturalist policy, I will then explore both traditionalist and anti-racist scholarship that calls the official discourse into question. Finally, to conclude this chapter, I will return to the question of whether Canadian

multiculturalism ought to be reformed or done away with entirely in favour of a new ideological policy such as interculturalism.

1.1 Multiculturalism as Part of Canada's National Imaginary

Let us return to the *Discover Canada* citizenship guide as an example of the ways in which multiculturalism is represented as a national discourse in Canada, as this is the means by which a national mythology has developed that, while oftentimes far from both historical and present realities, continues to persist as an imagined version of Canadian society. As previously stated, Canada's multiculturalism policy is lauded as a "*fundamental* characteristic of the *Canadian heritage and identity*" (*Discover* 8, emphasis mine). The words "fundamental" and "heritage" suggest two significant points: first, that multiculturalism is an intrinsic part of Canadian culture and society; and second, that it has been prevalent throughout Canada's history. However, as previously stated, the reality is not so idyllic. Canada has a track record of racist immigration policies, unfair treaties, and cultural genocide that has marginalized both non-white settlers and Indigenous peoples; the legacies of these discriminatory policies persist as an implicit hierarchy that marks Euro-Canadians as the "*Canadian* Canadian" that Mackey describes. How, then, does a policy that is flawed, and possibly even false, become a "fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity?"

The answer lies in the construction of a national imaginary that could best serve the interests of the Canadian state in generating an image that obscures racism in favour of a narrative based upon tolerance and acceptance. My use of the term "national imaginary" stems from Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined political community" (15); members of a nation will view their compatriots as being somewhat like them, oftentimes

through the creation of a mythology that grants them a common history and culture. Note that by "mythology," I do not mean that national imaginaries are simply made up and lack credibility in today's rational world. Rather, I wish to focus on the constructed nature of mythology: myths are generated and transmitted between generations in order to foster a particular set of ideas and values. Regardless of their veracity, or lack thereof, the relevance of mythologies rests upon their effects: how are they shaped by the societies that created them, and how do they influence the future of said societies in turn? Thus, a national mythology allows a nation – an "imagined political community" – to generate a set of norms and practices that would serve to mark that nation's distinct culture. From this, we can understand multiculturalism, and the conflicting narratives of its creation, to be among the myths that develop Canada's nationhood and Canadians' cultural identities.

What, then, are some of the key elements of Canada's multiculturalist national imaginary? In this section, I will focus on two key narratives that have developed as a means to retroactively integrate multiculturalism into Canadian history. The first is to depict the official multiculturalism policy as a turn away from a more discriminatory past. This is a history founded upon racialized discourses that promoted Eurocentrism and settler colonialism. Over the course of several centuries, the right to call oneself a "Canadian" was extended to first French- and English-Canadians, then progressively to a widening circle of immigrants of European descent, before finally including non-white immigrants, their descendants, and Indigenous peoples. The current situation in Canada, within this context, is viewed as one of continual progress and improvement, as society becomes gradually more open towards an increasingly ethnically diverse population (Mackey 37). Racism and its repercussions such as the Chinese head tax, the internment of Japanese Canadians during World War II, and the Indian residential school system

are part of a shameful past from which the government and public have collectively repented in favour of a new period of acceptance and mutual celebration (Hassan).

The second contrasting narrative of Canadian multiculturalism focuses on the notion that it is a significant component of Canada's heritage. In other words, this construction of Canadian history portrays the mutual acceptance of peoples from a variety of ethnic and cultural groups on Canadian soil as a primordial force in the development of the nation (Mackey 37). In this narrative, Canada was founded upon the cooperation between Indigenous peoples and French traders, followed by a British administration that permitted the French-Canadians they had conquered to maintain their linguistic and religious traditions (Moodley and Kogila 428). The fledgling nation of Canada was one that granted safe haven to runaway Black slaves from the United States via the Underground Railroad; one that did not participate in wholesale slaughter of Indigenous peoples; and, finally, one that granted members of all ethnocultural groups an opportunity to maintain their traditional identities via multiculturalism.

How, then, do these two conflicting narratives come together to form a Canadian national mythology? I argue that both the government and the public utilize both stories in a strategy akin to how Ien Ang explains the fluidity of ethnic identity: "it is experienced as a provisional and partial 'identity' which must be continuously (re)invented and (re)negotiated" (36). Like individuals who choose to emphasize or de-emphasize their ethnic or cultural backgrounds depending on the social situation (36), Canada and Canadians attempt to juggle between conflicting versions of their own history based upon what is most socially and politically expedient at the time. Thus, for instance, Canadians could emphasize a history based upon centuries of inter-ethnic cooperation during Canada Day celebrations in order to foster a sense of unity within the populace; but, inversely, paint multiculturalism as a progression away from a

shameful past in moments of reflection, commemoration, or the extension of official apologies for past atrocities.

Through this strategy, a merged version of Canada's national mythology might read as follows. Firstly, this land that we now call Canada was inhabited by the Indigenous peoples, who, for the most part, lived in peaceful coexistence with the natural environment (*Discover* 10, 14). With the establishment of the colony of New France in what is now Quebec during the 17th century, the French were able to create a stable trade alliance with First Nations peoples. Although the Jesuit missionaries attempted to convert the Natives and many Indigenous people died as a result of diseases inadvertently introduced from Europe, the dynamic that predominated in New France was far more tolerant and accepting than the war-torn conditions within the British Thirteen Colonies (Mackey 38-40). Thus, initially, the British conquest during the Seven Years' War of 1756 to 1763 could have threatened the system of peaceable cooperation through either the extermination of the Indigenous peoples or the forced assimilation of the Catholic French Canadians to Protestant English customs. Yet, magnanimously, the British allowed the French Canadians to retain their original linguistic, religious, and cultural practices through passing the Quebec Act of 1774 (40-1). Indeed, in the *Discover Canada* citizenship guide, the section devoted to the history of the Quebec Act is subtitled "A Tradition of Accommodation," thus orienting the depiction and discussion of Anglo-Franco relations in Canada to one of acceptance and tolerance of religious and cultural differences, even in direct contradiction to the anti-Catholic legislation within 18th century Britain itself (15). The migration of United Empire Loyalists did lead to conflict between the French and English Canadians, but this, too, was resolved in the establishment of separate colonies for each ethnic community via the

Constitutional Act of 1791 (16): a pattern that has persisted in the continued presence of Quebec as a Francophone province, and both French and English as the official languages of Canada.

However, according to this national imaginary, racialized discourse rears its ugly head during the time of British colonization and the early decades after Canadian Confederation in 1867. In an attempt to keep Canada a country predominantly made up of people of European descent out of a desire to claim the country as a northern and British nation (Mackey 43), the government enacted a series of discriminatory immigration laws that hindered migration from Asia, most notably China and India (45-6). This persistent racism ultimately led to the exclusion of Chinese immigration (*Discover* 20), the internment of all Japanese Canadians during World War Two (23), and the rejection of Jewish refugees in the years leading up to the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the period in Canadian history from Confederation also saw the harshest policies towards Indigenous peoples. These ranged from the *Indian Act* of 1876, which "paradoxically, sought to 'civilise' the Native peoples by assimilating them into dominant life and culture, yet at the same time segregated them onto reserves" (Mackey 49), to the banning of Indigenous religious and cultural practices, as well as the forced placement of Indigenous children in residential schools out of attempts to "civilise" them by eradicating their culture (*Discover* 10). Ironically, however, even as this cultural genocide was taking place, romanticized images of the Indigenous peoples as peacefully living in harmony with nature prevailed in representations of Canada as pure, untainted, yet needing industrialization and progress in order to fully establish itself as a modern nation-state (Mackey 49-50).

In this national mythology, however, such policies are relegated to the past as the Canadian government and public experienced a mass awakening after World War Two. For example, the horrors of the Holocaust and the proven loyalty of Japanese Canadians – the "drive

to excel at becoming Canadian," as described by Miki (209-210) – led to a gradual opening of Canada's borders once again to prospective immigrants across the world, which developed alongside a worldwide "human rights revolution" that also saw the emergence of decolonization movements and an increasing appeal for state recognition of civil rights for minorities (Kymlicka 35). Thus, by the time of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960s, there was not only evidence of the continued need for a bilingual system, but the country's many ethnic minorities now demanded formal recognition of their own cultural practices from the government (*Discover* 25). This was achieved by the formalization of multiculturalism policy by Prime Minister Trudeau, and has continued to the present day. Now, in the 21st century, Canada is not only accepting of peoples of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, but multiculturalism policy has set a precedent for public acceptance of increasing diversity in regards to gender and sexual identity as well.

In sum, by focusing on a peaceful beginning, a turbulent middle, and a hopeful conclusion, Canada's national mythology allows Canadians to perceive themselves as both inherently good and persistently improving. This constructed identity also leads multiculturalist discourse to become a means by which Canadians will distinguish themselves from other developed countries that appear to have significant anti-immigration far-right parties or racial schisms, such as much of Europe and the United States. By claiming that multiculturalism is not only an act of redemption but also a return to the nation's original state of inter-ethnic cooperation, Canadians paint themselves a "raceless" or colour-blind: unable or unwilling to discriminate on account of race (Dei 62). Indeed, according to former Conservative Party MP Maxime Bernier, "the ultimate goal of fighting discrimination was to create a colour-blind society where everyone is treated the same" (Zimonjic).

1.2 Critiques of Canadian Multiculturalism

However, in contrast to the optimistic account shown in the above overview of the Canadian national imaginary, from the outset, Canada's multiculturalism policy has faced opposition and criticism from scholars, activists, and members of the public. On the one hand, such an outcome is inevitable: government policies rarely succeed in pleasing everyone within the populace and thus often invite criticism from opposing parties or community members. On the other hand, it is important to examine multiculturalism policy within the broader context that its critics offer. After all, the controversies surrounding Canadian multiculturalism and its manifestations in everyday life belie utopian visions of an accommodating "raceless" society, such as those expressed by Bernier (Zimonjic).

This is particularly the case when one considers the various directions from which criticism has come. Although each critic has different reasons for their problematization of multiculturalist discourse, it is possible to understand their arguments as falling into three main categories: liberalist, anti-racist, and sovereigntist. By liberalist, I refer to concerns that the cultural freedoms granted by Canadian multiculturalism will lead to a fragmentation of the pre-existing structures and values of liberal democracy. In contrast, anti-racist criticism of multiculturalism here refers to those who argue that the policy has not done enough to bring about true equity between various racial and ethnic groups. Finally, I use the term sovereigntist to refer to criticisms of multiculturalism stemming specifically from Indigenous peoples and the Québécois, who both argue that their respective situations are unique within Canada and, therefore, that their concerns and rights should not be treated by the government as similar to those from other ethnic groups. All three of these approaches offer different lenses through

which Canada's multiculturalist rhetoric could be questioned more thoroughly as both a matter of policy and as a discourse in practice.

Multiculturalism in Canada, first and foremost, has centred upon the rights of Canadians. By allowing citizens of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to maintain their original cultural practices and values in lieu of a coercive assimilation into Euro-Canadian societal norms, the multicultural policy was intended to create what Charles Taylor has famously called a "politics of recognition." He argued that in today's obsession with personal and collective identity, it is important that states and societies adopt a "politics of difference", which entails a mutual acknowledgement from all members of a diverse community to recognize the validity of each individual's distinct characteristics (Taylor 38). By recognizing the inherent worth and possible contributions that each cultural community within Canada presents to society at large, multiculturalism functions as a manifestation of liberalism in the Enlightenment sense. In other words, multiculturalism and its emphasis on a politics of recognition allow every Canadian to claim a right to his or her own cultural heritage without interference from the state.

Ironically, however, some of the most vehement criticism of Canada's multiculturalism policy has stemmed from similar liberal roots. What happens, a number of scholars have asked, when the culture that is protected by multiculturalist discourse is one that contradicts liberal values such as freedom of speech? Such, for instance, is the question posed by Salim Mansur, who asks whether Canadian multiculturalism, in its expansion of individual recognition to include group and community rights, in fact violates the tenets of liberal democracy (23). The contradiction, he argues, stems from the fact that liberalism, as a social and philosophical movement originating in the 18th century European Enlightenment, intended to free individuals from the coercive forces of collectives and institutions such as absolutist forms of political and

religious authority (Mansur 28). Given this, a state government system that calls itself a liberal democracy cannot accommodate communal rights at the expense of those of the individual. This is particularly the case when the drive to preserve or maintain cultural traditions leads to community gatekeepers enforcing particular norms and values to the group as a whole, or presenting ethnic traditions as a counter-discourse to the views of the mainstream society (Mansur 88). With an ever-growing mass of divergent voices appealing for recognition from the Canadian government in the name of multiculturalism, Mansur fears that the ultimate outcome will be the erosion of individual free speech in a new zeitgeist based upon conciliation and political correctness (96). If such should be the case, Canada's multiculturalist policy could destroy the liberal democratic values that allowed the discourse to come into being in the first place.

Building upon criticisms of multiculturalist discourse centring on the erosion of liberal democratic values, there is a related school of critique that stems from feminist discourse in particular. Although her argument has been strongly refuted by subsequent scholars, Susan Moller Okin's assertion that multiculturalism contradicts feminist values is worth noting as a more specialized example of the concerns put forward by critics like Mansur. Rather than emphasizing individual liberties and freedom of speech, Okin focuses on the official equality between genders within first world democratic countries like Canada. Despite the fact that even mainstream Canadian society is strongly patriarchal, where "women still make 74 cents to every dollar that a man earns and gender-based violence affects approximately half of Canadian women" (Racco), Okin places the onus of discrimination against women upon ethnic minorities. For instance, she argues that permitting all ethnocultural groups in Canada to maintain their existent practices and beliefs would risk the introduction of strongly patriarchal practices such as

polygamy and female genital mutilation into Canadian society (Okin 17). Thus, once again, the emphasis on the protection of group or communal cultural rights under multiculturalism would sacrifice the rights of the individual: in this case, the rights of women seeking to thrive under a system of gender equality and freedom of choice.

Finally, within the category of liberalist criticisms of multiculturalism, there is a school of thought that holds that in spite of Taylor's politics of difference, which acknowledges the inherent worth of all cultures, there is an inherent need for a nation-state like Canada to maintain its own distinctive culture. One critic who addresses this is Neil Bissoondath, who worries that the singular core of Canadian nationhood, flawed as it was in its reliance on settler colonialism and white supremacy, has now been replaced with a growing multiplicity of centres as a result of official multiculturalism policy (65). In addition, the possibility of possessing a hybridized identity – to be both Canadian and something else – becomes romanticized and commodified, which further erodes the national sense of a unifying Canadianness: "To be simply Canadian untinged by the exoticism of elsewhere seems insufficient, even unacceptable, to many other Canadians" (Bissoondath105). Under these conditions, Bissoondath argues, Canadian values and practices will begin to lose their inherent worth, and Canada would become a nation which immigrants would not pledge allegiance to nor seek belonging from (122). Rather, hearts would continue to belong to the elsewhere even as the bodies are present in Canada; immigrants and their descendants, instead of attempting to build up Canada, could isolate themselves within their ethnic communities in a perpetual state of diasporic nostalgia (138). Therefore, for such scholars as Mansur, Okin and Bissoondath, it is essential that Canadian multiculturalism contain a system of checks and balances in order to ensure that members of all ethnocultural groups integrate into and contribute to Canadian society.

Perhaps one of the greatest ironies in this summary of liberalist criticisms of multiculturalist discourse and policy in Canada is that the critical voices mentioned fall outside a conventionally perceived pattern. None of the three aforementioned scholars I discussed fit into the stereotypical image of a critic of multiculturalism, who is frequently imagined as white, cisgender, and male: Mansur and Bissoondath are both people of colour; and Okin, while white, is an American woman. Although I make note of this particularity, I do not intend, as some politicians have done, to utilize these critics' respective marginal statuses to validate an anti-immigrant or anti-multiculturalist rhetoric (Ryan 67). Rather, it is to indicate that criticisms of multiculturalist discourse do not fall neatly along racial, gender, or any other social lines.

This is of particular importance when adding anti-racist criticisms of multiculturalism into the debate, because much of the scholarship in that realm argues that multiculturalist discourse has failed to dismantle systemic and covert forms of Eurocentrism within Canadian society. For instance, consider the popular image of Canadian society as a multicultural mosaic: comprised of a rich variety of peoples, cultures, beliefs, etc. that come together to form a beautiful picture. Yet, in a mosaic, not all the components are accorded equal importance; although the tesserae all carry the same degree of prominence, the mosaic could only be formed when the tesserae are properly embedded into the grout. In this metaphor for Canadian multiculturalism, then, what would be that grout: the essential core component that makes the mosaic possible? For many anti-racist critics of Canada's multiculturalism policy, the grout represents an existent systemic Eurocentrism that continues to inform imaginings of Canadian national identity to this day. According to scholars such as Himani Bannerji, the nationalized agent – the "Canadian" – is still of European descent; people of colour are merely asked to integrate into this dominant group, acting as the tesserae grounded into a white grout (42).

Moreover, the politics of recognition proposed by Charles Taylor as essential to multiculturalist discourse is also problematic from an anti-racist perspective. As with similar discourses pertaining to cultural tolerance and acceptance, the question that arises is who the separate parties are within the relationship. In other words: who is tolerating, accepting, or recognizing whom? Bannerji also addresses this question in her critique of Taylor's work, arguing that the problem with a relationship built upon recognition and acceptance of difference is that, inevitably, one party is invested with the power to grant or withhold that recognition (135-6). This implies a hierarchy of power within what, ostensibly, is an egalitarian communitarian system. Should that be the case, Canadian multiculturalist discourse, according to anti-racist scholars and activists such as Himani Bannerji, Sunera Thobani, and Eva Mackey, is inherently flawed, because it cannot, in fact, stop racial discrimination. Instead, multiculturalism serves as a short-term surface solution, but reinforces the very inequities it claims to eliminate.

However, even if multiculturalism were to successfully "help break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies" (Canada 8545), there is still reason for anti-racist scrutiny due to debates about how the policy is to be implemented. For instance, during the initial parliamentary debate in 1971, David Lewis, the MP for York South, focused upon the need to protect Canada's cultural diversity as one of its greatest assets:

> Every society has its own cultural treasures which it cherishes with pride. It is a fact of man's history that his preoccupations have been too frequently centred on material development and that his spirit has too often been embittered by conflict and by prejudice. The result has been throughout the world – and this is true of Canadians as well – a failure to appreciate the values of diversity, a tendency to resent rather than to welcome enriching differences. For Canada this attitude is particularly destructive. The diversity of cultures across the land is a source of our greatness as a people. (Canada 8547)

At what point does the state decide that these cultures have been sufficiently protected? Canada's government and much of the public look to outward manifestations of ethnic culture and tradition as indicators of multiculturalism policy's success. For instance, one could look for the physical presence of citizens of a variety of racial and ethnic origins in census records, on school attendance lists, in the streets, etc. Yet these observations just indicate that diversity exists, not that members of so many groups have been able to exercise their own cultures without feeling coerced to assimilate. Therefore, instead of counting bodies, multiculturalism's success is graded by markers such as the presence of ethnic restaurants and supermarkets, heritage language classes, community festivals and arts, etc.

Problems arise, however, when these outward displays of cultural identity become the sole markers of multiculturalism at work. Such culturalist approaches risk perpetuating stereotypes of ethnic groups – particularly those of non-European origin – due to their propagation of static interpretations of cultures that are, in fact, highly complex (Bakht 176-7). Cultural displays are perceived as authentic to their place or people of origin, thus limiting the scope within which they could be practiced. This continues to perpetuate a Eurocentric hegemony, where food, clothing, art, or literature that has clear European roots is indicated as mainstream, while everything else, including fusion and avant garde approaches, is considered as exotic or a carbon-copy re-enactment of a historical traditional practice. Even in instances where there is a genuine attempt to generate equality between different ethnocultural groups through diversity education and pedagogy, the resulting dynamic tends to turn into cultural voyeurism: members of a mainstream Euro-Canadian majority acting as sympathetic bystanders to the struggles of non-white minorities (Srivastava 301). The implied relationship of power, thus,

ultimately reinforces divisions and barriers between different ethnic and cultural groups in Canada.

In addition, overt celebrations of cultural diversity based upon outward markers such as food, clothing, music, or dance tend to shift public and government attention away from social inequalities that have persisted despite of multiculturalism policy. Since the presence of these visual markers leads to an increased public consciousness of ethnic diversity, visibility can create the illusion that multiculturalist discourse has already achieved its goal of eliminating racism. There is an element of truth to this assumption, particularly in contrast to overt white supremacism or coercive segregationist and assimilationist policies and discourses. However, while it is true that Canadian multiculturalism policy, rooted as it is in the politics of recognition, has made overt personal acts of racism – for instance, hate crimes or the use of racial slurs and epithets – subject to public condemnation, that has never been the only form of racism at work. Instead, as indicated by anti-racist scholars, it is important nowadays to consider the lingering covert and systemic legacies of racialization. Unfortunately, historical patterns of racialization – the attributing of value to particular physical markers such as skin colour – have led to a strongly entrenched system of inequality that cannot simply be undone by legislating acceptance. When certain ethnic or cultural groups have been favoured for educational and job opportunities in the past, their descendants in the present tend to occupy positions of higher socio-economic status that continues to facilitate their access to these opportunities despite an ostensibly fair and race-blind job market. The inverse, however, also holds true: groups that have historically been disadvantaged continue to be disadvantaged in the present, because a multicultural policy that celebrates outward markers of cultural diversity does not guarantee assistance in pursuing upward social mobility. Instead, the assumption that all Canadians are now equal permits the

emergence of a neo-liberal discourse that suggests that those who are disadvantaged simply have not worked hard enough to achieve their goals.

Thus, in sharp contrast to Okin, whose liberal feminist critique stemmed from a perceived dichotomous relationship between one's gender identity as a woman and one's racial/cultural identity as a non-white minority, anti-racist discourse is inherently intersectional. Race does not operate within a vacuum; it both influences and is influenced by other aspects of identity. Put simply, one can understand discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other factors as operating along a series of different axes that then come together to form a complex web in which individuals are placed. Marginalizations within this framework have a cumulative effect: an individual or community that fall within multiple marginalized categories will be negatively impacted by all of them. Thus, for instance, although women of all ethnic or cultural groups are marginalized in a patriarchal society, in a nation like Canada where whites have historically been in a position of privilege, women of European descent will have a noticeable advantage in the nationwide competition for educational, career, and political prospects compared to their non-white counterparts. Adding a third factor such as sexual orientation will then further complicate the intersectional effect by introducing a third axis, and so forth. Ultimately, then, anti-racist critics of Canadian multiculturalism oftentimes iterate the need to take the diversity of subjective experiences within the population into consideration: the playing field is not yet level, and a misperception that it is only further disadvantages those who have been marginalized in the past.

It is at this point that we must also consider what I have termed sovereigntist criticisms of multiculturalism, voiced by such authors as Gérard Bouchard and Glen Coulthard. In these instances, multiculturalist discourse's supposed leveling effect has overridden the needs of

Canadians who are, returning to Anderson's definition, self-proclaimed nations in their own right. Consider once again the official history of race relations and multiculturalism in Canada as reflected in government documents such as the *Discover Canada* citizenship guide: within that narrative, the main founding groups were the Indigenous peoples, the French, and the British (10). Since much of today's Canada was first under British colonial rule and then an Anglo-Canadian cultural hegemony for a significant portion of its history as a settler-colonial nation state, claims for recognition of national sovereignty today predominantly stem from Indigenous and Québécois communities. Note that my placing both under the broader term "sovereigntist" does not mean that I view them as parallel examples. Rather, in both instances, I see only one main similarity: there is a concern among both Québécois and Indigenous critics that multiculturalism policy fails to accommodate their distinctive social, cultural, and political needs, and renders them as one of many equivalent ethnocultural groups when they perceive their relationship to the state as more colonialist in nature.

However, there are also notable differences in the criticisms that have arisen from both Quebec and Indigenous peoples. For many Québécois, multiculturalism is a continuation of the history of marginalization they have experienced due to Anglo political power and cultural hegemony. As with earlier federal policies in the past – including, as it were, Confederation itself – official multiculturalism policy is understood as a means to further dilute the strength of French Canadian voices within the political framework of the state. Although the policy includes an acknowledgement of French as an official language with its promise of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework", the concern here is that a mandatory acceptance of customs and values of all ethnocultural groups would lead to the original Québécois culture and language becoming a smaller presence within its own borders (Taylor 58). In addition, some

conceptualizations of multiculturalism have established immigrant ethnocultural groups as supposed model minorities in comparison with Quebec's nationalist movement: if "newcomers" to Canada are content with mere cultural recognition, why cannot Québécois do the same (Bannerji 94)?

Within Quebec itself, Gérard Bouchard has argued that a discourse of interculturalism would serve the province's interests better than the federal multiculturalist discourse. He notes that this is due to Quebec's distinct cultural paradigm, which, in contrast to the ethnic and cultural pluralism he associates with the rest of Canada, he describes as dualist: "where diversity is thought of and managed on basis of a relationship between minorities from recent or older immigration and a cultural majority that could be called the 'founding culture'" (Bouchard 19). Thus, a system that is founded upon managing broad ethnocultural diversity, like multiculturalism, is not a practical option for Quebec and its idiosyncrasies. In particular, Bouchard argues that multiculturalism fails to address French Quebec's distinct position as both a cultural majority within its own borders and a cultural minority in the broader Canadian and North American context (49). Instead, Canada's official multiculturalism policy has been established by and for the benefit of an anglophone majority that "does not recognize any national or majority culture" (60). What Quebec actually needs, in contrast, is a system that focuses more on an integrationist approach: ethnocultural minorities are permitted to exist, but should recognize the host society – in this case, Quebec – as a "public space" with a distinctive mainstream culture that also ought to be recognized (Meer and Modood 187). Consequently, for instance, the children of immigrants are expected to attend Francophone schools, and there is a censure of overt religious dress in favour of the province's official liberal secularist stance. In essence, then, Québécois criticisms of multiculturalism, and the province's subsequent

modifications to the policy towards interculturalism, stem from Quebec's need to protect its position as a distinctive nation within Canada: francophone Quebec establishes itself as a majority/mainstream culture within its own borders to combat its marginalization on a federal level (Modood 304).

There is, however, a decided irony to Bouchard's conceptualization of Canada's current ethnocultural dynamics. In arguing that anglophone Canada lacks a national culture that requires protection under the law – in contrast to Quebec's francophone culture – Bouchard is echoing the same concerns about multiculturalism that have been put forward by both liberalist scholars such as Bissoondath, and the populist complaints Mackey encountered among her respondents in her 1992 study. However, as opposed to presenting this phenomenon as a potential threat to Canadian culture and national identity in a broad sense, Bouchard is more focused upon its implications for Quebec. He comments on the ethnocultural polycentrality of Canadian society as an inevitable component of multiculturalism, which he characterizes as "a definition of a nation as a collection of individuals and groups, which does not recognize the existence of a national or majority culture", "an openness to diversity that can jeopardize integration, going as far as to expose a society to the danger of fragmentation", and "little concern for the establishment of a shared culture that would ensure for the nation or society an essential symbolic foundation, a rallying point that is a source of cohesiveness and solidarity" (61). The irony here is that while Bouchard begins his argument with such a description of the Canadian multiculturalism policy, and scholars such as Bissoondath as well as members of the public like those interviewed by Mackey would agree with Bouchard's contention that multiculturalism has sabotaged Canadian culture and identity to the point of obsolescence, an anti-racist scholar such as Bannerji would strongly disagree. Instead, from an anti-racist perspective, Canada's cultural

dynamic is no different from the idiosyncrasy that Bouchard attributes to Quebec: a "national" culture does exist in Canada, and it is that of the English-Canadian "majority". Indeed, even Bouchard later concedes this point, stating that while his definition of multiculturalism implies not only the absence of a national culture, but the public's lack of concern in the face of that reality, Canada itself appears to be evolving towards a dualist or multipolar system (63). Canada, then, according to Bouchard, could be imagined as a collection of national groups with claims to sovereignty – English-Canadian, French-Canadian, and Indigenous – working in close proximity with a vast array of ethnocultural minorities.

Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples have also had to negotiate their position within multiculturalist policy in light of their own claims to sovereignty. Historically, in Canada's official nationalist discourse, the Indigenous presence was omitted: this includes a failure to acknowledge both their presence prior to European settlement through the construction of Indigenous land as *terra nullius*[6], and the discrimination and cultural genocide that resulted from Canada's colonialist policy (Lawrence 23-24). The erasure of Indigenous histories serves the interests of the Canadian nation-state, as it permits both the government and the public to perceive themselves as free of racial violence in contrast with other countries with colonial pasts (26). Thus, for example, just a year after a formal official apology by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Indigenous peoples for the implementation of the genocidal Indian residential school system in 2008, he was heard commenting at a G20 summit in 2009 that Canada had "no history of colonialism" (Coulthard 105-106). From the position of the Canadian state, such an assumption is only possible because the adoption of official multiculturalism policy and its recognition of the pivotal role of Indigenous peoples in the creation of what is now Canada,

[6] I.e., "empty land"

combined with the use of official apologies as a means towards reconciliation, is constructed as an improvement: "the inauguration of a 'new chapter' in a history of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal [sic] relations in the country" and "a genuine and necessary 'first step' on the long road to forgiveness and reconciliation" (105).

However, although there has been a positive turn on the surface, Indigenous scholars such as Glen Coulthard, Audra Simpson, and Bonita Lawrence, along with their various allies, such as Enakshi Dua, argue that the Canadian government continues to maintain colonialist discourses and policies. As with the anti-racist criticisms of multiculturalism that stress the ineffectiveness of legislation in eradicating systemic racialization, indigeneity points out the colonialist side of multiculturalism. Once again, the question that arises is one of power: recognition of Indigenous peoples and their cultures under multiculturalism is ultimately granted by the Canadian nation-state (Coulthard 44). Yet, culturalist constructions of Indigenous authority where communities can only claim ownership of their own internal affairs for the sake of cultural preservation mean that claims to national sovereignty, or the possibility of Indigenous peoples and the Canadian nation state negotiating with each other as political equals, are ultimately not protected under Canadian law (123). As Coulthard explains,

> And how, might we ask, does the court propose to "reconcile" the "pre-existence of Aboriginal [sic] societies with the sovereignty of the Crown"? Or, stated slightly differently, how does the court propose to *render consistent* Indigenous nationhood with state sovereignty? By refusing that the "aboriginal societies" in question had anything akin to sovereignty worth recognizing to begin with. Instead, what the court offers up is an interpretation of Aboriginal rights as narrowly construed "cultural" rights that can be "infringed" on by the state for any number of legislative reasons – ranging from conservation to settlement, to capitalist non-renewable resource development, and even to protect white interests from the potential economic fallout of recognizing Aboriginal rights to land and water-based economic pursuits. (124, emphasis original)

However, as with the Québécois, Indigenous peoples are conscious of their own sovereignty and seek recognition of their unique position by both the Canadian government and the public (32). Therefore, cultural recognition – an acknowledgement of cultural distinctiveness and the allowance to maintain traditional beliefs and practices – is insufficient.

It is worth noting that Indigenous presence and claims to land and sovereignty in Canada, unlike the previous criticisms discussed in this overview, challenge multiculturalist discourse at its core. Foundational to Canadian multiculturalist rhetoric is that all Canadians are equal; when understood on racial or ethnic terms, the discourse tends to resort to an assertion that all Canadians are, or are descended from, immigrants (Sharma 85). The implication of this is that indigeneity thus falls outside of the multiculturalist framework: Indigenous peoples are neither immigrants, nor descended from them. Indeed, the growing population of immigrants and their descendants in Canada has meant that government priorities have focused on accommodating new waves of settlers over the Indigenous peoples. This includes the expansion of towns and cities further into lands that had been stolen via unfair treaties, and the development of natural resources in these lands to provide utilities for a growing population, at the expense of the sovereignty and health of Indigenous peoples (Lawrence and Dua 128). Even in instances where the multicultural policy is critiqued by anti-racist scholars, the debate is oftentimes framed as one that predominantly affects racialized immigrants as a dominant group, and asserting their rights against a Euro-Canadian majority; in doing so, however, Indigenous peoples are largely omitted from the equation. Therefore, according to Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, an Indigenous and a South Asian Canadian scholar respectively, "we fear that rather than challenging the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal [sic] peoples, Canadian antiracism is furthering contemporary colonial agendas" (123).

This identification of all others as complicit participants of settler colonialism reveals yet another flaw within the multiculturalist discourse: just as non-white immigrants have been portrayed as grateful model minorities in contrast to Quebec's nationalist claims, Indigenous peoples have also been marginalized through being relegated as several cultures within a vast multitude. This equation of Indigenous cultural identities with those of other ethnocultural communities, particularly non-white ones, means that Indigenous peoples, too, suffer from culturalist "song and dance" interpretations of multiculturalist discourse: Indigenous regalia, music, dance, and spiritual practices are commodified. This even extends to well-meaning anti-racist activism, as there is often merely a token acknowledgement of Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues:

> Aboriginal [sic] organizations are not invited to participate in organizing the shaping the focus of most antiracism conferences. Indigeneity thus receives only token recognition. Their ceremonies feature as performances to open the conference (regardless of the meaning of these ceremonies for the elders involved). Usually, one Aboriginal person is invited as a plenary speaker. A few scattered sessions, attended primarily by the families and friends of Aboriginal presenters, may address Indigeneity, but they are not seen as intrinsic to understanding race and racism. At these sessions, Aboriginal presenters may be challenged to reshape their presentations to fit into a "critical race" framework; failure to do so means that the work is seen as "simplistic." In our classes on antiracism, token attention – normally one week – is given to Aboriginal peoples, and rarely is the exploration of racism placed in a context of ongoing colonization. In antiracist political groups, Aboriginal issues are placed within a liberal pluralist framework, where they are marginalized and juxtaposed to other, often-contradictory struggles, such as that of Quebec sovereignty. (Lawrence and Dua 133)

Thus, as long as the Canadian government and public perceive Indigenous peoples as duly recognized by multiculturalism, appeals for sovereignty in the form of land claims or calls for humanitarian aid for poor living conditions on reserves are either ignored or constructed as additional demands from an ungrateful population.

1.3 What to Do with Multiculturalism?

Thus far, it appears that multiculturalist discourse and policy in Canada are severely flawed. Whether one views it from a liberalist, anti-racist, or sovereigntist perspective, there is something in it to criticize, something that is not working. Some scholars argue that the rhetoric's focus on superficial signs of belonging and coexistence fail to rectify persisting socio-economic and political barriers that have their roots in racialization. Yet, on the other hand, some claim that multiculturalism has already gone too far in its desire to generate a zeitgeist of tolerance and accommodation, at the expense at the values of liberal democracy that make Canada what it is today. Laws ordained by the government, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot actually bring about change in and of themselves; they can declare that change will happen, but whether reform, in fact, occurs depends upon how policies are enacted. However, in the case of multiculturalism policy, we have before us a system that claims to have already succeeded when so many within the population argue otherwise.

With so many contradicting views – multiculturalism works, multiculturalism does not work, multiculturalism enables systemic racism, multiculturalism erodes Canadian identity – the question that must be asked is whether recovery is possible, or if multiculturalist discourse should be dismissed altogether. There has been academic, political, and popular discussion of what is termed the "death of multiculturalism": the argument that multiculturalist policies create more harm than good on a practical level, as evidenced by nation-states backing out of previously open immigration policies in favour of more assimilationist or restrictive approaches (Ozkirimli 309). Although many of the examples used in these debates focus around Europe, where there has been a noted increase in the popularity of right-wing extremism and anti-immigration views, similar discussions have occurred in Canada during the 1990s, and are part

of the state of alarm among racial, gender, and sexual minorities in the United States following the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. The reasons for calls to do away with multiculturalism can be economic, political, or cultural in nature, and oftentimes parallel the liberalist criticisms discussed in the previous section.

However, an elimination of multiculturalist policy carries significant risks, which makes it an impractical and unviable solution for the problems raised by liberalist, anti-racist, and sovereigntist criticisms. Most notably, much of the discussion against multiculturalism comes hand in hand with debates around various nation-states' immigration policies. Multiculturalism, in such instances, allows an unchecked flow of immigrants who could ultimately pose an economic or social threat: economic insofar as they increase competition for job opportunities within the population; and social when their practices, protected by multiculturalism, contradict the values and customs of the host society. Yet anti-immigration rhetoric that arises as a result of these fears around multiculturalism becomes problematic when the nation-state in question is in Europe or a place that has historically been predominantly settled by Europeans such as Canada, the United States, or Australia. In this situation, debates surrounding multiculturalism and immigration policies can easily degenerate into a return or resurfacing of Eurocentric or white supremacist racial ideologies. It is telling, for instance, that government backpedaling on multiculturalism and open immigration policies occurs specifically in the context of non-white immigration in these Eurocentric parts of the world, even as, in Europe, national minorities such as the Catalans in Spain or the Frisians in the Netherlands are gaining increased recognition of their autonomy from state apparatuses (Kymlicka 40-42). Thus, revoking multiculturalism policy risks a reversion to racialized discourse in an environment where there is now a greater minority population than before, vulnerable to overt discrimination and persecution, as evidenced by the

increase in racialized hate crimes after both Britain's referendum to exit the European Union and the election of a right-wing President in the United States.

However, within a Canadian context, I would argue that a revocation of multiculturalist discourse due to public backlash is unlikely. Multiculturalism and its associated values of tolerance and acceptance for all are simply too strongly ingrained into the popular imagination to be eliminated for such reasons. Rather, for Canadians, a different "death of multiculturalism" is a more pressing concern: the belief that multiculturalist policy has already fulfilled its objective of eradicating racism. In other words, building upon the official histories and discourses previously referenced, it is possible to believe that multiculturalism is a completed project and that formal official policy could be retracted because it is no longer needed to regulate relations between members of different ethnocultural groups. However, such post-race rhetoric is also problematic, and arguments against such assumptions about Canadian society parallel the concerns raised by anti-racist and sovereigntist critics. While it is true that race is an arbitrary social construct imposed upon biological features that in no way reflect one's intellectual or moral character, the assumption that anti-discrimination policies such as multiculturalism have succeeded in dismantling said construct lulls the Canadian government and public into a false sense of security. Until it can truly be said that systemic racism no longer exists, as evidenced by a fully equitable system where no one ethnocultural group is under- or overrepresented in places of power and opportunity, it is too early for us to think that the policy is no longer needed or has successfully completed its mandate.

If the solution to the criticisms raised by various scholars is not the revocation of multiculturalism policy, then what is instead needed is a reformation of the discourse and the system it creates. How, though, should multiculturalism be reformed? Whose perspective should

form the basis for the social and political changes that this entails? From the previous explanations of the various scholarly approaches that have been adopted in discussing and critiquing multiculturalist discourse, one common theme that emerges is that of validity of voice: which point of view has the strongest influence in developing policy. Liberalist, anti-racist, and sovereigntist critics all claim to speak for a demographic group that has been marginalized or silenced by multiculturalist policy. At times, their individual activisms operate in contradiction with one another; for instance, a liberalist who argues that the traditionally Euro-Canadian values within liberal democracy are challenged by a multiculturalism policy that permits immigrant groups to maintain alternative systems of authority may conflict with an anti-racist who argues that demands for ethnic minorities to publicly integrate into mainstream Canadian society are evidence of continued Eurocentrism and racism. It is with this question in mind that I present the perspective from which I will examine multiculturalist discourse within this study. By analyzing the lived experiences of Chinese Canadians via their writings, I endeavour to understand not simply academic discussions and debates around multiculturalism policy, but what it is like for one sample ethnic minority in Canada to live within it and, subsequently, to interrogate it from either liberalist or anti-racist perspectives.

Chapter 2: Chinese Canadian Life Writing as Subjective Acts

How does one measure the efficacy of a discourse such as Canada's multiculturalism? When scholars argue that it generates barriers between Canadians, or erodes traditional understandings of Canadian culture, or continues to permit systemic racism, where do they find the evidence to prove their conclusions? While it is possible to conduct surveys or consult census records to analyze the changing demographics in Canada, statistical approaches cannot reveal the full extent of a person's or community's experiences. A survey reveals patterns and trends in a community's perceptions, and census records indicate evolutions in demographics that could predict changes in the future, but in both instances, it is difficult to access the thoughts and emotions of individuals within a group. Discourses and ideologies such as racism or sexism cannot always be measured, because they are not experienced in concrete or easily definable terms. Overt displays of racial or sexual discrimination such as acts of violence or the use of demeaning epithets are readily noticeable and face both legal and social censure. However, the persistence of systemic privileges and barriers on account of race, gender, or socioeconomic status, while noted and exposed by academics and social justice activists, oftentimes depends upon the perception of the individuals and/or communities involved. A person who is marginalized according to scholarly analysis might not perceive themselves in such a manner; likewise, a person who is privileged could fail to see how he/she is at an advantage in comparison with others.

Research in the humanities thus entails the study and analysis of subjective experiences as they are articulated and expressed by individuals and groups. People express their thoughts, feelings, and worldviews through a broad variety of means: visual, audial and tactile. Examples

of these forms of articulation include artwork, music, film, writing, and social media. It is these verbal and visual representations of identity and experience that I will use as my lens into the Chinese Canadian community. More specifically, this study will focus on life writing as a means of self-representation and expression, through which individuals can both articulate their experiences and, through these revelations, sometimes raise public awareness of persisting social issues. To further elaborate on my chosen methodology and data for this dissertation, this chapter will first lay out the definition of life writing that I will use, inspired by that proposed by Marlene Kadar. Then, I will provide an overview of the dominant themes and tropes that have been prevalent thus far in Chinese Canadian literature, including life writing. Finally, to conclude this set of introductory chapters that address the theoretical bases for my study, I will introduce the primary sources that I have chosen for analysis.

2.1 Why Life Writing?

Life writing is an auto/biographical genre: the textual and visual representation of the autobiographer and/or of the biographical subject. Thus, it encompasses a vast range of forms, including autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters, autoethnographies, biographical accounts of ancestors' lives, Internet blogs and vlogs. In her discussion of the development of life writing as a genre, Marlene Kadar begins with notable characteristics of autobiography, arguably the most iconic form of life writing. Conventionally, autobiography consists of the author's account of his or her own life experiences, narrated in chronological or otherwise logical order; there is, overall, an assumption that the events would be told factually insofar as the author's knowledge and experiences would allow (Kadar, *Reading*, xi-xii). Historically, autobiography – particularly literary autobiography – has been associated with men from the upper or middle class (xii); however, the voices of women and minorities have become more prominent over time. In

contrast to autobiographies and memoirs, other forms, such as diaries and letters, are notable for their assumed subjectivity and privacy, although letters are often used as a form of public address (e.g. open letters or letters to the editor). In particular, as diaries and journals are supposedly written at approximately the same time in which the events they record occurred, there is less presumption of objective truth and greater scholarly focus on the inner thoughts and emotions of the author, which could thus be tracked over time (xiii). Meanwhile, letters, because they are intended for a specific audience, feature the author's self-projection and representation to the recipient through his or her rhetoric (xiv-xv).

However, Kadar proposes an even broader definition of life writing. Insofar as life writing is defined by the author's creation of the self through language, she argues that semiautobiographical and even some fictional texts could be counted within the genre (xv). Recall that traditional autobiography and memoir are usually read as factual accounts of the author's life experiences. However, they are also, by nature of their self-narration, inherently subjective. To what extent, then, can the autobiographical text be considered fact as opposed to fiction? In other words, life writing, like creative or fictional writing, is constructed: words and images are selected by the author to convey a particular impression to the reading audience – and that impression might not necessarily be true in a historical or factual sense. Instead, as noted by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "in self life writing, the interpreter often recognizes that her or his choices of what to narrate as formative are subjective and idiosyncratic" (6). Given that, there is little to distinguish non-fictional autobiographical texts from semiautobiographical or fictional texts if both are intended to convey the author's self-image to the audience, regardless of whether it is through his/her own person or a character that he/she created.

Scholars of life writing like Marlene Kadar, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also speak to the systemic race, gender, and class privileges inherent in our culture's understanding of writing and literature. For instance, divisions between high and popular culture in the context of life writing have tended to separate autobiography and memoir into the former group, and diaries and letters into the latter. In and of itself, such a distinction need not be problematic. However, once it is understood that access to education, literacy, and publication have been marked by boundaries of race, gender, and social class, an image of unfairness emerges. The accordance of literary status to genres of life writing associated with upper- and middle-class European men promotes them at the expense of works authored by women or people of colour (Kadar, *Essays*, 6); in addition, the presumed correlation between objective truth and autobiography perpetuates the stereotype that educated white men are more logical or rational than their female or racialized counterparts. These assertions do all parties involved a gross injustice, because women and racial minorities are equally rational human beings as white men, and any perceived lack of skill in erudition stems from systemic barriers to education rather than an inherent lack of ability.

Consequently, the assumption that autobiography and memoir are reflections of objective truth, and the subsequent gendered and racialized rankings that result, can be easily rectified by keeping in mind that all forms of life writing, including those viewed as examples of objective unadulterated truth, are subjective texts. Any claim to truth on the part of the author can only be a personal truth: based upon the individual's own interpretation of events. Indeed, in the cases of marginalized and subaltern authors, Smith and Watson have noted a blurring of the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, novel and autobiography, as a means to challenge colonialist Eurocentric norms linking autobiography with constructions of objectivity (12). Smith and Watson argue, too, that debates surrounding the factual veracity of life writing are meaningless;

instead, life writing texts should be understood as vehicles for conveying the authors' experiences to a reading audience:

> Any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of its writer. Thus, when one is both the narrator and the protagonist of the narrative, as in life writing, the truth of the narrative becomes undecidable; it can be neither fully verified nor fully discredited. (15-16)

Thus, from this perspective, while life writing could include forms such as autobiographies, memoirs, personal treatises, letters, and diaries, it can even include examples of semiautobiographical novels and poetry, as is the case of novels like *Disappearing Moon Café* by SKY Lee, which I have included in my data corpus despite its classification as "fiction". These all have merit and deserve to be treated as examples of life writing, without an imposed hierarchy based upon notions of truth or objectivity.

Indeed, recent scholarship in the field is questioning the ways that the designation of life writing as a genre can be simultaneously liberating, yet also restricting. After all, life writing is, ultimately, the structuring of something abstract and process-like – human experience – into a concrete written, visual, or oral form: "If life is a form of becoming, life offers itself in life writing as a becoming of form" (Karpinski "Migrations" 172). The abstractness of life, however, is not something that can ever be completely or entirely encapsulated in text. Rather, what is captured and recorded is a continual work in progress, through which experiences are not only expressed, but also formed and re-formed in the act of telling. For instance, Astrid Erll, whose main focus is on cultural memory studies, observes:

> Memories are not objective images of past perceptions, even less of a past reality. They are subjective, highly selected reconstructions, dependent on the situation in which they are recalled. *Re*-membering is an act of assembling available data that takes place in the present. Versions of the past change with every recall, in accordance with the changed present situation. Individual and collective memories are never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the

needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present. (8)

What this suggests is that any accounting of one's worldview and experience is not simply a constructed and subjective version of events, but an affective performance in and of itself (Ty "Memory" 364-365). The act of telling, such as in life writing, itself re-creates and re-forms the events being relayed, such that, in that specific moment and context, what is told is the creator's own personal truth. But only for that specific instance: in the next retelling, the past shifts and evolves yet again.

In addition, in the digital world of the 21st century, there is an ever-diversifying range of forms that life writing could adopt, ranging from written texts such as blogs and posts on social media sites, to online chats and text messages, to the emergence of non-textual forms such as Instagram photos and YouTube vlogs (i.e. video blogs). These forms represent a paradigm shift in how people as individuals and as communities record and present themselves: not only verbally, but through visual imagery as well. Thus, according to Paul Longley Arthur, these new forms, which he calls digital biographies, as well as the electronic devices in which they are stored and through which they are transmitted, represent a new space for life writing: "While the information stored is likely to be in the category of data rather than biography, the increasing capacity to store photos, videos, and reflective texts such as diaries is undoubtedly giving phones the potential to cross the line" (77). All of these forms rely upon their creators' self-realization and self-representation to a broader audience. In fact, with the increased prevalence of digital social media sites as spaces of communication and networking, life writing through visual media loses some of the reflexive quality with which it has been associated. Unlike, for instance, works like diaries that are presumably meant to be private or letters that are written with a specific recipient and audience in mind, the visual representation of experience and memory as

encapsulated and represented in social media contexts are, for the most part, created in a knowingly public sphere as a form of projection and broadcasting (Ty "Memory" 364).

Additionally, with the increasing prevalence of digital life writing, there has come a concern for personal security and privacy that has led to the overt creation of virtual personas and avatars: not the authentic self as a traditional life writing author would be expected to convey to his/her readers, but a blatantly constructed being, cultivated and curated for display. As Arthur explains, "power is in the hands of the individual – I can decide what I post on my blog, how I describe myself professionally; I can de-couple my day-to-day personality from my adopted persona in a game or social network – in other words, it is up to me how I manage my identity" (85). In addition, these avatars are in a continuous state of evolution and change, as digital publishing and representation lends a particular ease to revision, reconstruction and reimagination, as Ümit Kennedy notes:

> The authors' ability to revisit and revise their text indefinitely indicates the unfinished and ongoing nature of contemporary digital autobiography. There is no foreseeable end to the text, and the beginning can always be reworked and re-established. The malleability of these texts and their changing visibility and accessibility online make contemporary digital autobiography a rich site for exploring narrates selves that are ephemeral, unstable, and open to revision, but they also make the genre seem more vulnerable. (409)

Thus, what matters for authors – and, by extension, scholars of life writing – is no longer a promise of authenticity to the audience, but the desire to present themselves as they wish to appear: selecting particular aspects of their identities and experiences to reveal, sometimes all behind a deliberate façade such as a pseudonym or an avatar image. There is a sense of safety in numbers, and a safety in anonymity; authenticity is fluid when all parties are complicit in the same form of artifice.

Yet, with any form of life writing, the author's intended interpretation is not the ultimate source of meaning. These texts are not only constructed by their creators; they are also heavily conditioned by the contexts in which they are created and received. Thus, for instance, the concept of credibility has been used as an effective discursive tool in regulating the publication of life writing texts. This is most notably the case for subaltern and marginalized authors and their texts, as they frequently subvert hegemonic discourses based upon racism, sexism, classism, etc. For example, according to Smith and Watson, "readers expect the slave narrative to be written by an ex-slave, or the Holocaust narrative to be written by a survivor or survivor-descendant, or the narrative of nationalization or exile to be written by an immigrant" (36). This is compounded by critiques of the publishing industry by anti-racist feminist authors like Marlene Nourbese Philip, who has commented, "Canadian writers of African, Asian or Native backgrounds have a difficult time getting their work published, because of the small size of their respective ethnic audiences, except if their works are 'good' enough to appeal to a white audience" (161). Such a systemic bias that constructs whiteness as the default cultural setting in Canada inhibits the extent to which racialized authors' voices can be heard, as they are forced to appeal to the same audience that has marginalized them in the first place. Finally, returning to the newer realm of digital biography, Arthur notes that the flexibility of online personas adds to their capacity for multiple facets and interpretations, yet the sheer expanse and fluidity of digital space aggravates the extent to which authors are, in fact, not in control of their own creations (86). The over-accumulation of digital biographical fragments, sometimes in contradiction with each other, can lead to excessive exposure of an author's privacy and his/her subsequent loss of agency at the audience's mercy.

Rather than limiting, I find all of these debates and shifting boundaries and definitions of life writing to be enabling for scholars of discourse. Life writing, due to its subjectivity, offers a glimpse into the thoughts and actions of the author, as well as the social, cultural, and political contexts that shaped both their experiences and subsequent decisions. Thus, in addition to understanding political and academic analyses of discourse and ideology, such as the examples discussed in Chapter 1, an analysis of life writing allows scholars to see how these forces figure in people's lives in a tangible way. Although one could argue that individual experience amounts simply to anecdotal evidence insignificant to serious academic inquiry and insufficient as evidence, the authors and their narratives reveal the frameworks within which they live and work, and the epistemologies that influence their identities and subjectivities. Thus, while it is impossible to claim that life writing is wholly factual, it is possible to examine texts in this genre as experiential evidence, which allows scholars to infer how perceptions can become reality: what matters is not what is actually true, but what people believe to be true.

2.2 Chinese Canadian Literature and Its Common Themes

At first glance, the designation of the label "Chinese Canadian literature" seems straightforward: written works authored by Chinese people who also identify as Canadian. However, the term is actually incredibly complex, as is any form of cultural or creative production attached to it. Chinese in Canada come from a broad range of different geographic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds: an individual from mainland China is not the same as one from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Southeast Asia. Likewise, even when two people come from what is now China, their experiences and worldviews will be notably different depending on whether their knowledge stems from a land prior to or after the Communist revolution of 1949, or the subsequent reopening of China's borders after the end of the Cultural Revolution. This, in turn,

does not account for those who were born within the diaspora as opposed to the alleged homeland, who may or may not identify Canada as their main place of belonging. Finally, even the assumption that "Chinese Canadian" demarcates a racial or ethnic group is problematic, as it presumes a fixed category that fails to include individuals of interracial descent. With an awareness of this complexity that defies definition, for the purposes of my study, "Chinese Canadian" will refer to individuals and communities residing in Canada who trace their ancestral history either directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, to what is now mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

One of the most notable early comprehensive studies of Chinese Canadian literature is Lien Chao's *Beyond Silence*. She attributes the beginning of Chinese Canadian writing as a distinctive genre to the late 1970s, when a group of Chinese and Japanese Canadians came together to publish an anthology in an attempt to create a counter-discourse to the dominant Euro-Canadian ideologies (Chao x). In the wake of almost a century's history of discrimination and erasure from the country's national mythology, which promoted European settlers' hard work in settling and cultivating the land yet constructed Chinese efforts to do the same as first an economic threat then evidence of self-debasement in the face of racism (8-9, 11), Chinese Canadians chose to provide their version of the story (15). The burgeoning of Chinese Canadian literature was one of many movements in the "human rights revolution", to use Kymlicka's wording, in the latter half of the 20th century founded upon the civil rights of minorities, including women and racialized people – and oftentimes both simultaneously (35). Because of this, its development in the 1970s also parallels the rise of multiculturalism policy in Canada during the same decade, such that by the time of the concretization of the policy in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* of 1988, Chinese Canadian literature, along with other forms of creative

and artistic expression by ethnic minorities, can arguably fall under the act's mandate to "encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among the diverse communities of Canada" (5).

It is important to note, however, that Chao's contrast between silence and voice cannot simply be understood as racism and its erosion in favour of a more multicultural voice. Although Chinese Canadians during the Exclusion Era were marginalized, and sometimes even segregated, within the Euro-centric educational system and job market, there was, in turn, a self-imposed silence as Chinese immigrants and their descendants withdrew into ethnic enclaves, such as the Chinatowns that cropped up in cities across Canada (12-13). Chinatowns and their persistence over time were caused in large part by discrimination from Euro-Canadian society, which prevented many Chinese from moving into other neighbourhoods or accessing the better-paying jobs that would permit them to afford housing elsewhere, yet much of their growth also stemmed from the sense of familiarity and community they offered to immigrants (18-19). Chinese immigrants and their descendants thus communicated with each other using their heritage languages; gradually, English-language and bilingual publications also developed within Chinatowns as a means to enable inhabitants to cultivate their knowledge in the dominant languages around them (18). This ultimately gave rise to a new generation of bilingual Chinese Canadians who had the tools, at last, to speak back to the dominant prejudices and discourses that had relegated them to silence within the ethnic enclaves.

One of the first tasks early Chinese Canadian authors undertook was recounting the histories of their ancestors and raising awareness of their struggle to survive in this country. Much of the Canadian public's preconceived notions of Chinese identity and culture stemmed from the anti-Oriental stereotypes circulated prior to and during the Exclusion Era. These

stereotypes centred upon the assumption that peoples and cultures from the "East" – i.e. the "Orient" – and the "West" – i.e. the "Occident" – were inherently and fundamentally different:

> The underlying assumption of Orientalism was that the Orient represented the inferior opposite of Europe: the East was feminine and passive, the West masculine and dominating. The East was spiritual and inward-looking, the West rational and outward-seeing. The East was bound in tradition, the West impelled by progress. The East was primitive, vulgar, and defenseless; the West was the beacon of civilization, the standard of refinement, and the wielder of unstoppable military power. (Tizon 52)

Not only that, but because Orientalism[7] as a discourse was constructed by a white European and white North American hegemony, the "Occident" was the default standard against which the "Orient" was continuously judged and found wanting. As Roy Miki describes it:

> The Asian inside Canada, which is to say, the fabricated Asian, has functioned less as a descriptive term and more as the sign of the not-white – the formative lack – against which the white settler body has been valorized as a centralizing figure. This Asian has undergone an externalization process, or an *orientalization*, through which it is either seen as the perilous face in a "yellow peril" discourse or the benign face of a model minority that has undergone assimilation. (97, emphasis mine)

Thus, for instance, in Canada prior to and during the Exclusion Era, in order to create and emphasize this polarized and irreconcilable difference between the "Orient" and the "Occident", Chinese communities were constructed as unsanitary, unsavoury places filled with gambling dens, prostitution, and opium addiction (Chao 12).

In the latter half of the 20th century, popular opinion had shifted significantly in the favour of Chinese Canadians. Such changes included the repeal of exclusion policies, and the reconfiguration of Chinese Canadians as hardworking citizens who persevered despite racism, and of Chinatowns as places of cultural preservation in which Euro-Canadian visitors could

[7] Ironically, while the word "Orientalism" is used to refer to the discourse, policies, and actions conducted as a result, such as discriminatory immigration policies, racial riots, etc., are termed as "anti-Oriental" or "anti-Orientalist" by scholars.

become exposed to an exotic culture without ever leaving home (13). However, what is particularly imperative for the development of Asian Canadian writing, including Chinese Canadian writing, is the process of self-actualization and self-affirmation that began in the 1970s across North America. Beginning in 1970 with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, and building upon the successes and legacies of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1970s, Asian American and Canadian scholars, activists, and artists worked to redefine their own place within North American society (Tizon 56). One of the ways they did this was to interrogate the use of the word "Oriental" in reference to the continent of Asia, its inhabitants, and its diasporas. Due to the negative connotations of the term, which emphasized an insurmountable dichotomy between the "East" and the "West", "Oriental" was phased out in favour of first "Asian" and then "Asian and Pacific Islander" to refer to this particular demographic. A pan-Asian American and Canadian communal identity began to develop as second- and third-generation immigrants realized that despite their varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds, individuals from China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia shared an experience of racialized interpellation (57).

To be fair, a change in nomenclature does not remove racialization; calling a Chinese Canadian "Asian" instead of "Oriental" might be more politically correct and thus in vogue, but it is still ultimately a label based upon one's place of origin and thus, implicitly, based upon race. Yet, such is the irony of Asian American and Canadian activism in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Roy Miki,

> Although collectives that fall under [Asian Canadian] – such as Japanese, South Asian, and Chinese Canadian – may have been portrayed as aliens and strangers, as outsiders, in the long history of their struggles to attain the full rights of citizenship, they have imagined themselves as *insiders to the nation*, but *insiders who have suffered the burden of externalization* in a nation constructed out of a hierarchically organized system of designated identities. (10-11, emphasis mine)

This assertion of belonging in Canadian society, for many Chinese Canadian writers, entailed the vindication of their ancestors, who had been maligned by the earlier anti-Orientalist discourses to the extent that many had been separated from their friends and family for decades, if not denied the chance for family reunification altogether. Thus, for instance, an early form of Chinese Canadian literature consisted of dialogues, real or imagined, between a young writer and an older survivor of the Exclusion Era (Chao 25). In this study, I am including *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* as an example of such dialogue. Although the voice of the younger interviewer is notably absent and the narratives of the informants, including survivors from the Exclusion Era, are portrayed as autonomous and untouched narratives, an exchange between those interviewed and those interviewing certainly did take place, as shown by the segmentation of stories into sections that were grouped together thematically in the finished volume. Dialogues and interviews like this, when translated into and published in English, allowed mainstream reading audiences an opportunity, if only hypothetically, to witness for themselves the real-life effects of the injustices systemic racism had wrought upon the Chinese Canadian community, thus augmenting the need for their (hi)stories to be remembered all the more, as many elders had already passed away. In this way, a voice that had once been silenced could speak once again.

A second, similar, literary trope that was used by Chinese Canadian authors to give voice to their predecessors was the ancestral quest, which Chao terms "searching for the bones" (27). Searching for one's roots and predecessors was a declaration by authors of a Chinese presence in Canada that went as far back as the early period of settlement along the West Coast. Chinese migrant workers came to North America, a land perceived as a place of such opportunity that it was colloquially referred to as *Gum San* (the Gold Mountain), beginning in the late 19th century: mining for gold, working in fisheries and logging camps, and building much of the western

portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Chao argues that while the contributions of the Chinese in British Columbia were well known at the time, their lower position in Canada's racialized hierarchy meant that their presence was ultimately buried out of sight in the official settler colonial narrative (7-8). Thus, in one particular example of a Chinese immigrant's search for one's ancestors, appearing in the beginning of Sky Lee's novel *Disappearing Moon Café*, a young Chinese migrant is sent from Victoria into the bush to collect the bones of deceased migrant workers (Lee 21-22); there is both a physical and conceptual unearthing of a history that has been obscured by time.

One other means that Chinese Canadian authors use to reassert their community's presence on the Canadian historical landscape is different forms of biography. Many noteworthy works of Chinese Canadian life writing include discussion of not only the author's own life, but also those of his/her parents or grandparents. For example, Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* is a multigenerational (auto)biography, since it devotes the majority of its content to a broader family history. The book begins with her maternal grandmother's journey to Canada as a young concubine to a Chinese Canadian immigrant, following which the next main subject is Chong's mother over the course of her childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. In fact, relatively little is spoken about Chong's own life until the book's conclusion, which documents her travels back to China with her mother to reconnect with relatives there. As with the imagined dialogue I previously mentioned, the purpose of these biographical accounts of the author's parents, grandparents, and other ancestral family members is to vocalize to mainstream Canadian society a history that would otherwise have been forgotten. This is particularly notable with texts written in either English or French, the language of the dominant Euro-Canadian population, as

opposed to Chinese, which would indicate the author's desire to address the Chinese Canadian community itself.

Oftentimes, Chinese Canadian life writing adopts characteristics of an autoethnography. Ethnography originates from the social sciences as a means to describe and catalogue the customs and practices of an ethnic group: scholars would enter a community and record their observations, sometimes also interviewing specific members chosen to be spokespersons for the group. These social scientists' records are intended for an audience different from the ethnic community under investigation, thus allowing readers to glimpse what to them is an exotic and foreign way of life. Frequently, in such instances, the social scientist as observer is in a position of power in relation to his/her object of analysis. This applies not only to the historical tendency for ethnographers to be white and for those under examination to be peoples of colour, but also to the greater authoritative weight the voice of the ethnographer has in comparison to the voice of the community being studied (Lai *Slanting* 43). Authoethnography, a form of ethnography in which the author is writing of his/her own ethnocultural group, subverts this power relation (58). There is no longer a sense of an "objective" outsider examining and analyzing a community's cultural practices; rather, what occurs in autoethnography is a self-reflexive examination of culture that includes confrontations with "violence, desire, confusion, struggle, and economic transactions with informants" (44). In this way, autoethnography is to ethnography what life writing in the broader sense as defined by Kadar, Smith and Watson is to autobiography: it is a tool through which the marginalized – the woman, the person of colour, etc. – can supplant the so-called "objective," "authoritative," and "truthful" voice of the white male hegemonic subject.

However, one important caveat should be noted that is frequently ignored in studies of Chinese Canadian literatures like Chao's, with their focus upon breaking silences and finding

voices to speak. As writers like Paul Yee discovered, the silence that purportedly enveloped and stifled Chinese Canadian voices did not solely come from the outside Euro-Canadian hegemony. Rather, at least some of the reason for the dearth of Chinese Canadian literature in English prior to the mid-20th century stems from within the Chinese Canadian communities themselves. In an interview conducted by Geoff Hancock, Paul Yee, a third-generation Chinese Canadian author, remarked that the history of anti-Asian racism in Canada was hidden by survivors who wished to shield the next generation from its legacies of trauma:

> I see the suppression of our own Chinese Canadian history as a deliberate mistake. Our parental generation wanted to protect and shelter us from the negative parts of our history. They'd say, yes, there was racism, but we don't want you to grow up with a chip on your shoulder. We want you to be equal, and as Canadian as the white kid down the street. What that attitude did was to gut us. It did not give us a soul to write from. We need to go back to recover our history. Our parents protected us. We got piano lessons and hockey so we'd grow up and be accepted. It was a major mistake not to recognize our history. Those years of hardship will give us the power to write. (Hutcheon 348)

Thus, Chinese Canadian writers who seek to reinsert themselves and their ancestors into Canadian history, culture, and literature, must not only struggle with the hegemonic mainstream that has marginalized them, but those within the community who suppress their Otherness in order to gain acceptance in our multicultural society as desirable and deserving citizens.

Because of this dynamic, it is not only silence that can be attributed to a desire to integrate into mainstream Canadian society. Paradoxically, the desire to break that same silence has a similar origin. Many Asian Canadian authors, particularly those writing after the implementation of the official multicultural policy that created a market for their work under the designation of "multicultural," "ethnic," or "immigrant" writing, sought to use literature as a means of entry into mainstream Canadian society (Lai *Slanting* 57). Thus, although authors may intend to reassert and reinsert the Chinese Canadian presence into our national history as a

response to racial discrimination and obscurity, they are also cautious in their portrayal. On the one hand, there is a desire to speak back to stereotypes that associated Chinese Canadians with poverty, vice, and extreme otherness. Yet, on the other hand, Chinese Canadian authors also have to account for the gambling addiction, depression, racial prejudice, homophobia, and intensely patriarchal societal worldview that were a reality in Chinese Canadian communities (Chao 29). Thus, for instance, numerous texts depict generational conflicts between parents and/or grandparents with markedly patriarchal and success-oriented views, and young adult children seeking their own independence as they negotiate hyphenated identities after growing up in a society with significantly different values. Such examinations differ from polemical anti-Orientalist discourse insofar as they are self-imposed: a critique of the Chinese Canadian community from within rather than without. However, these texts also risk perpetuating the very stereotypes they claim to challenge, as the construction of Chinese Canadian history as one based upon silence and secrecy that is now being broken by writers-cum-activists adds to the exoticizing mystique surrounding the community (Lai *Slanting* 57-9).

In spite of these risks, above all else, I would argue that Chinese Canadian writing is a political statement, because recounting and thus re-creating history is an act of agency. Official discourses surrounding Chinese in Canada, whether positive or negative, are conceptualizations that are built upon racialized stereotypes, the creation of which is objectifying by nature. These images belie the actual complexity of Chinese Canadian experience, and also deny members of the community a voice. Indeed, many scholars and activists have argued that both the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses are generalizations that Euro-Canadian society has imposed upon the Chinese as a means to maintain their own systemic economic privilege: "The popular discourse of race in which these constructions of the Oriental were produced and deployed is not

a transparent or unmediated reflection of the economy, but rather an expression of social contradictions drawing on images of the present, visions of the future, and memories of the past" (Lee 11). In other words, Chinese Canadians, along with other marginalized groups in Canada, are deliberately constructed as points of deviance from the mainstream for the specific purpose of defining the key characteristic traits of that mainstream.

Certainly, there is truth to this argument. For example, the idealized traits of Chinese immigrants that eventually form the Model Minority discourse – humility, intelligence, and a diligent work ethic – can already be found in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration* of 1885, conducted shortly after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway that same year:

> Englishmen could not supply their places. They seem fit for gigantic things; Chinese favor little things. They are willing and wish to learn. What their brain takes in they are able to execute with their hands. Of course not all are equally intelligent. Many are poor and of low caste, but remember they inherit the brain of a civilization of thousands of years dormant, but ready to take in new ideas and progress. They take to anything, any trade or business, and will pick them up very quickly. Their imitative faculties are very great, though I do not know what their inventive genius is. (56)

However, such an emphasis on the ways in which Chinese immigrants have been portrayed by mainstream society also denies Chinese Canadians their agency. Who is to say that Chinese living in Canada have passively submitted to the expectations and restrictions placed upon them? Historical evidence from scholars such as Lisa Rose Mar points to the creation of the Model Minority discourse as itself being, at least in part, an act of agency and resistance: an assertion by the Chinese of their right to be in Canada as full citizens. This is what, in my analysis of a corpus of Chinese Canadian life writing, appears to be the case. Chinese Canadians have, throughout their history, engaged in a process of continual self-invention and self-assertion, establishing

themselves not as objectified Others, but as active subjects shaping their own pasts, presents, and futures.

2.3 Methodology and Data Corpus

This study, in keeping with its focus upon Chinese Canadian life writing as an act of subjectivity, examines a broad range of (auto)biographical texts, a full list of which can be found in the References section under "Primary Sources." The selected texts adopt a broad variety of forms, from transcribed interviews used as part of an ethnographic study to personal memoirs, to non-textual media such as online video. In addition, all the texts included in this study date from the 1990s to the present, and have been published in English; for some, such as *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, original statements have been translated from Cantonese and Mandarin for publication to an Anglo-Canadian audience. However, although these texts are all relatively recent publications, they cover a broad historical range insofar as authors focus not simply on their own experiences, but those of their parents and grandparents as well. Also, for ethnographic texts such as *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community* or *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*, a number of direct statements from Chinese immigrants who lived during the Exclusion Era or immigrated shortly after the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947 have also been included. In regards to audience, most of the texts appear to be intended for an Anglo-Canadian readership; the main exception is the online reality video series *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*, which is also marketed towards an East Asian audience, and is a bilingual production with subtitles in both Chinese and English.

I realize that this necessarily narrowed sample of texts cannot do justice to the full magnitude of Chinese Canadian literature or life writing published since the 1970s, the perceived

beginning of Asian Canadian writing in English according to Lien Chao. In addition, I cannot ignore the political implications of the boundaries I have chosen for my corpus. The fact that these texts were originally published in English, while significant in the history of Chinese Canadian literature, also requires me to remain conscious of the power dynamics at play whenever a marginalized group is speaking to a larger, more socially dominant audience. As previously discussed in Chapter 1, one of the significant problems that arises with an official multiculturalism policy is that it is ultimately a gesture from a position of power: someone from above is offering recognition and tolerance to someone they perceive as beneath them (Bannerji 135-6). The same could be said for the position of what is termed “multicultural” writing: works by authors from marginalized ethnocultural groups, who, despite the recognition, are inevitably marked as peripheral and can only exist in a hyphenated state – Chinese Canadian, but never *Canadian* Canadian, to return to Mackey’s informants (117-9). Thus, in order to be successfully published, racialized authors like the ones featured in this study are frequently called upon to conform to a specific imagined narrative of ethnicity that includes tropes such as searches for identity and generational conflicts between first-generation immigrant parents and their Canadian-born offspring (Chao 29). However, my expectation is that these texts will together touch upon Chinese Canadians from a variety of points in history and a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, as well as including voices from men and women, heterosexual and queer individuals. Some of the texts, particularly the memoirs of celebrated members of the Chinese Canadian community, offer a look into the Model Minority discourse. In contrast, texts such as Evelyn Lau’s *Runaway* and Jan Wong’s *Out of the Blue* reveal a vivid, undiluted vision of depression and mental illness in contrast to the imagined success of Chinese Canadians.

Chapter 3: Interpellation and Affective Performance: Chinese Canadians in the Exclusion Era

In order to understand the influence of the Model Minority discourse on Chinese Canadian history, it is important to consider how it functions as an example of progression in Canadian society's racialized ideologies. Prior to the emergence of Model Minority rhetoric that constructs Asian immigrants in Canada and the United States as hardworking, law-abiding and desirable contributors to our social and economic fabric, the dominant image of Asian immigrants was that of a faceless yellow horde with irremediably foreign practices and worldviews (Li *Chinese* 86). Moreover, Chinese migrant workers were believed to be a competitive threat to the Euro-Canadian working class, as they were willing to perform menial or dangerous tasks for a lower wage, thus jeopardizing both whites' opportunities for employment and attempts to unionize (Jung 360). In addition, they were perceived as a moral and cultural threat, with a penchant for gambling, opium addiction and prostitution: problems further exacerbated by the fact that most Chinese migrants were men separated from their wives and families for long periods of time, thus supposedly making them prone to become sexual predators preying upon innocent white women.

These and other negative and discriminatory views towards Chinese immigrants and their descendants led to a series of exclusionary laws and policies. In short, their numbers had to be curtailed and, where that was not possible, Chinese ought to be separated out from the rest of the public. Beginning with a $50 head tax specifically aimed at Chinese immigrants that was implemented in 1885 and then increased to $500 by 1903, the Canadian government ultimately passed the *Chinese Immigration Act* in 1923 that barred ethnic Chinese from entering Canada

with only a small number of exceptions. For many Chinese migrant workers, this legislation meant that they were unable to bring their families to join them in Canada; meanwhile, the lower wages they received kept many close to the poverty line and also prevented them from raising sufficient funds to return to China. Thus, numerous "bachelor societies" developed in towns and cities with significant Chinese immigrant populations, with men living in close proximity with each other to pool resources and services in a relatively friendlier and more familiar environment (Li *Chinese* 78). The ethnic enclaves that sprouted out of Canadian exclusion of the Chinese, known as Chinatowns, remain today as visible and tangible markers of a discriminatory past.

However, isolation and withdrawal were not the only consequences of Canada's exclusionary policies. Although the mythologized narrative of Chinese Canadian history depicts the years leading up to and during the Exclusion Era (1923-1947) as a time of difficulty and humiliation, the story is not entirely one of victimization. On the contrary, Chinese immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants adopted various forms of resistance that still resonate to the present. The emergence of paper sons/daughters and the strengthening of communal ties outside of direct relations of kinship created a sense of family and belonging within Chinese Canadian communities. In addition, Chinese Canadians did not remain passively content with their position in society. Instead, as Chinatown communities became more entrenched with the rise of a second generation born in Canada, some Chinese began to lobby for citizenship and acknowledgement. Through their educational, economic, social and cultural choices, Chinese Canadians sought to prove that they were not an inassimilable Other, but rightful members of mainstream public society – provided that they were granted the opportunities to excel. It is this drive, I argue, from which the Model Minority discourse originates. The discourse is not solely a top-down measure from the government to keep systemic white privileges in place or placate Asian Canadians

pushing for greater equity; but also the appropriation and affective performance of desirable traits associated with Canadian citizenship by members of the Chinese community.

This chapter will thus focus on the historical and cultural developments from the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the implementation of the first *Chinese Immigration Act* of 1885 through to the repeal of exclusion in 1947. I will begin by examining the anti-Orientalist discourses of the period, with a focus on the myth of the Yellow Peril as well as its repercussions in Canadian state and immigration policy. From here, my discussion will shift to the responses of the Chinese immigrant community and its Canadian-born descendants: first, the withdrawal into ethnic enclaves and the drive towards cultural preservation as a means to foster community; and secondly, the agitation for state recognition that I argue is the beginning of the Model Minority discourse.

3.1 The Yellow Peril and Chinese Exclusion

The genius of the term "Yellow Peril" is in the fact that its meaning is quite self-explanatory: those of the "yellow" races being perceived as a "peril" to society. However, it is also in its simplicity that the term's arbitrary nature becomes apparent. In many ways, the "Yellow Peril" discourse operated as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those who saw Asian immigrants as an economic and cultural threat moved to marginalize them in isolated communities where, in order to maintain both cultural traditions and familial ties, they resorted to lifestyles and coping techniques that were illegal under Canadian law. Such actions – including immigration fraud – conveyed a sense of lawlessness within Chinatown communities to Euro-Canadians, who then further agitated for their exclusion and isolation. Under such

assumptions, it would appear as though the Chinese immigrants could do no right; their actions as individuals and as a community were automatically read negatively.

To begin, one must understand the significance behind "yellow" in the context of the "Yellow Peril" discourse. Ostensibly, it is a reference to the predominant skin colours in East and Southeast Asia, and is used in tandem with other words denoting people from these regions such as "Mongoloid" and "Oriental." However, Alex Tizon, in his memoir *Big Little Man: In Search of My Asian Self*[8], makes an interesting observation:

> Yellow was the perfect color for Orientals. It was only superficially descriptive of skin tone. The cultural associations with the color resonated with the Western view of the Orient. *Caucasoids*, or Europeans, were white, the color of purity and power. *Negroids*, or Africans, were black, for their dark and animalistic character. *Mongoloids*, or Orientals, were yellow, the color of infirmity and cowardice. (53)

Clearly, the designation of "yellow" to denote the Chinese, among other East Asian and Southeast Asian ethnic groups, does not simply function as a phenotypical descriptor. Such is the insidious nature of discourses of racialization. In itself, there is no wrong in commenting upon phenotypical differences, as human beings do present a broad range of physical characteristics. The problem instead occurs, as it has here, when one ascribes a sense of value to various physical features such as skin colour, eye colour, hair texture, height, sexual organs, etc. The imposition of meaning is what makes the "Yellow Peril" discourse racist, not the comment upon appearance or ethnic origin itself.

What, then, were the qualities and attributes ascribed to "yellow" peoples, according to the Eurocentric norms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? As the word "peril" suggests, the belief was that Asian immigrants presented an economic and cultural threat to the Euro-

[8] Although this book qualifies as a piece of life writing, it was not included in my data corpus since it was written by an American of Filipino descent. Instead, in my research, I focused on Tizon's comments on the intersections of race and gender in constructions of Asian American masculinity.

American and Euro-Canadian way of life. In terms of economics, Asian immigrants such as the Chinese indentured workers who aided in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway were a valuable source of cheap labour by Euro-Canadian corporations (Jung 354). Oftentimes, the jobs that Chinese migrant workers took on were positions that employers encountered difficulties filling with European settlers, who deemed such tasks too hazardous or menial for consideration. In this way, Chinese migrant workers in both Canada and the United States fulfilled the same role that other racialized minorities, such as Blacks, did, particularly after the abolition of the slavery (351-2). For example, "John Chinaman," an Irish American song from the 1870s, details this transition with the lyric, "one set of men of late we've freed…but another takes his place" (Lee 70-71). Even so, despite the low wages and the harsh physical conditions they faced, many Chinese immigrants still saw the indentured "coolie" labour as a desirable means towards financial stability and prosperity; southern China, from which many of these workers originated, had been plagued by years of famine, war, and political instability that made peasant farmers' agrarian lifestyle insufficient to support themselves and their families (Jung 353). In contrast, North America was viewed by many Chinese as a land of opportunity: first as the place for quick wealth during a gold rush, and then as a means towards employment and wages in a foreign currency that stretched far beyond their numerical value back home (Fong 18).

From this standpoint, the importation of indentured migrant workers from Asia could appear to be a symbiotic relationship. While Chinese labourers were exploited and subject to physically demanding work in dangerous conditions, both they and their employers gained in the process: money to put towards future wealth in China for the former, and an increased profit margin for the latter. However, just as it was the forces of capitalism that allowed the Chinese to migrate to North America in large numbers, it was capitalism that also ultimately stalled their

progress. For example, in Canada, with the completion of the railway in 1885, Chinese migrant workers were left to resort to alternate means of employment, seeking work in logging camps, fisheries, and mines (Li *Chinese* 22). This led to an increased competition between workers from numerous ethnic groups, and with employers still interested in maintaining their profits, it became cheaper to hire Chinese migrants instead of European settlers. The presence of Chinese immigrants as a reliable source of labour thus undermined the burgeoning labour movements of the time, as Chinese were perceived as more willing to work in menial positions, and thus were at times utilized as strike-breakers by employers reluctant to settle terms with their white workers (Jung 360). Also, Chinese immigrant workers were favoured over Irish immigrants in particular, because the latter were perceived by the Anglo-Saxon majority as "undisciplined, ill-tempered and recalcitrant" (Lee 61). Because of this competition, in order to protect their own chances for employment and their fight for rights, the Euro-American and Euro-Canadian working class began to focus on their own whiteness as their reason for desirability as employees and citizens, as well as to agitate for restrictions on Chinese migration (70).

In addition, the Chinese were also regarded as an economic threat because many migrant workers intended to stay only temporarily; their ultimate goal was to accumulate a surplus of wealth that they could bring back to their families and hometowns in China. Again, as with other aspects of the "Yellow Peril" discourse, the Chinese workers' sojourner mentality cannot be read simply as either a cause or an effect of racialization and anti-Oriental sentiment. Chinese in Canada were marginalized by the general public, making it difficult to create any sense of attachment to Canada as a new home; in addition, the strict immigration and exclusion policies meant that many migrant workers could only hope to be reunited with their families by returning to China, thus further fostering a hope for a potential return home. However, despite racism's

role in the development of the sojourner mentality, the fact that many Chinese migrant workers maintained strong emotional ties to China also fueled further beliefs that Chinese migrant workers were an economic threat, as they would frequently send monetary remittances to their hometowns whilst working in Canada. Thus, for instance, contributors to the Royal Commission of 1885, which led to the implementation of the head tax, reported that Chinese workers were siphoning Canadian money and resources out of the country and had no intention of contributing to the development of Canadian society (*Report* 156). This would, according to the complainants, ultimately hinder the development of British Columbia as Canada's key western province:

> British Columbia has many valuable resources, and should in the course of time become one of the leading provinces in the Dominion; but if her progressive development is to be left to the Chinese, and her wealth carried to China, then Canada's Pacific province will…be ages behind. (91)

Thus, for the sake of Canada's own economic growth and well-being, workers and politicians alike advocated for restrictions on further Chinese immigration.

Not only were Chinese immigrants painted as an economic threat by the mainstream population during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but they were also thought to be dangerous both culturally and morally. Chinese and their communities were associated with various vices such as gambling, prostitution, and opium addiction (Chao 12). It is important that we not view this as a simple inevitability ingrained in their nature. Rather, the vice industries prevalent in Chinatowns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were the product of a desperation for social interaction and belonging (Li *Chinese* 86). Despite this, in the popular discourse of the period, the presence of drugs, gambling and prostitution within Chinese communities was read as a reflection of Chinese culture, and concern grew that interaction between Chinese and Euro-

Canadians would lead to the moral degradation of mainstream society (83). This spread, rather than the vices themselves, was the main cause for moral panic in the Royal Commission of 1885. Thus, even though one commenter observed that "[opium consumption] does not appear to prevent Chinamen from being the most prolific race, the most indefatigable laborers and the keenest traders in the world" and that opium was "not nearly so dangerous to the public peace than whiskey" (*Report* 74), another argued that it was "the Chinese evil" that was "used in every house" and "growing with the whites" (48). Not only that, the fact that most Chinese immigrants at the time were male, by nature of their migration as indentured workers in menial and physically demanding jobs, meant that many white Canadians feared that the Chinese would sexually prey upon their women or, worse, engage in romantic liaisons leading to miscegenation (Yee 13). In addition, Chinese immigrants were, for the most part, not Christian: a frightening prospect for a country that was founded upon Christian beliefs and values. While this difference in religious and cultural beliefs led to some ties developing between Chinese and Euro-Canadians as churches and missionary organizations sought opportunities for charity work and possible converts to Christianity (Li *Chinese* 86), it also led to an increased sense of the Chinese as utterly foreign Others whose activities should be controlled.

By constructing Chinese and other Asian immigrants to Canada as a threatening racialized Other, the "Yellow Peril" discourse severely limited the degree to which they could integrate and be accepted into mainstream society. The effect, as with the discourse itself, was cyclical: Chinese were barred from socializing with Euro-Canadians, and then marked for their supposed inassimilability and difference when they failed to integrate. Even without direct government intervention, the Chinese immigrants faced discrimination and racism on both social and economic levels. Indeed, the cycle of racialization and exclusion faced by Chinese

immigrants dates back at least to the time of the Royal Commission of 1885 itself; for example, one of the respondents, when asked whether there was any possibility for Chinese assimilation into mainstream society, answered, "No, they are a foreign element, and certainly there was no desire for it from the whites, and probably none on the part of the Chinese, and apparently always will be so" (52). Therefore, in response to public agitation and outcry, provincial and federal governments moved to enact a series of restrictive and exclusionary policies meant to both limit further Chinese immigration and police those who had already settled in Canada. These policies marked the first attempt by the Canadian state to curtail immigration by a specific ethnic group and set a precedent for later legislation against other marginalized peoples as well.

With the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885, the first action from the government was to conduct a Royal Commission to investigate the situation of Chinese immigration to Canada, specifically in the province of British Columbia. What is worth noting about the Royal Commission of 1885, however, is the power dynamics within its inception, as indicated in the opening remarks to the transcribed comments collected in British Columbia:

> The Federal Government did not think the Local Government, unless they had facts or statistics, would have made representations to them asking for legislation to restrict Chinese immigration, or that British Columbia members, in the House of Commons, would have demanded restriction on Chinese immigration, without having necessary proof to show those to whom they appealed that such steps were necessary. (*Report* 43)

From this excerpt, it is clear that the organizers of the Royal Commission were not seeking to objectively assess the impact of Chinese immigration to British Columbia; rather, the goal was to collect proof and evidence to support the complaints that the provincial government had made to Parliament. However, because it was conducted with this intended purpose, the Royal Commission also serves as significant primary source evidence of the ways in which members of

the public in British Columbia thought of and spoke about the Chinese immigrants in their midst. There are, of course, numerous examples in the *Report* of the negative stereotypes concerning Chinese immigrants that figure prominently in the Yellow Peril image: claims that the Chinese are permanently foreign and inassimilable because "it is impossible to Anglicize a Chinaman" (46); that that they live in "very limited…dirty and disgusting" quarters that, while not dangerous in terms of criminal activity, are hazardous to their own health and that of the white Canadians around them (85); that they "show no respect to [Canadian] laws" and "will not give evidence against each other" even when asked to by police (82-83); and that they, through their polygamous lifestyle, "have no such ideas of the high importance of preserving the honor and fair fame of their women, such as obtains amongst white people" (89). Still, the single greatest complaint brought to the Royal Commission against Chinese immigrants was that they were providing unnecessary competition for jobs to both current and potential white settlers, and that their presence had the effect of discouraging Euro-Canadians from the eastern provinces from coming to the West Coast (83); thus, as one commenter notes, "They are entering into every branch of industry and actually crowding white people out" (87).

However, in addition to the complaints brought against Chinese immigrants as socially and economically threatening Others, there was also a strong presence advocating on their behalf to the Royal Commission. In many instances, the Chinese immigrants were described as hard workers and not prone to the same vices that appeared in white Canadian communities. For example, in a statement similar to the comparison between Chinese and Irish immigrants discussed by Robert Lee (61), one respondent to the Royal Commission said, "The Chinese are most industrious, perfectly sober, very economical and as law-abiding as those of a similar class amongst the whites [i.e. the poor working class]. They are not lazy, drunken, extravagant or

turbulent" (*Report* 94). Those who spoke positively about the Chinese immigrants also stressed the important role they had played in British Columbia's economy, even going so far as to argue that "If all the Chinese were withdrawn from the province, it would…paralyze all industries, and cause widespread ruin" (95). Yet, although such claims, especially those to the industry and diligence of the Chinese, are noted as positive traits, they were not brought forward as justification for leniency; rather, counterintuitively, these arguments were also used to support stricter border controls. This is because Chinese immigrants were constructed as a temporary solution to British Columbia's economic needs but not a permanently viable approach to settlement: "White labour would have been preferred, if steady and reliable men could have been found, but thus far this has not been the case; therefore the Chinese have been acceptable" (101). Thus, the solution that the Royal Commission ultimately settled upon was the restriction of immigration of Chinese workers and the further encouragement of European settlement.

Given the fact that many Chinese migrants were indentured workers hoping to escape poverty back home, the initial proposed solution was to make immigration as financially prohibitive as possible through the implementation of a $50 head tax. It should be noted that prior to the federal levy of a head tax in 1885, British Columbia's provincial government had attempted a similar policy in the 1870s; however, it was disallowed by the federal government after an outcry by Chinese merchants (Yee 29). The fact that Parliament subsequently passed its own head tax law in 1885 reveals that Chinese immigrants were regarded only as workers and not as persons: allowed to enter Canada only when there was a need for cheap labour, but not otherwise. However, the $50 head tax was evidently not sufficient as a financial deterrent for future migrants, as the federal government was compelled to raise it to $100 in 1900, and then

$500 in 1903; to put this into perspective, $500 was the equivalent of two years' wages at the time (14).

In addition, further restrictions were put in place by government bodies to closely curb the process of Chinese immigration, and monitor the growth of the burgeoning Chinese Canadian community itself. Those who lived in Canada, whether through immigration or as part of a second generation of Canadian-born Chinese, found their movements restricted and policed by the Canadian government; for instance, "[beginning] in 1910, Chinese migrants who wished to temporarily leave Canada had to register for a C.I.9 [Chinese head certificate] and provide, along with a range of biological and biometric information, an identification photograph" (Cho "Mass" 381). While the official intent of this system was to document which Chinese Canadians had already registered their exit with the government, and were thus eligible for re-entry into Canada (389), what is most notable here is that the certificates were, according to Cho, solely implemented to mark Chinese Canadians as temporary workers ineligible for citizenship: "The men, women, and children captured in these certificates are not immigrants. Their presence [including re-entry] was handled by the *Department of Trade and Commerce*. They are not settlers. Their presence was meant to be temporary" (388). As with the *Report of the Royal Commission* in 1885, the C.I.9 papers of this period indicate that Chinese Canadians were merely tolerated insofar as they proved beneficial to Canada's economy and settler colonial expansion: indispensable as workers, but undesirable as citizens.

By the 1920s, however, it was clear to the Canadian government that the head tax and C.I.9 system were insufficient to bar Chinese immigration. Thus, in 1923, Parliament ultimately passed the *Chinese Immigration Act*, often referred to as the Chinese Exclusion Act. To say that this act banned immigration from China to Canada altogether would be an oversimplification,

even if that was its intended purpose. In actuality, there were several exceptions to the ban: "diplomatic corps, children born in Canada to parents to Chinese race or descent, merchants, and students" were allowed entry into the country, thus clearly delineating a distinction between desirable and undesirable Chinese immigrants based on factors outside of race, such as level of education and socio-economic status (Li *Chinese* 35). The act also established a registry for all residents of Chinese descent, regardless of place of birth, and formalized the C.I.9 system, which placed restrictions upon travel out of the country (Cho "Mass" 385). Consequently, Chinese Canadians who wished to return to China to visit relatives, marry, etc., were required to both obtain official travel permits in the form of C.I.9 papers and return to Canada within two years lest their right for entry be forfeit (Li *Chinese* 35). All of these clauses within the Exclusion Act allowed the Canadian government to police its Chinese population, allowing entry to only a select few and placing constant surveillance upon the movements and the actions of those who were living here.

At the same time, not only were the movements of Chinese Canadians restricted, but their ability to lobby for better rights was curtailed as well. In the early years of the 20th century, provincial legislatures in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and British Columbia had passed laws disenfranchising their Chinese populations (Li *Chinese* 33). Being barred from provincial elections also prevented the Chinese in these provinces from voting in federal elections: a restriction that was further codified in 1920, when the *Dominion Elections Act* proclaimed that all voters across Canada must be "British subjects," thus disenfranchising all Chinese Canadians on racial grounds (34). However, in spite of their lack of access to voting and citizenship rights, the Chinese Canadians were not exempted from paying income tax, nor were they exempted from military conscription (34). The end results of anti-Chinese legislation were thus a severe

limitation of their rights as citizens, and the continuation of their exploitation as cheap sources of labour and as a marginalized population that could be taxed or oppressed without the means to protest their discriminatory treatment.

3.2 Chinese Responses to Exclusion: Chinatown Communities

In response to these pressures, many Chinese Canadians withdrew into ethnic enclaves and neighbourhoods where they could be surrounded by a relatively welcoming presence of their compatriots. These enclaves, called Chinatowns, emerged in many of Canada's major cities, and were predominantly peopled by Chinese immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants. Although the term "ethnic enclave" invokes images of segregation and ghettoization, the blame for which ought to be placed upon the oppressive institutionalized racism that the Chinese and other racialized minorities faced, I argue that the rise of Chinatowns and the resultant assertion of Chinese cultural norms is also an act of resistance and agency in the face of discrimination. Here, the Chinese were able to establish a support network for a broad variety of people, creating communal and social ties that transcended blood ties to make sure that those who were alone could also find family. These ties ensured the continuation of Chinese culture, which furthered the sense of belonging, albeit limited, that Chinatowns accorded to their residents.

One of the primary ways in which Chinese Canadians fostered community ties was through the various associations that developed within Chinatowns. These associations were oftentimes extensions of social networks that were already in place in China: clans and districts. Many early Chinese immigrants came from the same regions in southern China: a small area in comparison to the country as a whole, but incredibly diverse in its own right, with each area having its own distinctive spoken dialect. Thus, it made sense for migrant workers to initially

focus on creating social and business networks with others from the same regions (Li *Chinese* 78). The district associations that developed out of these relationships worked to both provide resources and services for members within the Chinese Canadian community and compile support such as remittances that could then be sent back to their home villages in China. As for the clan associations, these developed through extended kinship ties: Chinese society was patrilineal, and many people felt a connection with those who shared their surname, regardless of whether they were actually related by blood (78). Thus, in the Chinatowns, clan associations allowed individual migrant workers, who were separated from their families for an indefinite period of time, to have something akin to familial support.

It is important to note that during the Exclusion era, kinship ties between Chinese immigrants did not always follow direct lineages based upon birth or marriage. For instance, a practice that became common as a second generation of Chinese Canadians began to be born was the sale of their birth documents – which, while not granting them citizenship, did allow for free entry into Canada as one of the exceptions to exclusionary policy – to prospective immigrants within China (Djao 24). The transaction could take place undetected by immigration authorities, because the Canadian-born child could have died in infancy, in which case the parents simply did not register the child's death, or could have been sent back to China to be brought up by the grandparents or other relatives (24). Another possibility was the appropriation of identity, in which one potential immigrant assumed the identity of another who had returned to China from Canada and used the latter's C.I.9 certificate for "re-entry" into Canada (Cho "Mass" 395): a process that was facilitated by immigration officials' inability to develop a consistent method for Anglicizing Chinese names and recording personal information (389-392).

The majority of these “paper children” – Chinese immigrants coming to Canada under assumed names and identities – were boys and young men: whose families and villages continued to foster the dream of financial prosperity in North America and saw this as the only means to circumvent the restrictive immigration policies. There were also “paper daughters”: girls or young women sent abroad to provide wives for Chinese migrant workers who were either single or perpetually separated from their actual spouses back in China. The papers of the children born from these unions could then be sold in turn, and the cycle would continue. Ultimately, the sale of birth and residential papers proved to be beneficial for both parties: the Chinese who wished to immigrate to Canada, and the Chinese Canadians who wished to earn more money that could be mailed back to their ancestral towns and villages as remittances. However, the ready acceptance of “paper children” in Canada’s Chinatowns came at a price: those who had entered the country by such means were obligated to maintain their false identities for life or risk deportation for fraud by immigration authorities (Djao 65). It is fortunate, then, that they were accepted by their host Chinatown communities and the families of those whose papers they had purchased. The institution of the “paper children” reveals the importance of kinship-based ties and networks in the lives of Chinese Canadians during the Exclusion era, as they not only strengthened actual blood ties but provided adoptive “families” for those who did not have them.

Besides the district and clan associations, which were, unfortunately, often quite insular by nature due to their reliance upon regional or kinship ties, the Chinese immigrants adapted various charitable organizations and fraternities to provide communal assistance to each other. These groups were established to act upon the interests of Chinese communities as a whole and originated from similar broader organizations in China. For example, the Chinese Consolidated

Benevolent Association, founded in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1884, was designed to provide financial support and services to all the Chinese immigrants in the city, maintain social order in Chinatown and work on behalf of those who had fallen victim to lawsuits resulting from Canada's discriminatory laws (Li *Chinese* 81). Other organizations had more overt political ties, such as branches of the Freemasons and the Kuomintang (i.e., the Chinese Nationalist Party), which raised funds for various reformation movements and charitable causes overseas, such as the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the war effort against the Imperial Japanese Army (Yee 17). For the most part, the Freemasons and the Kuomintang were rivals in Canadian Chinatowns, as they competed for support towards their disparate political ends (80); however, they serve as examples of the many means by which Chinese immigrants not only generated and maintained social ties but retained connections to political affairs within China itself. Nevertheless, as much as institutions such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, the Freemasons, or the Kuomintang were designed to support entire Chinese Canadian communities, it would be unfair to say that they either wholly represented their constituents or that the Chinese Canadian public willingly followed their interests. In reality, a number of the local community leaders in these organizations and in Chinatowns overall were from the smaller and wealthier merchant class: aware of the discrimination faced by Chinese in Canada, but largely shielded from the day-to-day realities of the uneven labour market that resulted from exclusionary policies (Li *Chinese* 81).

The close social interaction between Chinese Canadians led to the preservation of Chinese languages within Chinatown communities. Chinese or bilingual newspapers were a common feature in Chinatown media, and were evidence of the persisting heritage language literacy within Chinese Canadian settlements (Chao 18). It was also common in Chinatowns for

benevolent associations to open heritage language schools for Canadian-born children, which they would attend in conjunction with their public schooling (Yee 31). In this way, the second generation of Chinese Canadians became fluent in both their heritage languages – the various dialects spoken by their immigrant parents – and Canada's official languages (Chao 18). This formed a group that came to see itself with an increasingly complex identity: both Chinese by ethnicity and Canadian by birth. The ultimate result was a paradigm shift within Canada's Chinatowns from a focus inwards or directed towards homeland affairs in China to a desire to assert their place as Canadian citizens.

3.3 Chinese Responses to Exclusion: Brokering Citizenship

Although withdrawal into ethnic enclaves like Chinatowns is the most popularly imagined and conceptualized response to Canada's discriminatory laws, there was from the beginning a concurrent need for Chinese immigrants and their descendants to interact with mainstream white Canadians for political, economic, or social purposes. Contrary to the image of the Chinese Canadians as an oppressed and victimized minority who only looked back towards China as their homeland in a perpetual sojourner state, historical evidence shows that they were actually the determinants of their own trajectories in this country and many sought to find belonging within Canadian society. Besides the aforementioned use of "paper children" to circumvent Canada's exclusionary laws, Chinese Canadians also used a variety of other means to demonstrate their desire to be accepted by the Euro-Canadian majority by demonstrating that they were, in fact, fit for citizenship and ought not to be discounted simply on grounds of their race.

One of the earliest methods that Chinese immigrant communities adopted was brokerage. Prominent members of the local Chinatowns, most notably in British Columbia, sought positions as interpreters between government officials and prospective immigrants; for many newcomers, who did not know English and were unfamiliar with Canadian law, the interpreter held a crucial degree of influence in their ability to pass through customs and successfully land in the country (Mar 16). Fortunately for many Chinese immigrants, the brokers were likely to work in their interests over the government's, as brokers received patronage from wealthy Chinese merchants who wished to keep the flow of people and goods between Asia and North America as open as possible in order to ensure their own profits (9-10). Not only that, but brokers found support from sympathetic Euro-Canadians who were opposed to the exclusionary laws. During the years in which the head tax was in effect, some interpreters attempted to help Chinese immigrants evade the tax by passing them off as members of the merchant class or as naturalized British subjects, who were exempt from the restrictions (24). In addition, well into the Exclusion era itself, Chinese brokers worked as legal interpreters for their communities. Although the exclusionary laws forbade them from becoming licensed lawyers that could independently represent clients in court, Mar claims that Chinese interpreters were able to oversee much of the logistical procedures that factored in a court case: preparing briefs, arranging monetary settlements, and interpreting between Chinese clients and Euro-Canadian lawyers (52). Thus, whether they primarily operated at the border or within Canada's legal and political network, bilingual brokers enabled many Chinese Canadians to circumvent the restrictions that had been placed upon them and granted them the agency and mobility that was ostensibly denied them.

In actual practice, however, brokers were not simply the heroes of the Chinese Canadian communities. As middlemen situated between the interests of the Canadian government and the

Chinese immigrants, they were in an understandably precarious position. On the one hand, the brokers' position of prestige and influence among Chinese Canadians relied upon their ability to aid their compatriots in navigating Canadian discriminatory laws to their benefit; yet, on the other hand, their ability to circumvent policy was only possible through maintaining positive relations with the very government they subverted (Mar 61). In addition, the brokers' reputation within Chinatown communities was also not entirely positive. There was a common acknowledgement among Chinese immigrants that brokers were affiliated with different institutional and political factions, leading to power struggles throughout their period of efficacy. For instance, large Canadian corporations like the CPR and provincial and federal political parties formed partnerships with Chinese brokers in order to raise funds for their own operations, while the brokers in turn sought out potential Euro-Canadian allies who could lobby for better treatment of Chinese Canadians (47). In addition, the brokers' loyalties to wealthier Chinatown businessmen, merchants and organizational leaders were known to the rest of the community, so they were not fully trusted to act on the workers' best interests; thus, it was not uncommon for Chinese women and labourers to instead seek legal counsel from Euro-Canadian missionaries and social workers, whom they believed could counteract conventional Chinese patriarchal and hierarchical norms (67). Thus, although legal interpreters and brokers took on a prominent role in Chinese-Euro relations in Canada prior to and during the Exclusion era, their attempts to negotiate fair treatment for Chinese Canadians were, for the most part, unsuccessful, if that was their intent at all.

Brokerage was not, however, the only means by which Chinese Canadians resisted discriminatory policies in the years leading up to and during the Exclusion era. In the school year from 1922 to 1923, for example, Chinese children and their parents in Victoria conducted a

strike against attempts to force them into segregated schools. Prior to the 1920s, it was common for Chinese students to be relegated to separate classes and schools in the lower grades, especially for young immigrants who possessed lower levels of proficiency in English than their Euro-Canadian and Canadian-born Chinese peers (Mar 72). By 1922, pressure for educators to extend the segregation policy to apply to all Chinese children regardless of their grade level or academic performance met strong opposition from Chinese Canadian community members who saw the proposed arrangement as a permanent barrier to their upward social mobility. As second-generation Chinese children had previously been educated alongside their peers for at least part of their schooling, it was possible for them to become fluent in English and become exposed to mainstream Canadian culture: an outcome that was desirable for youth who perceived themselves as assimilated Chinese Canadians (73-74). Formal segregation, therefore, would deny the children of Chinese immigrants opportunities for integration, thus further marginalizing the community as a whole. Although the protest movement was ultimately unsuccessful insofar as the strikers did not make any gains in lessening segregationist policies, it did prevent the further expansion of these policies; by the time students returned to school in 1923, the educational system in Victoria was *status quo ante bellum*.

However, the greatest significance of the 1922-1923 school boycott was in its populism. One of the unforeseen outcomes of Canada's exclusionary immigration policy was that the Chinese population was becoming increasingly Canadianized by virtue of the fact that they have remained in the country for many years, sometimes even marrying and having children. Thus, through exposure, occasionally from birth or early childhood, to Canada's educational, social, political, and economic systems, many Chinese no longer understood themselves as a culturally distinctive Others that should withdraw into ethnic enclaves or invest more in homeland politics

than Canadian affairs. Instead, Canadian-born Chinese began to take interest in economic and political issues within Canada itself, including the developing labour movements, and started to protest against further anti-Chinese legislation, including failed attempts to stop the Exclusion Act from being passed in 1923 (Mar 83-84). There was also a shift away from conventional systems of Chinatown leadership as a younger generation of brokers came to power: one with a desire to represent the Chinese Canadian community's fight for recognition and citizenship, and valued that over the need to placate the merchants who had previously held sway (86-87).

For these new brokers and Chinese community leaders, priority was placed on the cultivation of an improved public image in comparison with the dominant Yellow Peril discourse. The goal was to present Chinese Canadians as people who deserved the right of citizenship by providing a counter-discourse to popular beliefs that they were inassimilable cultural and economic threats. Opportunity arose in 1924 when a sociologist from the University of Chicago, Robert Park, began an ethnographic study on Chinese American and Canadian communities along the Pacific coast with the intention of defining once and for all the place of Asians in North American racialized ideology: were they more like blacks or whites (Mar 89)? In order to conduct this study, Park and his associates needed access to Chinatown communities, particularly individuals whom they could interview as part of their data sample – for that, they sought out the Chinese brokers in the cities they would study. Brokers not only participated as interviewees themselves, making up two thirds of the entire data corpus in British Columbia, but acted as interpreters and contacts for other meetings between the sociologists and Chinatown residents (90). Fully aware of their position of influence in this endeavour, both brokers and Chinese community leaders grasped the opportunity to refute the racial stereotypes and

prejudices that had been directed against them: that the Chinese were foreign Others with no interest in assimilating into mainstream society, nor the ability to do so.

This endeavour on the part of the participants in Park's study was as crucial as it was difficult. In reality, the sojourner mentality – where Chinese immigrants to Canada still saw China as their homeland and their stay as only temporary and economically motivated – still held true for much of the Chinatown population (Mar 90). However, community leaders believed that Park and his partner in the Canadian portion of the study, Winifred Raushenbush, could not be allowed to discover this fact, lest their findings lead to a further cementing of Canadian exclusionary policies. Therefore, Chinatown leaders made active efforts to cultivate a more favourable image of Chinese immigrant communities by deliberately selecting and nominating as participants more acculturated bilingual members of the Chinatown community such as brokers, representatives from the Chinese Benevolent Association, and second-generation youth who were raised and educated in Canada (93). The hope was that these more assimilated community members would comprise the majority of the data sample and outweigh the less acclimated sojourner labourers who were the initial target for analysis (95). Naturally, participants' performances of assimilation and desire for recognition were met with incredulity at first, but they eventually became proof that even if many Chinese immigrants had not successfully integrated into mainstream Canadian society, such acculturation was in fact possible. Although Park's study did not bring about any direct legislative changes, the Chinese Canadians' self-fashioned image as a community both wanting to and capable of assimilating did succeed as a foil to the popular Yellow Peril stereotype (105): one that I would argue shows the role that the Chinese Canadian community itself played in the formation of the positive stereotypes later associated with the Model Minority discourse.

By the 1930s, the older style of brokerage as a means to maintain a steady flow of Chinese immigration had almost entirely faded in favour of a grassroots fight for citizenship rights. Workers stranded by both the Exclusion Act and the Depression, during which time government economic policy overtly called employers to prioritize hiring Euro-Canadians above all others, no longer trusted a group of middlemen that appeared to have their own political gains at heart. Instead, Chinese Canadians turned to labour movements and unions as the means to negotiate for better treatment (Mar 112). This period was also marked by war between China and Japan, leading to massive destruction in the immigrants' hometowns and violence and hardship for their loved ones. However, whereas the United States repealed its own exclusionary policy against Chinese immigration as a gesture of goodwill to the Chinese government in 1943 (114), Chinese Canadians noted that Canadian government policy did not shift in their favour, and even placed stronger restrictions on their remittances to China (115). These policy changes led to an increasing disillusionment among the Chinese Canadian population.

Instead of relying on brokers and community leaders as mediators, Chinese Canadian workers initiated their own manners of protest. First of all, they formed their own labour movements, even going on strike in 1943, to lobby for better income tax deductions on behalf of their dependents in China (Mar 118). Prior to this point, the increased desperation on the part of Chinese immigrants who wished to send greater remittances to China in order to support relatives in war-torn regions had been met with government and public resistance, as many believed that Chinese claims of dependents in need were fraudulent and saw their agitations during times of war as selfish (120-121). Ultimately, Chinese Canadian workers were able to unionize in their own right and, from that position, forge alliances with employers in the

woodworking and shipbuilding industries, who recognized the need for Chinese employees to keep business running in wartime (124-125).

Another protest movement from the Second World War concerned military enlistment: a divisive issue within Chinese Canadian communities. For some Chinese men, the desire to contribute to a war against Japanese aggression was imperative; those who volunteered for military service were also driven by the hope that their sacrifices for Canada would earn them respect that could be used as leverage to lobby for a repeal of discriminatory government policies (Mar 129). However, many Chinese Canadians refused to enlist, even when conscription was enacted, because they believed that they should not render service to a state that continued to disenfranchise and marginalize them (128). Ultimately, after the conclusion of the War, it was those who had enlisted who rose in public consciousness, and the Exclusion Act was finally repealed in 1947.

3.4 Beginnings of the Model Minority? Interpellation and the Performance of Assimilability

The actions of the Chinese Canadian community during the Exclusion era as discussed by scholars like Chao, Li, and Yee can easily be interpreted as a dogged endurance in the face of discrimination. Certainly, the withdrawal into ethnic enclaves and businesses as well as the persistence in maintaining the culture and language from one generation to the next speak to the community's survival despite racialized marginalization. In addition, the narrative of the assimilating ethnic exemplified by both the University of Chicago study and the active participation in the war effort point to a display of loyalty to Canada that, according to some scholars like Mar, was not in vain. In 1947, the Canadian government repealed the Exclusion Act

and opened the political franchise to Chinese immigrants and their descendants, allowing them the rights of citizenship.

However, it is important to note that the reality was not so clear-cut. Note, for instance, that several of the tenets that are later associated with the Model Minority discourse – that Chinese Canadians are industrious, temperate, and submissive – exist alongside the negative stereotypes that paint them as economic, social, and cultural threats. From the history described in this chapter, there are two simultaneous forces at work in the Chinese Canadian community's interactions with the Euro-Canadian majority: interpellation and performance. Interpellation, here, I mean in the Althusserian sense:

> [Ideology] 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey! You there!'
>
> Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (and not someone else). (Althusser 174, emphasis original)

The act of ascription, in which members of the Euro-Canadian majority seek to label and define the Chinese immigrants in their midst for good or ill, thus functions as a form of interpellation. By juxtaposing the thoughts and opinions expressed in the Royal Commission of 1885 with the various means by which Chinese Canadian communities coped with the overt and covert exclusion they faced, we can see that there is a complex relationship at play: one which entails the simultaneous construction of Chinese immigrants as either threats or assets to mainstream Canadian society, and a subsequent performance of desirability within the community itself.

Thus, I argue that these two trajectories – an emphasis on hard work and patient endurance, coupled with a desire for involvement in the Canadian state enterprise – do more than just combine to create a more positive image of Chinese Canadians, in contrast to the Yellow Peril discourse that had underlined the discriminatory and exclusionist policies of the period. Rather, they combine into a powerful performance of identity that I argue is the first hint at the Model Minority discourse to come. Chinese Canadians during the Exclusion Era, in facing the outside world, enacted a form of self-censorship, as evidenced by the Chicago Study. Park's informants glossed over the real harsh effects of exclusionary immigration policy – the separation of families, the relegation of even Canadian-born Chinese as resident aliens, the sense of rootlessness and subsequent insularity of a community that is left to fend for itself – in favour of a constructed image of the racialized innocent who desires assimilation but cannot achieve it. In so doing, the Chinatown communities of the Exclusion Era, which were painted by the Yellow Peril discourse as an inassimilable blight on towns and cities that tried to construct themselves as entirely white, are reinvented, both by prominent members of the Chinese Canadian community and their allies, as a liminal space that takes a foreign immigrant Other and transforms it into a valuable potential Canadian subject.

This, however, leads to the question as to the extent to which Chinese Canadian communities, in their response to the discrimination they faced, were active agents in their own image. On the one hand, the persistent exploitation of legal loopholes via "paper children" and other fraudulent practices reveal the community's determination not to be outdone by the laws of a nation-state that refused to acknowledge their economic contributions. Yet, simultaneously, the alliances forged by legal brokers and the performance of assimilation presented by many Canadian-educated second-generation immigrants show a willingness to conform with a

subjectivity that arose from an act of interpellation from the Euro-Canadian majority. The behaviour of the Chinese Canadian brokers during Park's study during the 1920s is the most overt example of this complexity. The selection of second-generation Chinese Canadian youth, who had already been educated in English and were fighting for greater citizenship rights, to form the core data sample of the study is a sign of proactivity and agency from within the community, as it sought to harness an ethnographic study to reshape its own perceived image. However, the traits that these Chinese Canadian brokers emphasized are also ones that have formed a significant component of the ways in which white Canadians have also attempted to cushion the blow of anti-Orientalist sentiment and legal policy, as shown in the *Report of the Royal Commission* of 1885.

Consequently, any claim that the Model Minority image began during the Exclusion Era must be understood with this performance in mind. I do not mean to suggest artifice through my use of the word "performance;" for the Chinese who did adopt this discourse, the desire to be recognized as Canadian citizens through recognition of their ability to contribute to the mainstream society was genuine. However, this was, nonetheless, a deliberately constructed image that has roots both within the Chinese Canadian community struggling against exclusion and discrimination and the very Euro-Canadian majority they sought to resist. During the Exclusion Era, then, the Chinese Canadian community exercised their agency through this appropriation of the imagined Chinese immigrant subject that was placed over them.

Chapter 4: Chinatown Narratives: Giving Voice to the Silenced

Nowhere is the constructed and performative nature of Chinese Canadian cultural identity during the Exclusion Era more prevalent than in the life writing that refers to this period. As previously discussed, many Chinese immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants sought to present themselves as valid candidates for citizenship, whether that be through the promotion of a complaisantly submissive image or through active participation in labour and political lobbyist movements. Given this pattern, it is interesting to note that Chinese life writing in reference to the Exclusion Era openly addresses the harsh realities of the Chinese immigration experience at this point in Canadian history: refusing to shy away from condemnations of the strict discriminatory laws of the period or from the physical, emotional, and social harms that affected families and communities as a result.

Although numerous Chinese-language publications such as Chinatown community newspapers existed during the Exclusion Era[9], there is a notable dearth of English-language life writing in the conventional sense – i.e. autobiographies, memoirs, journals, etc. – from this time period. According to Lien Chao in her history of Chinese Canadian writing, this lack was not because of an isolationist silence on the Chinese's part; rather, it was because attempts to communicate with the mainstream Euro-Canadian society fell upon an unreceptive audience (20). Such is the nature of systemic racism: without a broad interest in minority voices, there is little opportunity for their concerns to be heard. However, this is not to say that early Chinese Canadian perspectives faded into obscurity in the years before and during the Exclusion Era. Even though few authors attempted to address a mainstream Canadian audience, Chinese

[9] I am not including such Chinese-language texts in this study, however, as they fall outside of my focus on the means through which Chinese Canadians used life writing in English to present their stories to a mainstream Euro-Canadian audience.

immigrants communicated their concerns with each other: an internal rather than external audience. Later, with the repeal of the Exclusion Act and the gradual emergence of more openly tolerant government policies and social ideologies, including multiculturalism policy, Chinese Canadians who had either experienced the Exclusion Era themselves or were descended from those who did began to publish (auto)biographical accounts as a means to raise awareness of the real-life consequences of racial discrimination. The latter in particular, authors whose works recount their parents' and grandparents' stories, function as examples of postmemory as defined by Marianne Hirsch:

> Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right….To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. (106-107)

Thus, Chinatown narratives like the two I have selected for this study – Wayson Choy's childhood memoir, *Paper Shadows*, and Denise Chong's multigenerational (auto)biography, *The Concubine's Children* – count as examples of Exclusion Era life writing. Although Choy's own experiences of the Exclusion Era are limited to his childhood, and Chong was born after the revocation of the *Chinese Exclusion Act* in 1947, both authors remark upon the ways in which their own personal and cultural identities have been shaped by Chinatown elders in their parents' and grandparents' generations who experienced racism and exclusion firsthand. These authors' own stories, then, have been, to use Hirsch's words, "dominated," "displaced, even evacuated"

by the traumas of those who have come before them; in order to tell their own stories, then, Choy and Chong must address those of their predecessors first.

In sum, this chapter focuses on two broad categories: life writing contemporaneous to the time preceding and including the Exclusion Era; and accounts of survivors from that era narrated after the fact by their descendants. I will thus begin with one of the few sources from the period: brief messages and poems written on the walls of the building where Chinese immigrants were quarantined while their applications for entry into Canada – including the payment of the head tax – were processed. I will also draw on transcribed interviews of Exclusion Era survivors which were conducted and published after the fact in two major collections: *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community* and *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*. Then, I will focus on two of the most noteworthy examples of what have been termed Chinatown narratives: *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood* by Wayson Choy and *The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided* by Denise Chong. All three types of texts reveal the changing attitudes towards Chinese Canadian history and Canadian immigration and government policy over the course of the 20th century, reflecting societal shifts in ideology in the process as the voices of Chinese Canadians became increasingly accepted by mainstream audiences over time. They also demonstrate the complex processes and struggles that members of the Chinese Canadian community underwent in order to both retain some sort of psychic tie to their place and culture of origin and meet the requirements for citizenship and belonging set before them by the Euro-Canadian majority.

4.1 Surprisingly Unwelcome: The Writing on the Wall

Where publication is lacking, sometimes archaeology delivers. This is the case in regards to Chinese Canadian life writing during the period in which the head tax was in effect. At the time, prospective Chinese immigrants to Canada were quarantined in the Immigration Building of Victoria, British Columbia, while their cases for entry were investigated by government authorities and, where applicable, payment of the head tax and the certification thereof were arranged. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the actual immigration process itself was perilous and unpredictable: Chinese immigrants were either permitted to stay or turned away at the whim of the immigration officers, and much depended on arrivals providing the "correct" responses to government questioning. During this interim period, after disembarking from the ships that had brought them across the Pacific and before knowing whether they were allowed to progress any further, the Chinese were confined to quarantine cells within the Immigration Building. There, caught in this liminal space, a number of these men wrote their thoughts onto the walls of the rooms where they were kept, which were later discovered when the Immigration Building was demolished in 1977 (D.C. Lai "Prison" 16). Written in Chinese in traditional verse, the wall writings were subsequently translated into English by David Chenyuan Lai and published in *The Asianadian*, a magazine by Asian Canadian authors, in 1980.

The writings left by the quarantined Chinese men reveal the despondence, disillusionment, and frustration that they felt in response to the racist treatment they received on the Canadian border. This came particularly as a shock to them because, back home in China, North America had been constructed in popular imagination as a land of riches and opportunity: the so-called "Gold Mountain" (D.C. Lai "Prison" 18). Migrating abroad was not just a personal decision, but an investment made by entire families and communities. For instance, one man wrote, "I went abroad on my brother's advice" (18), while another, adopting the imagined voice

of his wife, wrote, “You [the author] are fortunate to have an elder brother to pay your head tax. Always remember your gratitude to him” (19). In both of these cases, the writers lament that their loved ones’ hard-earned financial and emotional investments have been spent in vain when it became clear that the most they, as Chinese immigrants to Canada, could do was menial physical labour (18). The quarantined immigrants also expressed extreme homesickness and heartbreak as they thought of family members in their home villages who were still desperately awaiting word of their safe arrival in Canada (18).

These wall writings were not simply personal lamentations, however. Notably, several of the inscriptions were clearly written for a reading audience, with salutations such as “Fellow countrymen,” “My dear fellow countrymen,” etc. A number of the writers, realizing that the glowing mythologized image of the Gold Mountain had fostered their desire to immigrate, but had not adequately prepared them to face racism and a host society that wanted to prevent them from coming in, now exhorted other prospective immigrants to take notice. Along with calls not to heed the same foolhardy advice to migrate – some even remarking that it would be better to simply return back home (D.C. Lai “Prison” 19) – one entry stands out for its forethought. In this example, the author appears to understand that anti-Oriental racism in Canada stems from a broader pattern of racialization: “After you are financially successful, return to your motherland and help build your country strong and rich” (18). This comment speaks to the international politics of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during which China was subject to a host of unfair treaties and sanctions at the hands of Western imperial nations; if China was denigrated and marginalized on a global scale by a white hegemony, then it should be no surprise that Chinese immigrants to Canada would be marginalized and humiliated on the same terms. Thus, this particular writer argues that the best way to counteract anti-Chinese racism was to make

China itself worthy of respect by Western nations (18): fostering a politically and economically stronger China would lead to Chinese immigrants being viewed as valuable financial assets in Canada instead of a mass of poor labourers who could not contribute to the country. This, interestingly, parallels the claims made by those within the white Canadian majority who spoke up in defence of the Chinese immigrants during the Royal Commission of 1885: the Chinese immigrant subject was reduced to that of a labourer, but it was a labourer to whom the Canadian economy and industrial development were deeply indebted.

Ultimately, because many of the wall writings were anonymous, individual authors could not be traced; it is difficult to assess if any of the authors discussed here were ultimately allowed to enter Canada upon payment of the head tax, or if their applications were rejected and they were turned away. However, those who did successfully make it to Canada to live and work were now arguably prepared for the difficult and dangerous work for low wages that many Chinese immigrants were subjected to, as well as other aspects of the Yellow Peril discourse that was prevalent at the time. These early Chinese Canadians, though, never lost sight of the Gold Mountain mythology, disillusioned as they were by their experiences in quarantine: the small amounts they earned in Canada equated grand sums in their home villages, thus spurring more families, villages and towns to send able-bodied men abroad as a means to escape poverty. Thus, the imagined Gold Mountain was continually created, shattered, and resurrected, in a process fueled by the immigrants who had survived the despondence of quarantine and whose views towards their harsh treatment, too, began to evolve over time. By the latter half of the 20th century, many Chinese Canadians who had entered the country under such harsh decisions lamented the racism, but did not regret their choice to migrate.

4.2 Choosing to Come, Choosing to Stay: First-Person Accounts of Exclusion

One of the first written genres to become popular with Chinese Canadian writers after the implementation of official multiculturalism policy was anthology, which permits multiple people to speak simultaneously. In this way, reading audiences are privy to multiple perspectives, ideally from both men and women, of a variety of ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Although the numerous texts within an anthology could be of a variety of genres and forms, I have selected two examples that focus on personal histories: *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community* and *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*. Neither of these books is an anthology in the traditional sense: i.e., individually written submissions compiled together by an editor for publication as a collection (Chao 35). While they each have external editors who are in charge of organizing individual texts for publication – Evelyn Huang and Jeffrey Laurence for the former and The Women's Book Committee and Chinese Canadian National Council for the latter – the chapters are not comprised of short pieces written by contributors, but are instead transcribed oral histories. The contributors in these two books are specific representatives from the Chinese Canadian population, who are interviewed by the editors and whose responses are transcribed in print.

Chinese Canadians was published in 1992, and features interviews with 23 individuals who have achieved social, economic, or political prominence in both Chinese Canadian and mainstream Canadian society. The interview subjects have a broad range of immigration histories and experiences; however, in this chapter, I will focus on the accounts of those who either immigrated to Canada or were born here prior to the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1947: a total of 8 individuals. For some who were born in China and migrated to Canada for work, there was a struggle to enter the country. For example, Sam Eng recalls that his first attempt was unsuccessful: "In 1905, when I was thirteen, I came over. When I came they sent me back; I

didn't have the right papers. I was illegal. They sent me back to Hong Kong" (Huang 14). Eng's father had previously arrived in Canada as a migrant worker and was subject to the head tax. He later secured the proper documentation for his son to join him a year after the initial rejection (14); although Eng only says that an unknown individual helped his father to procure the papers, it is possible that his case is an example of the intervention of a broker, as described in Chapter 3. While Eng, like many others, was required to pay a $500 head tax at the time of his arrival to Canada, some immigrants, like Lee Bick, who came in 1911, were exempt due to their merchant status (22). Already, the interviews included in *Chinese Canadians* address both what is considered the typical Chinese immigration experience of the 20th century, according to the wall writings previously discussed in this chapter, and an example of an exception to the norm.

Another common theme featured in the oral life histories given by the individuals in *Chinese Canadians* is the discriminatory policies that were put in place, including the Exclusion Act itself. Dock Yip, who was born in Canada in 1906, recounts his frustration as the Act's passing became imminent, recalling that even those Chinese Canadians who had attained higher education and could be considered integrated into mainstream society were powerless to intervene: "My brother was studying medicine at Queen's University. He went to Ottawa to protest. He couldn't do anything either. He was in the gallery at the House of Commons and just watched as they passed the Act" (Huang 5). From this passage, we could see that it was not that the Chinese Canadians did not protest Exclusion, nor were they forbidden from doing so; rather, their pleas were not answered by a government determined to legislate its racialized policies. As previously noted in my discussion of the Royal Commission in Chapter 3, any investigation or legal process in the enactment of these restrictive and discriminatory policies was simply a formality preceding a foregone conclusion within the federal government; and even those who

defended the Chinese immigrants' significant role as workers spoke in favour of restricting further numbers from arriving in favour of encouraging European immigration instead (*Report* 101). Thus, once the Act was officially enacted, many Chinese saw no point but to grudgingly submit. However, submission did not equate agreement, nor did the disappearance of active protest mean that the Chinese Canadian community did not engage in acts of passive resistance: for instance, they took to calling July 1, Dominion Day or Canada Day to the rest of the population, Humiliation Day, as that was when Exclusion fully came into effect.

However, as with their experiences at the border, the contributors in *Chinese Canadians* also had varying views on the Exclusion Act. Some, like Lee Bick, did not allow the Act to prevent them from continuing with their lives; he was one of the many Chinese Canadians to use the "paper children" system to be reunited with his wife (Huang 25). His son, Bob, also remarks that parents saw education as a means to attain upward social mobility, and encouraged their children to excel in school in order to rise above the discrimination (50). Another interviewee, Jean Lumb, remembers that many Chinese immigrants during the Exclusion Era chose to cut their losses and return to China, rather than stay in a country that discriminated against them (33). Others, like Sam Eng, took what appears to have been a minority view among Chinese Canadians: that the Exclusion Act was necessary. In his eyes, albeit possibly in hindsight as he does not address his actual thoughts from that time, the Canadian government was acting upon its obligation to ensure that the population could be properly employed and provided for during a time of economic difficulty; when asked by the interviewer why the policy only applied to the Chinese, he replies, "[The Chinese] came over to make money to support the family, so when they don't have a job to give them so what's the use of coming over?" (18).

A response like Eng's is even more noticeable in light of the context in which the interviews took place. At the time of *Chinese Canadians*' writing, there was a redress movement taking place that demanded reparations from the federal government to Chinese immigrants who had been subjected to the head tax. The interviewer was particularly interested in the opinions of contributors who had either paid the tax themselves or had parents or spouses who did. However, while a number of the interviewees saw the head tax and the Exclusion Act as racist, and even actively lobbied for the repeal of the latter after the Second World War, opinions on the former were surprisingly complaisant. Although several respondents or their parents had been forced to pay the head tax and also lived with the realities of exclusionary immigrant policy, a number were against official reparations. It was not that these people were blind to the racism within the government policies; rather, they now refused to take part in a narrative that victimized and made martyrs of them. For instance, one respondent, Roy Mah, who was born in Canada to parents who had immigrated under the head tax rules, associated the demand for reparations with the blind idealism of younger generations who "don't understand Canadian history" (Huang 77). He argued that the Chinese who immigrated to Canada prior to and during the Exclusion Era did so by choice and out of a desire for their own financial gain: "They knew it was a racist society. They walked in with their eyes wide open; they weren't bamboozled. Even though it was a racist society, it was still better than staying behind in China" (77). A number of the other respondents reacted in a similar manner, asserting that they or their ancestors made the conscious decision to migrate to Canada, and that, therefore, they were not victims of oppression but free subjects acting upon their own agency and free will.

This sentiment is echoed in the interviewees' desires for their children and grandchildren in Canada, as well as younger generations of Chinese Canadians in general. For many

immigrants, the hope was for future Chinese Canadians to have a dual identity: both retaining their ancestral culture and language, and actively participating in Canadian society. In a way, the impetus for this comes from the interviewers' own experiences. With the Exclusion Act limiting Chinese immigration, particularly for women and children, many young second-generation Chinese Canadians had few peers like themselves during their childhoods; instead, they would socialize with Caucasian classmates and neighbours (Huang 5). This socialization brought about a gradual integration into mainstream Canadian society, as evidenced by the interviewees' political activism: enlisting in the military during World War II, lobbying for the repeal of the Exclusion Act, volunteering in community organizations, etc. The contributors to *Chinese Canadians* who lived during the Exclusion Era thus present themselves as examples of people who strongly identify themselves as Canadian, particularly in contrast to more recent immigrants who do not share the same history as them (46). For instance, in reference to the wave of immigration from Hong Kong during the 1980s and 1990s, at the time when the anthology was compiled, Jean Lumb commented:

> It's been good for Canada to have these newcomers [due to their affluence and capital], but I'm afraid there might be a backlash. There's going to be too much money put into areas where possibly it's going to affect people's jobs and positions….I think earlier my main concern was to be accepted into this Canada…being a Canadian. And I feel we succeeded without really pushing to get where we are. But today all of a sudden, we have these new people who are ready to push. They say they'll push for everything they want. They don't care. They'll speak up and there's not that same type of getting along. (46)

What this statement implies is a division between desirable and undesirable traits from Chinese immigrants. Although Lumb does not use such terminology herself, there is a notable contrast between what she understands to be the actions of Chinese Canadians who had experienced exclusion and those who had not: those who had lived through overt discrimination focused on assimilation and acceptance, and those who were coming to Canada later were focused on

striving proactively toward their economic and social goals. In this case, from the perspective of Lumb and several other contributors to *Chinese Canadians*, the prescriptive way to overcome racism appears to be a performance of desirable and assimilable traits: the same tactic that Frank Wu (*Yellow* 44) and Roy Miki (209-210) have remarked upon as part of the foundation for the Model Minority discourse.

One thing that must be considered, then, is how *Chinese Canadians* strongly echoes the 1924 Chicago study described in Chapter 3. As with the brokers and their cohorts who acted as informants in Park's study (Mar 91), the respondents in *Chinese Canadians* clearly present an image of both themselves and their compatriots as hybridized Canadian citizens. In this, there is a marked parallel not only with Park's Chicago study, but also the 1885 Royal Commission before it, where a combination of quietly submissive industry and a desire to assimilate and conform to Euro-Canadian social and cultural norms become marks of "model" Chinese Canadianness. This is brought about through the convergence of several factors. First of all, the editors for *Chinese Canadians* selected interviewees who, regardless of the point in history in which they came to Canada, have attained some semblance of a Model Minority status by the time the interviews took place: financially successful careers, positions of influence in the Canadian government, etc. That they selected this as the main body of their sample suggests that the editors wished to construct a specific image of Chinese Canadians as a whole: one that emphasized both cultural hybridity and adaptation to Canadian societal norms, and strong national pride in Canada and its government. The accounts given in *Chinese Canadians* are thus a performance: conforming to a specific narrative arc that comprises an experience of racism, a drive to succeed either academically or economically, and an assertion of belonging within Canadian society that is contingent upon that same success.

In comparison with *Chinese Canadians*, *Jin Guo* is a particularly valuable source for Exclusion Era histories, because while the majority of Chinese Canadians at the time were men, this book focuses entirely on women. The book also stands out within its genre: the anthologized collection of oral histories, as its editors chose not to reveal their own names, instead calling themselves The Women's Book Committee of the Chinese Canadian National Council; according to Eva C. Karpinski, "they symbolically assert that their contribution is of no greater importance than those of the women included in the volume" ("Multicultural" 118). Forty contributors were interviewed in total, eighteen of whom resided in Canada at some point during the Exclusion Era. Their words were transcribed without modification, with the exception of those who gave their statements in various Chinese languages, which were subsequently translated into English by the editors: this, according to Lien Chao, "keeps the women's personal voices alive and their individual identities intact" (92). Thus, as compared with *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community*, in which respondents asked to answer specific questions by the interviewers, it is the women themselves who direct the conversations and stories that have been published in *Jin Guo*. This reveals that there is no monolithic Chinese Canadian experience; instead, the events in individuals' lives and their interpretations thereof vary based on their particular contexts and personalities.

In light of the directness of their testimonies, the women featured in *Jin Guo* had unique experiences outside of the circumstances discussed hitherto in this study. As a result of the discriminatory immigration policies in Canada during the Exclusion Era, in actuality, the majority of those women who were residing in Canada during that period were second-generation Chinese Canadians. Some, like Wong Sin, were born in Canada but were brought back to China where they spent their childhood or formative years (*Jin Guo* 41). Many, however,

remained in Canada throughout the Exclusion Era and had to navigate the complex racial dynamics of the first half of the 20th century. For instance, while many Chinese Canadians faced racial discrimination and, on occasion, even violence, Gretta Grant reveals that she did not experience racism as a child growing up in London, Ontario during the 1920s and 1930s, as the Chinese community in the town was deemed too small to be an economic threat and, thus, was generally accepted by the majority (62). In contrast, Jean Lumb, who was interviewed for both *Chinese Canadians* and *Jin Guo*, describes the racialized violence her Nanaimo, British Columbia, neighbourhood experienced at the hands of mischief-makers during Halloween, as well as her frustration at being sent to a segregated school (50). As it turned out, however, the racism Lumb experienced also led her to question the divisions that emerged between Chinese Canadian and Japanese Canadian communities during the Second World War: “We did not pay much attention to the boycott against the Japanese since we knew what it felt like to be the victims of segregation and discrimination” (50). Lumb would later become one of the main lobbyists who appealed to Parliament for the revocation of the Exclusion Act.

Several women also contributed to their family businesses: usually restaurants, laundries or grocery stores that Chinese immigrants could open with little capital or investment (50). Chinese Canadians had to find work wherever it was available, particularly during the Depression, when competition increased for limited employment opportunities and make-work initiatives and government assistance favoured the Euro-Canadian majority. Family-operated businesses were thus a common recourse during the Exclusion Era. To maintain them, Chinese immigrant women and their daughters could not expect to relegate themselves to the home, as would have been the case in China (Djao 179-182); instead, all hands were needed to generate income for the family as a whole, and the women’s contributions serve as evidence of their

strength and resourcefulness in times of adversity. This is in sharp contrast to the image of Chinese immigrant women held by the Euro-Canadian majority, as described in the Royal Commission of 1885: "Their wives here…are their second wives, and chiefly prostitutes; these living and bringing up their families whose children are known to be illegitimate" (*Report* 45). However, what is marked here as prostitution and immorality appears to simply be a refusal to conform to late 19th and early 20th century standards of femininity by Euro-Canadian standards, which associated morality and femininity with monogamy and domesticity. In actuality, these women, as could be seen from their own narratives in *Jin Guo* and also in Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, which I will also discuss in detail in this chapter, were seeking to contribute to the income and remittances that their husbands could send back to China.

For the Canadian-born women in *Jin Guo*, one of the concerns that arose growing up during the Exclusion Era was the lack of socialization into Chinese culture. Families were scarce in Chinatown communities, and some of the interviewees lived in smaller towns where there were few Chinese residents altogether. These small-town Chinese Canadians, according to Lily Cho in her study *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada*, are an essential component of the Chinese diasporic experience, despite the fact that much of the scholarship surrounding Chinese Canadian histories tends to focus on the urban Chinatowns (7). They provide an example of the multiplicity of Chinese Canadian communities, as well as the struggle to negotiate Chinese and Canadian identities in relative isolation (50). Thus, while Jean Lumb, who grew up in Chinatowns in both Nanaimo and Vancouver, British Columbia, spoke of the close-knit Chinese community that developed to combat the overt and systemic racism they faced (*Jin Guo* 52), for those outside of the urban Chinatowns, there was no large community to sustain and preserve the language and cultural practices (Cho *Eating* 50).

Even after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed in 1947, the isolation faced by many small-town Chinese Canadians meant that their circumstances continued to evoke those of the more urban communities who had lost ties with friends and family as a result of discriminatory policies. We see this tension in the interviews recorded in *Jin Guo*: a number of the small-town women interviewed admitted to struggling with the dearth of Chinese Canadians in their surrounding communities. Although these interviewees often immigrated to Canada after the repeal of the Exclusion Act, their circumstances offer a facsimile-like glimpse into the lives and experiences of those who have been cut off from their fellow Chinese Canadians. For example, one respondent, Kim[10], who immigrated to a small town in Atlantic Canada from China in 1957, bemoaned the price this isolation brought to her community, which was primarily made up of restauranteurs: "What's so good about our life in this country? We've lost our traditions and customs – and you can't do anything about it" (71). She also remarked upon the desire within the second generation – those born into these small towns with very little opportunity for socialization into a Chinese community – to assimilate to the Euro-Canadian culture. According to Kim, this socialization into a stereotypically white set of customs and norms had a detrimental effect on her relationship with her children: "The *to sang* [Canadian-born] here talk back to us with a 'why', and say 'I can make my own decisions.' They argue with you until the end. Their children are all Western. No, I wouldn't want to live with my children. The children wouldn't want me anyway" (72).

Another sign of this socialization is the fact that several of the women interviewed were in exogamous marriages, or were open to their children pursuing interracial marriages. For example, two of the participants, Roberta Mercier and Janet Trifa, were sisters born in the small

[10] No surname was provided; according to the editors, Kim was a pseudonym, as the respondent did not want her real name to appear in the book.

town of Leask, Saskatchewan in the 1950s, with theirs being the only Chinese family in the community (*Jin Guo* 73). Roberta in particular commented extensively on her childhood desire to assimilate into mainstream Canadian society, to the point where she imagined herself being racially marginalized when, in hindsight, "[the other children] were actually accepting me for what I was" (77). Later, as an adult, she married a Euro-Canadian man, whom she admired for his decision to stay by her side despite his parents' opposition to an interracial relationship (78). It must be emphasized, however, that stories like those of Roberta Mercier and Janet Trifa are only possible because they came of age and married at time when Chinese immigrants and their descendants had the franchise and, thus, the full rights of citizenship. In sharp contrast to these accounts of acceptance by a younger generation of Canadians, the memoir *Incorrigible* by Velma Demerson[11], which details her imprisonment in 1939 due to her interracial relationship with a Chinese man, reveals the state of affairs as they truly were during the Exclusion Era. After her release and the birth of her Eurasian child, she marries her Chinese lover; yet, in doing so, Demerson's Canadian citizenship is revoked, as Canadian law at the time automatically accorded women their husband's citizenship status (138-9, 168).

However, although the ready acceptance of interracial and exogamous marriages as depicted in *Jin Guo* can be read as a sign of growing racial tolerance and a turn away from purist conceptualizations of miscegenation (Wu *Yellow* 263), it still needs to be regarded critically due to the power dynamics within the relationship. According to Frank Wu, interracial relationships are a manifestation of racial and gender-based hierarchies. First of all, an individual's racial and/or ethnic origin has a direct impact on his/her desirability as a potential spouse: "For most

[11] Although *Incorrigible* is a piece of life writing that reveals the anti-Orientalist miscegenation laws during the Exclusion Era, it has not been included in my primary data corpus as it was written by a Euro-Canadian author as opposed to a Chinese-Canadian. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I am using *Incorrigible* more as a supplementary source.

Asian Americans, a white spouse ranks higher than a black spouse. Whites and blacks may both be 'foreign devils,' but whites are the more sought-after foreign devils" (273). Secondly, Wu notes that in many cases, it is an Asian American or Canadian woman who marries a Euro-American or Canadian man in such instances; the combined gender and racial dynamics, which privilege whiteness and maleness, thus lead to a situation where, "Asian women are supposed to integrate themselves into white society. Seldom are the white men bothered about integrating into Asian society" (276). What this all means is that for the Chinese Canadian women in *Jin Guo* who resided in communities with few of their compatriots around them, interracial marriage was one means to find connection and belonging within the mainstream Euro-Canadian society around them.

The interviews in both *Chinese Canadians* and *Jin Guo* serve as a testament to the tenacity of Chinese immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries once they have passed the immigration requirements. It is worth noting that in spite of the racism they faced, many still chose to come and to stay in Canada. This should not be taken as a justification for racism, as though a willingness to endure abuse on the part of the victim makes it acceptable for the abuser. Rather, we can see that as much as they were aware of the discrimination and oppression they faced, early Chinese Canadians refused to see themselves as passive victims. While many resisted through maintaining linguistic and cultural ties to their perceived homeland, the interviewees in these two collections tell a different story: one where they insist on their right to Canadianness even as it was denied them.

4.3 Growing Up Chinese, Growing Up Canadian: The Chinatown Narrative

Of course, such stories of willingness to integrate into Canadian society and ultimate success in doing so should also be viewed critically. It is, for instance, possible to argue that the desire to assimilate and attain Canadian status stems from internalized racism or simple pragmatism. Also, there is no denying that for many Chinese immigrants to Canada during this period, disappointment, loneliness and homesickness reigned in their hearts and minds. Examples of these individuals and their stories can be found in the numerous Chinatown memoirs that make up a significant part of the Chinese Canadian literary canon. These texts offer reading audiences a glimpse into the lives and experiences of Chinese immigrants who inhabited the ethnic enclaves and Chinatowns in many of Canada's major urban centres prior to and during the Exclusion Era. Since they are often longer works by a single author, narratives here are more detailed and complex compared to those in anthologies. Also, unlike anthologies and the compiled interviews discussed in the previous section, there is no intermediary here in the form of an editor or interviewer, who may have invested interests in portraying Chinese Canadian communities in a more positive light for mainstream readers – particularly since they were published after the formal introduction of multicultural policy and the popular rise of the Model Minority discourse.

Instead, the Chinatown memoirs offer close examinations of life under racial discrimination and the complex conflicts that arose as a result. For the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on two examples of such narratives. The first is Wayson Choy's *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*, which details his experiences growing up in Vancouver's Chinatown during the 1930s and 1940s. The second is Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided*, in which the author focuses on the stories of her mother

and maternal grandmother, also in Vancouver's Chinatown. Both texts were published in the 1990s, during what Julie Rak has termed the "memoir boom", during which:

> [Memoirs] by people who were not celebrities or political figures began to sell in large numbers. Sometimes they even outsold trade fiction. Some memoirists began to be treated like major novelists as they and their books were integrated into the media industries. Some even became celebrities themselves. (9)

Two main features of Rak's conceptualization of the "memoir boom" are particularly pertinent to my discussion of *Paper Shadows* and *The Concubine's Children* as sample pieces of Chinese Canadian life writing in a multicultural context. The first is the aforementioned shift in the memoir genre from a limited focus upon "celebrities or political figures" as authors, to a broader market demand from readers for the narratives and life experiences of a diverse group of individuals (8-9). In a Canadian context, as previously explained in Chapter 2, this boom also includes a growing interest in the narratives and histories of ethnocultural minorities in the wake of multiculturalism policy and its emphasis on the sharing and exchange of information and experiences across ethnic and cultural lines. Secondly, Rak argues that a memoir is not solely focused upon its creator's own personal experience, but also includes "a writing of one's own life *in relation to others, to events, or to the construction of some kind of public identity* related to a popular issue of the day" (12, emphasis mine). This, too, is a characteristic shared by both *Paper Shadows* and *The Concubine's Children*, as the narratives in these memoirs include not only the authors' own stories, but those of their ancestors as well. Combined, these two accounts reveal the insular nature of Chinese ethnic enclaves during the Exclusion Era, and the various means through which individuals and families attempted to navigate belonging in both the Chinese and broader Canadian communities.

For Wayson Choy, Vancouver's Chinatown during the Great Depression and the Second World War was an isolated community, filled with distrust of the outside world. To Chinese women and their young children during the Exclusion Era, Euro-Canadian strangers represented a fearsome presence that would invade the home to sift for "paper" immigrants to deport, thereby separating people who had already sacrificed everything to come to Canada. Thus, one of his earliest memories was of how his mother would lock the front door while his father was away, after which they would both secret themselves away to peer at strangers outside through the windows without being noticed in turn (Choy 20-21). In addition, for the Chinatown elders who brought with them to Canada their beliefs in a spiritual world inhabited by ghosts, Chinese ghosts were viewed as benevolent tragic beings trying to find their way back home after dying abroad, while white ghosts were a malicious presence that haunted buildings and brought misfortune (31-32). Choy, hearing stories from Chinese folklore throughout his childhood, used this lens to view the world around him: violent arguments between his parents, likely caused by his mother's gambling or his father's stresses at work, were, in his child's mind, caused by his father being possessed by a white man's ghost that haunted their house (30-31, 38). Like the Chinese elders around him, belief that Chinatown was an insular community besieged by malevolent forces helped him to rationalize the anger and frustration that he witnessed; ghosts were easier to deal with than people who made them feel unwelcome.

However, throughout his childhood, Choy also felt a constant struggle between identifying with what he perceived to be Chinese and Canadian cultural norms and practices. For him as a child, this was expressed through his hobbies and entertainment choices. Choy loved the local Cantonese opera in his early childhood years, and gained a reputation within his neighbourhood for his own impromptu performances; his mother encouraged this interest and

explained to him the events occurring on stage, changing the endings of the tragic pieces to foster a hope in her son that good would triumph over evil (56). The heroism of the protagonists of the Cantonese opera was matched, however, by the cowboys in the films that Choy watched at the local cinema. Captivated both by the stories in the movies and the ready availability of cowboy-themed merchandise in the toy stores, Choy and his boyhood peers soon aspired to be like the men they saw on screen (81).

It is telling that in both of these childhood pursuits, Choy engaged in imaginative roleplay: reimagining and reconstructing himself as first a hero from the Cantonese opera, and then as a white American cowboy. These re-enactments inevitably involved dressing up in costume; like many of his second-generation Chinese Canadian peers, Choy appropriated the signature components of cowboy dress: "the latest cap gun, a boy's holster and a cowboy hat, maybe even a belt with Indian beading" (82). What is notable here, however, is the ways in which Choy, at this point in his memoir, contrasts the two forms of playacting; these were not simply childish games, but parallels to his actual struggle between Chinese and Canadian cultural norms and practices. Thus, for instance, Choy comments that it was easier to roleplay as a cowboy than as a Cantonese opera hero, because the former was readily accepted by the Euro-Canadian majority, and thus more easily accessed and consumed: "You could never buy opera stuff. Never see the South Wind General's pennants on store counters, never pick up the headdress with the quivering peacock feathers from any store display" (81). What matters here is not the availability of materials for Choy's costumes; this accessibility translated to other cultural practices as well, including language and, by extension, identity. Thus, as he grew older, Choy began to equate whiteness with goodness and heroism. English, with its roman alphabet, also

appeared more comprehensible than the multitude of Chinese ideographs; it was thus an easier communicative tool.

Throughout his attempts to assimilate into mainstream Canadian culture, however, Choy encountered a counter-discourse from his mother and many older Chinese immigrants: that no matter what, he was Chinese. He was taught to respect elders according to Confucian norms that encouraged the youth to defer to authority figures with more accumulated knowledge and life experience (Beckett and Zhang 244-245); and therefore spent much of his leisure time as a companion to various “uncles”: Chinese men stranded in Canada with families overseas (Choy 89, 92). In exchange for his company, these men would teach him “proper” Chinese manners, lest Choy grow up ignorant of traditional social norms (96). In addition, when he was eight years old, Choy began attending an extracurricular Chinese school along with other second-generation children in Vancouver’s Chinatown; however, frustrated with the complexity of writing thousands of different Chinese characters with ink and a brush, he soon began to avoid his classes before ultimately dropping out entirely (219). The Chinese school was not only an academic or cultural institution, but a political one as well; newly immigrated teachers expected their charges to hold patriotic fervor for China, and failed to understand the children’s struggles between a Chinese and Canadian identity (233-234). Throughout this training, whether at home, out and about in Chinatown, or at the Chinese school, Choy was taught a perceived authentic Chineseness and was expected to conform to it: two performances instead of one.

Like many of his fellow Canadian-born Chinese peers, however, Choy was a *mo-no*. A Cantonese term that literally meant “brainless,” *mo-no* in Vancouver’s Chinatown during the Exclusion Era referred to an individual, usually second-generation, who was ignorant of traditional Chinese customs and values (78). Ostensibly and publicly, when given the choice, the

young Choy identified himself as Canadian (238). However, this was not a straightforward declaration; in the same instance where he called himself Canadian, Choy reflected that this choice stemmed from his difficulties learning the Chinese language: "If I could not read or write the language, if I could not learn to speak the Sam Yup Cantonese dialect that was being taught, how could I ever be Chinese?" (238). Although some of his older relatives insisted that he was simply not trying hard enough, and even suggested sending him back to China to learn authentic Chineseness, the family ultimately agreed that Choy was more Canadian than Chinese by virtue of being local-born: preferring English over Chinese, then, was only the natural outcome (241). The young Wayson Choy was, in many ways, simply adopting the side of a hyphenated identity that he felt the most attainable for himself: "I was turning into a banana: yellow on the outside and white on the inside" (84). He may have been Chinese by blood, but the performance he ultimately chose was one of white Canadianness.

Ultimately, Choy's family moves away from Vancouver's Chinatown to Belleville, Ontario in his eleventh year, before ultimately settling in Toronto, where he continued his education and began his career as a writer. *Paper Shadows* was written as a means for Choy to recall his childhood: written in response to his discovery at the age of fifty-six that he was, in fact, adopted (278). His parents, a childless couple, had adopted him, the son of an actor in the local Cantonese opera company, in order to continue their family line (282). They and other Chinatown elders had not anticipated that Choy himself would discover the truth of his birth; secret pasts and identities were a common feature of Chinatown life during the Exclusion Era, when discriminatory policies forced many immigrants to adopt alternate names via the paper child system, along with the histories attached to those identities (289, 297). Choy had attempted

to discover more about his family's history at various points in his adult life, but his requests were met with silence (313).

Although the revelation of his adoption becomes the breakthrough with which Choy was finally able to ask his family about their past in greater detail, the memoir concludes with a sense of resigned wonder at the complexities of history and the layers of secrecy that continued to imbue Vancouver's Chinatown in the years after the Exclusion Era. In her analysis of *Paper Shadows*, Larissa Lai argues that Choy's narrative is ultimately one focused upon doubled names and identities: not only had Choy been passed off as his parents' biological son when he was in fact adopted, but his adopted mother, too, was a "paper" immigrant who had taken on the identity of a Chinese Canadian woman who had died whilst living back in China (*Slanting* 55). Thus, the question is raised not only concerning the nature of truth and falsehood – real and perceived experience in Chinese Canadian communities during the Exclusion Era – but also about whether the difference between the two actually matters. At a time in Canadian racial and immigration history in which Chinese immigrants and their descendants were denied the rights of citizenship and barred from full participation in Canadian society, it is perhaps possible that the truth of one's existence bears less weight than the performed persona, particularly when the latter is what is actually lived. The falsity of Choy's mother's papers, although not true to her actual personal history, was what granted her a legitimate presence within Canadian society; likewise, Choy's adoption and his naming as a member of the Choy family, despite having no blood relation to them, gave him a place of belonging within Vancouver's Chinatown community that he might not have had access to as a child born out of wedlock (55). Through his articulation of his childhood and his subsequent search for his own family history and roots, as well as his conclusion that implies the impossibility of finding all the answers, Choy thus

emphasizes both the insularity and the closeness of the Chinatown communities that developed during the Exclusion Era.

While Wayson Choy's memoir focused upon his own childhood experiences, Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children* is predominantly focused on the stories of ancestors. In particular, the book focuses on her maternal grandmother, the eponymous concubine; and her mother, who was born and raised in British Columbia during the Exclusion Era. Chong's grandmother, May-ying, had been married to her grandfather, a Chinese immigrant to Canada, as a concubine in 1924; she was a paper daughter: a girl who appropriated the identity of a Canadian-born Chinese girl whose family had sold her birth certificate (Chong 10). According to Chong, this marriage was meant to be a compensatory measure. Separated from his wife in China, Chong's grandfather, Chan Sum, desired companionship and sons to continue the family line. Although he could have returned to China temporarily to marry a second wife, his ultimate goal was to accumulate a large stock of wealth before permanently returning to his village a wealthy man; passage for the journey cost considerably more than the price for a "paper daughter" spouse (22). Thus, *The Concubine's Children* begins not with Chong's own story, but May-ying's: the narrative follows her on her journey to a new life and marriage in Canada, her struggles to make ends meet, and the tragic consequences of the choices she made along the way.

What is particularly noteworthy about Chong's decision to focus on May-ying as the protagonist throughout much of *The Concubine's Children* is the ways in which the resulting multigenerational (auto)biography functions as a herstory of the Exclusion Era. According to the form of Confucian tradition in place at the time *The Concubine's Children* takes place[12], not only

[12] This idealization of female submission within a patriarchal society only became widely accepted as part of Confucian philosophy in the Ming Dynasty, some fourteen hundred years after Confucius's own lifetime (Djao 179).

were women expected to be "strong, chaste, prudent, and wise" as well as subservient to men (Djao 179-180), but concubines were secondary to the wives as heads of the domestic realm (Chao 108). However, both among China's own working class and much of the diaspora, these ideals were oftentimes unattainable due to matters of economic necessity:

> It can be reasonably argued that both before and after emigration, many Chinese women were not likely to resemble the confined, retiring, and submissive female without a mind of her own. The "tradition" for the Chinese women overseas would, therefore, depart from the ideal culture, although some men and women in Chinese communities overseas undoubtedly could claim to have kept to the ideal culture. (Djao 182)

Thus, contrary to the imagined picture of Chinese women as docile domestics under a strong patriarchal system, Chong reveals May-ying to have been a formidable woman: one who, by acting as her husband's de facto wife in Canada, becomes, for the branch of the family that takes root and is born in Canada, the true matriarch of the family (Chao 108).

As a child, Chong was intimidated by her grandmother's presence, preferring the image preserved in old photographs in which May-ying had been a beautiful young woman (Chong 4); only when she was older did Chong understand how her grandmother became the person she was. With her knowledge of the reputation that immigrants to North America had among the villages in southern China as men of wealth and prosperity, May-ying expected that her husband would be well-renowned in Vancouver's Chinatown. She was quickly disappointed, however, when she was forced to work in a local teahouse in order to pay the debt Chan Sum had incurred in order to afford her false papers and passage (26). Within the Chinatown community, working outside the home, while oftentimes a necessary concession in order to supplement the family income, was not what respectable women and girls did; and waiting tables in restaurants and

---

However, for our intents and purposes, it is still relevant as a standard for Chinese femininity due to the fact that the events discussed in this dissertation occur from the late Qing Dynasty onward – and, henceforth, well after this particular more has become normalized as an aspirational ideal.

teahouses was just a step above prostitution in many people's eyes (26). Fortunately, May-ying soon adjusted to this part of her new life, and even began to revel in the fine clothes and makeup that she and her fellow waitresses adopted to attract more customers (28). In addition, her strong will and extroverted personality, both of which were outside the norms of traditional Chinese femininity (Djao 179-180), worked in her favour as she quickly became a favourite conversation and gambling partner with the patrons.

Yet, according to Chong, May-ying was still ultimately bound by the patriarchal constraints of traditional Chinese culture, the standards of which were upheld in Chinatown circles wherever possible. Although the large male-to-female ratio and the general poverty among Chinese as a racialized minority compelled young women like May-ying to work outside of the home (Djao 182), they were still subject to the same gendered expectations as their counterparts in China would have been: not only were their professions deemed unrespectable, but their incomes belonged entirely to their fathers and husbands (Chong 29). In May-ying's case, she was mostly ignored by her husband, whose affections were reserved for his wife in China, and much of her income was put towards remittances sent to Chan Sam's hometown (31). On top of her waitressing income, Chan Sam also ran his own dry goods store, which doubled as a popular gaming spot for the neighbourhood Chinese. However, May-ying proved to be more successful than her husband, both in playing mah-jong and in conversing with the men who frequented the shop; and Chan Sam's attempts to enter into May-ying's social circle and assert his role as the public head of the household often degenerated into heated arguments when she refused to defer to him (37).

Unfortunately, May-ying failed to provide Chan Sam with the son that he wanted. Instead, she bore him three daughters: the older two were left behind in China after the entire

family returned to Chan Sam's hometown to pay their respects to his first wife; and the youngest, Hing, spent her childhood in Canada. This third daughter was Denise Chong's mother, and was conceived in China but born in Canada at May-ying's insistence. The fact that this return coincided with the Depression in the 1930s meant that Chan Sam was unable to find work when the shingle mills where he had previously been employed either closed down or prioritized whites in their hiring policies (49-50). The resulting financial stress, coupled with disappointment that Hing was not the longed-for son that May-ying had believed she would be, drove Chan Sam and May-ying further apart; also, while she enjoyed the simpler life of the Chinatown in Nanaimo, where they settled in this second migration, he preferred Vancouver's thriving community and familiarity (58). In attempts to compensate for his own unhappiness, Chan Sam further distanced himself from his family in Canada, focusing almost all of his attention on the wife and children still in China and on saving enough to go back with May-ying and Hing in the future (59). Finally, unable to bear the separation and homesickness any longer, he returned to China alone when Hing was five years old (67).

It is at this point that the contrasts between China and Canada during the Exclusion Era are vividly brought to life in *The Concubine's Children*. Chong alternates between these two locations as the separated family continues to develop: while Chan Sam travels back and forth between China and Canada numerous times in the narrative, his two wives and the divided children stay firmly in their separate spheres. Huangbo, the Chinese wife; her two stepdaughters, Ping and Nan; and the son she finally bore to Chan Sam, Yuen, witnessed first great prosperity as a result of Chan Sam's Canadian wealth; then the deprivations of the Second World War, which Nan did not survive; and finally a complete reversal of fortunes when the Communist Party of China came into power in 1949. Meanwhile, May-ying continued to work in various

teahouses and restaurants, raising Hing and Gok-leng, a boy she adopted as her own son. Separated from Chan Sam in all but name, she also made a series of male acquaintances, with one particular friend, Guen, becoming her alleged lover and surrogate father for the children. In actuality, according to Chong, what May-ying most desired for herself was independence in a Chinese Canadian community that was otherwise intensely patriarchal (123-124). Her supposedly loose behaviour – frequenting teahouses and gambling dens, freely associating with men, living in rooming houses usually occupied by "bachelor men," adopting masculine dress, among other things – were a means of self-assertion that she, May-ying, was a strong and capable woman who should be respected in her own right: as a person separate from her role as Chan Sam's concubine.

However, while *The Concubine's Children* contains the division and reunion of family members as a significant theme, as evidenced by the literal splitting of the family as Chinese and Canadian branches, it is important to consider the broader political implications of such a narrative choice. On the one hand, Chong is presenting a broader, more thorough image of her family's history by constructing these two parallel narratives, one of which she could only figure out by visiting her grandparents' hometown in China with her mother (Chao 104). In so doing, Chong discovers the seminal role that May-ying, as the concubine based in Canada, played as one of the primary breadwinners for both sides of the divide: "Only by recovering what is deleted in Chan Sam's letters and what is never recorded in any other written documents, can Chong and her mother [Hing] reclaim the historical invisibility of May-ying as the breadwinner of Chan Sam's two families" (112). On the other hand, this seemingly fundamental division of the family across space can also inadvertently perpetuate an Orientalist dichotomy that paints the Chinese branch of the family as inherently passive and dependent upon the more active members

of the Canadian branch (Diehl 112). May-ying, as the career-driven, fiercely independent breadwinner working within the "Western" Canadian context is contrasted with Huangbo, the principal wife in China, whose traditional role as the mistress of the family is undermined by her relative passivity. As Diehl argues, "May-ying's personal progress is predicated upon the effacement of her Chinese counterpart, Huangbo….While Huangbo is presented as 'plain, quiet, [and] unassuming' (Chong 23), May-ying is described as challenging the patriarchal status quo with her 'quick temper' and 'driven' personality (9, 70)" (113). Here, as with Wayson Choy's childhood memoir, we see the contrast between stereotypically Chinese and Canadian modes of being; by emphasizing May-ying as the dominant figure in *The Concubine's Children*, Chong presents her grandmother as a sympathetic – perhaps even proto-feminist – character for her mainstream Canadian readership.

As for Chong's mother, Hing, she became increasingly frustrated at her family's circumstances as she grew up. Not only did she have to act as May-ying's interpreter when they took valuables to the pawnbroker in order to obtain loans to make ends meet (128-129), but she started to become aware of her peculiar situation in comparison to other Chinese Canadian immigrant families. Unlike many of her fellow Chinese Canadian peers, Hing and May-ying continued to live in rooming houses, one of the few accommodations they could afford; thus, Hing felt a deep sense of inferiority not only in relation to the mainstream society, which was arguably better off economically compared to the Chinese in general, but also in comparison with other Chinese children (127). Therefore, Hing took refuge in her own education. A highly intelligent child, she excelled in both the English public school and the local Chinese school, finding approval and acceptance from her teachers that she lacked from May-ying, who was often too focused on her own downward spiral of poverty and depression to pay her children

much heed (129). Although May-ying and Hing's circumstances improved with both Guen's assistance and, ultimately, reconciliation between May-ying and Chan Sam, Hing remained cautious and fearful that her mother's condition would regress in the future.

Unable to trust in her family any longer, Hing, called Winnie by the outside world, invested her energy in education. With the end of the Second World War and the gradual acceptance of Chinese Canadians as citizens in both government policy and popular imagination, she chose to attend an academic secondary school with hopes of a future university education and a career as a doctor (153). Unfortunately, like many other Chinese and racialized Canadians, her aspirations were premature. While it was true that the situation for Chinese immigrants and their descendants was improving, particularly after the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1947, the long term effects of racism meant that systemic barriers continued to exist. Not only were universities and employers reluctant to accept racialized applicants, many older Chinese Canadians saw little value in higher education for their children (160); they had become so accustomed to being denied opportunities that they saw the younger generation's dreams as hopelessly impractical. Realizing that pursuing a university degree would not help her family out of poverty, Hing finally made the painful decision to withdraw from the academic secondary school and enroll in a secretarial course instead (163). When commitments to her family made even this option impossible, she then applied to a resident nursing program, where she was the only Chinese student to gain admission (166). Ultimately, however, Hing quit the nursing program as well, when she fell in love with and married John Chong, Denise Chong's father, in 1950 (180).

The Concubine's Children continues on to elaborate upon Hing's married life, Denise Chong's own childhood, and a final reunion between the Chinese and Canadian branches of the

family that had been separated so many years ago. However, I choose to focus on May-ying's married experience and Hing's coming of age in particular because they took place during the Exclusion Era, in accordance with the theme for this chapter. From their stories, it is clear that life for Chinese Canadians in the first half of the 20th century was immensely difficult due to the government's discriminatory policy. Women like May-ying found themselves stranded in a foreign land and unable to fulfill their dreams and aspirations for a better life; along with their spouses, the wealth that was promised to them upon migrating to Canada could only be seen by the Chinese relatives who received remittances. They were torn between conflicting standards for femininity: the Confucian ideal that, for May-ying, was impossible to attain if she sought to make a career for herself; and the brazen extroversion and business acumen that came to mark Chinese immigrant women as loose in the eyes of outside observers. As for Canadian-born children like Hing, a desire to escape from the stigma of racialization was seemingly possible only in theory. Despite the fact that Chinese Canadians were finally enfranchised and allowed the rights of citizens after the conclusion of the Second World War, despite the fact that Canada was the only home these children had ever known, and despite all the efforts young Chinese Canadians like Hing made in order to be fully accepted into Canadian society, opportunities for upward mobility were still few and far between.

4.4 Coming Around Full Circle

Nonetheless, it was the Canadian-born Chinese like Wayson Choy and Hing who became the first to witness positive changes in the perception and reception of Chinese immigrants and their families. Placing the experiences of the many writers, characters and contributors in the texts discussed in this chapter together, a pattern of enchantment and disenchantment emerges. The first generations of Chinese immigrants to Canada, like Chan Sam in *The Concubine's*

Children, dreamt of financial prosperity and security for their families and hometowns. However, they were quickly faced with the reality of attempting to enter a country and society that refused to welcome them. Although the writings on the wall in the Immigration Building in Victoria reveal that many immigrants bemoaned the injustice of their circumstances, like the early immigrants interviewed for *Chinese Canadians*, they were determined to survive to the best of their ability. Chan Sam and others like him continued to work and strive for a better future: no longer for themselves, but in the form of remittances that could save their communities and loved ones back in China. Although these early Chinese immigrants became martyrs to the mythologized Gold Mountain, in hindsight, many believed that the suffering was not in vain.

As for the second-generation children of immigrants like Chan Sam, May-ying and Wayson Choy's biological and adopted parents, in addition to many of the women interviewed in *Jin Guo*, childhood was a continual struggle to negotiate and perform multiple identities. On the one hand, many experienced the racism that their elders endured, particularly in urban areas with significant Chinese minorities. On the other hand, they were, to use Choy's words, the *mo-no*: permanently disconnected from their parents' pasts by virtue of never having seen China for themselves. For children like Wayson Choy and Hing, it seemed better to identify themselves as Canadian, to the extent that the limitations placed upon them would allow: consuming mainstream popular culture and excelling in English public schools were both means by which children tried to fit in as best they could. Yet they, too, found rejection when their efforts never made them "Canadian enough" to truly find educational or career success. The Canadian-born generation, however, was not like their parents; instead of viewing their marginalization as an acceptable payment for their choice to come to Canada, they began to strive towards greater

acceptance. It is this generation, as described in Chapter 3, which began to lobby for reforms in government policy, and actively cultivate an image of both themselves and their ancestors as desirable Canadian citizens by virtue of their assimilability, perseverance, hard work and family- and community-centredness. As will be seen in the next chapter, both of these actions fuelled the development of the Model Minority discourse in conjunction with broadening immigration policies and the burgeoning multiculturalism policy in Canada. By the 1990s, when Choy and Chong published their memoirs and when the interviews that led to the formation of *Chinese Canadians* and *Jin Guo* took place, this same second generation of Chinese Canadians who were directly impacted by the Exclusion Act could reclaim their personal and family histories and present them to a mainstream audience that was now clamouring to listen.

Chapter 5: Opening Policy and the Rise of the Model Minority Discourse

Asian Canadians are smart. Asian Canadians are hard-working. Asian Canadians are studious. Asian Canadians are obedient. Asian Canadians are, in a word, successful.

All of the statements above are stereotypes about Asian Canadians and, by extension, Asian Americans that emerge from the Model Minority discourse. Emerging in the second half of the 20th century in correlation with the Civil Rights Movement and an increasingly open immigration policy in both Canada and the United States, the Model Minority discourse has become one of the most prominent imaginings of Asian immigrants and their descendants. In Canada in particular, the rise of the Model Minority as the dominant discourse through which the government and the public majority came to understand Asian Canadians occurred alongside the repeal of the Exclusion Act in 1947, the implementation of a points system to determine worthy candidates for immigration and the removal of overt racial bias in 1967, and the official establishment of multiculturalism policy in 1971. All of these developments in government policy and popular consciousness suggest that the position for Asian Canadians, including Chinese Canadians, has improved considerably from the Yellow Peril discourse that led to exclusion and legally sanctioned discrimination.

Such an assertion is, of course, an oversimplification. Like Canada's multiculturalist discourse itself, the Model Minority discourse has been subject to intense scholarly debate and scrutiny from its beginnings. However, in order to lay the foundation for discussions of its criticisms, this chapter will focus on the development of the mythologized Model Minority as a means of imagining Asian immigrants and their descendants in North America. Thus, I will first

continue my historical discussion from Chapter 3, by examining the changing social, cultural and political tide in Canada after the conclusion of the Second World War as reflected in its racial and immigration policies. Then, I will analyze the Model Minority discourse itself in greater detail: both what it represents in its American and Canadian contexts and how it came to supersede, although not entirely replace, the Yellow Peril discourse before it. In both instances, I argue that both loosening immigration policy and the Model Minority rhetoric, although ultimately created by the government and mainstream Canadian society, had significant Chinese Canadian involvement. The repeal of the Exclusion Act was, among other factors, the result of grassroots lobbying by Canadian-born Chinese. Similarly, although the Model Minority discourse took on a separate life of its own during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the original concept stemmed from Asian Canadian attempts to assert their rightful places as citizens in a country that had long excluded them by re-creating themselves as the ideal racialized subject.

5.1 "Open" Doors: Repealing Exclusion and the Points System

After banning Chinese immigration to Canada for over twenty years, and placing various legal restrictions on them for several decades prior, the federal government finally formally repealed the Exclusion Act in 1947. For the first time since the head tax was implemented in 1885, naturalized Chinese Canadians could sponsor their spouses and children for entry into Canada (Poy 13-14). Although this still paled in comparison to the rights granted to other ethnic groups in Canada, for whom anyone could sponsor their relatives, it was for many Chinese Canadians a marked improvement. If nothing else, the possibility for naturalization meant that Chinese immigrants and their descendants could finally qualify for legal citizenship in Canada; previously, even those who were Canadian-born were officially classified as "resident aliens," a

clearly visible sign of their marginalization. In addition, the possibility of sponsoring one's dependants held vast appeal for Chinese Canadians, as this entailed a legal means of immigration that was more secure than previous clandestine arrangements such as the sale of birth certificates to allow "paper children" access into the country; under the Exclusion Act, those who had immigrated to Canada in such a manner lived in constant fear of discovery and deportation. Subsequent changes to policy allowed Chinese Canadians to also sponsor their parents in 1954, and then for landed immigrants to sponsor family members in 1957 (31). All of these changes in the space of a decade led to a significant increase in the rate of Chinese immigration to Canada, as well as the growth of what would have otherwise been a rapidly assimilating Chinese Canadian population.

Repealing the Exclusion Act was the work of many different parties, not least of which was lobbyists from within the Chinese Canadian community itself. During and after the Second World War, there had been considerable debate among Chinese Canadians in regards to military enlistment and other forms of participation in the war effort. Most notably, the central point of contention was whether a disenfranchised people should display any form of loyalty to a state that openly opposed them: on the one hand, some Chinese decided that they would not serve in the military unless they were granted citizenship rights; others, however, saw enlistment itself as an opportunity to negotiate belonging through its overt performative patriotism. By the end of the Second World War, the presence of Chinese Canadian veterans and their role in active service became incorporated into a broader narrative of Allied victory; for mainstream Euro-Canadians, the Chinese who had fought alongside them were no longer inscrutable aliens, but fellow comrades in the fight against Fascist imperialism (Mar 130).

The ideological debates following the Second World War were also a contributing factor to the repeal of exclusionary policies against the Chinese. Although the war began as a purely political matter – Canada supporting the British Commonwealth against the Axis Powers – by its conclusion, the horrific effects of legislated racism as evidenced by the Holocaust meant that the Allies could no longer retain their own discriminatory policies if they wished to maintain their moral victory (Poy 12-13). In addition, the postwar period saw the transition from traditional empires to economic superpowers, also stemming from a worldwide aversion to the actions of both Nazi Germany and Imperialist Japan. The latter half of the 1940s witnessed several decolonization projects, as well as the creation of the United Nations and universalized human rights standards, with international sanction for violations becoming possible (13). Finally, the rise of Communism in China meant that those who had benefitted from North American immigration and remittances in the past were now regarded as capitalist enemies of the state and exploiters of the proletariat; their properties were seized by the government and many desired to flee the political and social persecution that resulted from the new ideological environment (12). These global developments deeply changed Canada's stance towards its racialized minorities: both by raising public and even international awareness of grassroots lobbyist protests against discrimination, and by pressuring the Canadian government to do away with its racially exclusionist policies in order to maintain its standing as a former Allied nation and a liberal democracy of the Cold War.

However, repealing the Exclusion Act, while an outward sign of a turn away from racialized immigration policies, has also been criticized as a token gesture from the Canadian government. Note, for instance, that then Prime Minister Mackenzie King was adamant that immigration reforms would not diversify the racial composition of Canada's population: if new

legislation now made it possible for Chinese to immigrate to Canada, preference would still be given to European applicants (Poy 13). These biases are particularly apparent in policies pertaining to immigrant labour: although Europeans and Americans were encouraged to enter Canada as workers, for the Chinese, only spouses and dependent children of naturalized citizens were permitted entry, with an eventual expansion that allowed for aged parents as well (Li *Chinese* 92). This suggests that while Chinese family reunification was now legal, an increased presence of Chinese in the workforce was still unacceptable and they were still regarded as unwanted competition for jobs – despite the fact that Canada was facing a labour shortage immediately following the Second World War. In this, little had changed since the Royal Commission of 1885: even when workers were needed and desired, the Canadian government preferred that they be white.

In addition, xenophobia continued to negatively impact popular opinion concerning China and the Chinese. Although the mainstream public regarded the Chinese more sympathetically during the Second World War itself, this was not due to a greater openness or acceptance of racial diversity. Instead, the Chinese Canadians' rise in favour came at the price of the Japanese Canadians: China was seen as Canada's ally against Japan, and Chinese Canadians gained sympathy and compassion by proxy (Li *Chinese* 90). Thus, while many Chinese Canadians worked to establish themselves as loyal partners of Euro-Canadians in the war effort, Japanese Canadians were suspected of disloyalty simply on the basis of their ethnic origin: Japanese immigrants and their Canadian-born descendants, even into the third generation, had their property seized by the government and were sent to internment camps away from British Columbia's urban coastal areas (90). Public favour, however, reverted to the Japanese Canadians after the conclusion of the War: both due to their proven loyalty via submission to government

policy, as noted by Roy Miki (209-210), and due to Japan's clearly capitalist stance during the Cold War. In contrast, the victory of the Communist Party and the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 meant that Chinese were once again the focus of the Yellow Peril: not only as economic threats, but as potential Communist sympathizers (Li *Chinese* 93). These changes in status, for both the Japanese and Chinese Canadian communities, show the extent to which acceptance as citizens and as valued members of Canadian society still rested upon economic factors: both groups were still regarded as potentially threatening foreign Others, and their presence was only tolerated contingent upon their willingness to conform to mainstream Canadian values and customs, including capitalism and liberal democracy. Policies may have changed, but people's hearts have not.

All of these factors meant that the repeal of the Exclusion Act was not the boon to the Chinese Canadian community that the government believed it to be. Nevertheless, the new legislation, although not perfect, was still an improvement, for it allowed Chinese to immigrate to Canada under broader terms. This, in turn, led to an evolution in the evasive tactics used during the Exclusion Era to circumvent restrictive laws. For example, "paper children" continued as a means of exploiting legal loopholes: Chinese Canadians still sold birth certificates to prospective immigrants in China, which now included those wishing to flee from the new Communist regime. In addition, applicants occasionally lied about their birth dates in order to appear younger than they actually were, thus allowing them to immigrate to Canada as minor children of naturalized citizens even if they were, in fact, already of age (Li *Chinese* 93). Thus, through both legal and illegal means, the rate of Chinese immigration to Canada increased over the 1950s, leading to a corresponding growth of the Chinese Canadian community more generally.

The Canadian government was not unaware of the various forms of immigration fraud that had developed during the Exclusion Era and persisted after the Exclusion Act's repeal. However, due to the insularity of Chinatown communities after decades of discrimination and suspicion, it was difficult for official bodies to assess the extent to which immigration policies were being circumvented. Immigration fraud and the use of falsified documents had served as reason for deportation during the Exclusion Era, so many Chinese Canadians were still intensely secretive about their histories; Chinese immigrants feared that government enforcement of immigration laws would lead to the separation of families that had already waited so many years to be reunited. Thus, according to Li, the only practical solution for the Canadian government was to offer a general amnesty towards illegal Chinese immigrants, which was enacted in 1960; under the amnesty, those who confessed to their fraudulent immigration status but were otherwise law-abiding citizens would be pardoned and permitted to stay in Canada (*Chinese* 93-94). In this way, during the 1960s, thousands of Chinese Canadians came forward to the government and were granted fully legal landed immigrant status.

The Canadian government also made additional changes to broaden its immigration policy. In 1962, applicants were classified by their country of origin rather than their racial or ethnic background, and individual workers, if accepted as independent immigrants, could bring their immediate families with them (Li *Chinese* 94). Thus, for the first time since the Exclusion Act was enacted in 1923, independent Chinese workers could enter Canada, and even bring their parents, spouses and children alongside. Regulations broadened even further in 1967 when the federal government did away with its prior immigration policy, replacing it with a new points system that, in theory, allowed applicants from all countries and ethnicities of origin to be evaluated on equal terms, as it emphasized occupational and educational skills as opposed to race

(94). This led to a dramatic rise in the level of ethnic Chinese immigration to Canada; however, unlike earlier waves in which most arrivals were working-class men from the mainland, the majority of the post-1967 immigrants were middle-class individuals and families from Hong Kong and Taiwan (96-99). Their wealth and education, particularly in comparison with the previous generation of Chinese immigrants, were regarded favourably by the Canadian government: under the points system, which favoured particular professions and educational levels based upon Canada's economic needs, the Chinese were no longer deemed economic threats to the working class, but as potential financial assets to the country's growth and development.

5.2 Making It Big: Asian Success and the Model Minority Discourse

Although it is easy to regard the Model Minority discourse as a progression from the Yellow Peril discourse of the 19th and early 20th centuries, it was never, in fact, so simple. Instead, the Model Minority was and still is in a constant state of evolution, oftentimes working in a tenuous tandem with the Yellow Peril discourse as its foil. Thus, for instance, the term in its American context first applied to Japanese Americans, who had persisted in their patriotism to the United States during the Internment of the Second World War and who had, despite the loss of their properties, re-attained their middle-class socioeconomic status in ensuing decades (Wu *Color* 151). However, to paint this as solely a narrative of perseverance and recovery is to oversimplify the actual economic and political forces at hand. The government-enforced displacement of Japanese Americans to rural areas of the United States led to the rupture of an ethnic community and economy, which prompted the younger generation to pursue higher education to improve their career prospects in the post-war economic boom (146). Similarly, the wealthier Chinese immigrants who fled to North America as refugees from the newly-established

Communist regime became a more visible Chinese presence in the United States: they "comprised a small…but highly visible proportion of ethnic Chinese in university, corporate and other highly skilled positions" (147). It is important to note that in the case of Chinese Americans, this increased presence of Chinese in professional and upper-middle-class circles did not reflect the broad diversity of experiences immigrants faced; in reality, many still occupied the same working-class positions associated with extant Chinese communities in North America, and they also continued to face discrimination in other areas, such as access to housing (147). However, what is most notable here is the way in which this small minority within the Chinese American community eventually became its representative face under the auspices of the Model Minority discourse.

As for the Canadian context, although the term "Model Minority" itself is not as frequently used as it is in the United States, the images and stereotypes that correlate to the Model Minority discourse are inextricably linked to the immigration reforms from 1947 to 1967. On the one hand, the performed assimilability of Chinese Canadians during the Exclusion Era, as an early form of the Model Minority stereotype, played a significant role in the loosening of immigration policy towards Chinese as they came to be regarded as immigrants who could contribute to mainstream Canadian society. On the other hand, however, it is also important to note that reforms such as permitting family reunification with the repeal of the Exclusion Act and the point system's overt preference for professional and educated applicants have led to a significant socio-economic shift within the Chinese Canadian community itself. The more financially grounded and successful Chinese immigrants, who came after these reforms had been established, created a new popular image of Asian Canadians more generally as highly intelligent, hardworking and economically savvy. It is also worth noting that the purported

success of Chinese Canadians as defined by the Model Minority discourse is not simply economic. Since the implementation of the official multiculturalism policy in 1971, there has been an increased presence of Asian Canadians, including Chinese, in a broad range of fields and professions: medicine, business, the arts, and politics among them.

In many ways, the versions of the Model Minority discourse dating from before and after the repeal of the Exclusion Act shared similarities. For instance, in both cases, there was an emphasis on the civic involvement of Chinese immigrants to Canada and their descendants. During the Depression and the Second World War, through various acts of protest against discrimination, Chinese Canadians expressed their interest in becoming involved with Canada's political life. This included participation in labour movements, fundraising for the war effort, and active military service. In addition, as previously discussed in Chapter 3, brokers and local Chinese community leaders deliberately performed assimilability and Canadianness to sympathetic bodies such as the Chicago sociologists, to whom they asserted their desire to fully belong in mainstream society, but bemoaned the oppressive system that was forever relegating them to the margins. Likewise, from the late 1940s onwards, new Chinese immigrants to North America were depicted as helpless destitutes fleeing from Communism in order to enjoy the freedom of democracy and the economic success promised by capitalist government (Wu *Yellow* 42). This belief was further fostered by the fact that initial post-repeal immigrants were family members of naturalized Chinese Canadians, whose desire for wealth now marked them for the wrath of the Communist Party. Thus, starting from a point of poverty within North America, Chinese immigrants appeared to work diligently towards upward social mobility, whether through doggedly maintaining ethnic businesses such as restaurants and laundries, or pursuing higher education as though their lives depended upon it (42-43).

In other words, the Model Minority discourse developed as a means by which Asian immigrants and their descendants could be rendered desirable as potential citizens. It is worth noting that this outcome was not simply an inevitable result of the repeal of exclusionary legislation. As previously stated, the late 1940s saw the rise of Communism in China, culminating in the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Given the United States and Canada's stance during the Cold War, Sinophobia resulting from these recent political changes was a real concern for both countries' Chinese immigrant communities. After all, the Yellow Peril rhetoric that cast Asian immigrants as inassimilable foreign economic and political threats was still prevalent; and just several years prior, during the Second World War, Japanese Americans and Canadians had had their properties seized and were forced into internment camps on account of suspected loyalties to Imperialist Japan. Thus, to prevent a reversion to xenophobia and anti-Orientalist racism, it was in the best interests of Chinatown community leaders to promote and perform the components of Chinese immigrant life that best reflected the liberal democratic values espoused by state governments at the time: hard work, a skill for enterprise, and a deferential gratefulness to the ruling state authorities. In this way, they hoped that their performance of conformity to the ideals of both capitalism and liberal democracy would cement their position as welcomed members of Canadian society: a complete transformation and re-creation of the imagined Chinese Canadian subject.

Consequently, Asian American and Canadian weaknesses that had formed the foundation for the Yellow Peril discourse were now repainted as strengths towards the creation of an overall more positive image. For instance, a significant component of the myth of the rise of Asian immigrant communities was their very persecution in decades prior. From this perspective, as an example, Chinese immigrants marginalized from mainstream society resorted to opening small

ethnic businesses in the few trades that were permitted to them: restaurants, grocery stores, laundries, etc. Thus, their determination to carve out economic niches for themselves, which had previously served as proof of their role as competition for white workers during the Exclusion Era, functioned now as an example of their entrepreneurship and tenacity in the face of oppression: a pioneering capitalist spirit that sought to overcome hardship through carving out one's own career path instead of relying upon assistance from the state. The Chinese Americans and Canadians, in short, were the "model workers" (61): those who simply kept to their labour without complaint or protest. In addition, the Confucian philosophy and way of life, which emphasized submission to a strict social hierarchy – wives deferring to husbands, children to parents, students to teachers, workers to employers, citizens to the state, etc. – and education as a means of upward social mobility and cultivator of self-discipline, became an identifying feature of Chinese culture (Li *Chinese* 61).

It should be pointed out, however, that the actual role of Confucianism within Chinatown communities during the Exclusion Era has been exaggerated by the scholarship. First of all, according to Peter Li, its tenets were upheld predominantly by China's aristocratic and merchant classes, as opposed to the working class which comprised most of the immigrants to Canada (62). Also, claims that Chinese immigrants' submission and deference stem from Confucianism are based upon an erroneous dichotomy in which "Westerners search for personal identity and autonomy, whereas Asians are more accepting of benevolent authority" (Fong 294). Instead, as shown through the actions of brokers and lobbyist groups as discussed in Chapter 3, as well as my earlier discussion in Chapter 4 of May-ying's defiance against traditional gender norms in Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, Chinese Canadians have been active participants in civil processes in their fight for full citizenship rights. However, despite the real-life historical

evidence for these alternate ways of being, the public belief in Confucianism's social and cultural importance allowed it to persist as a marker of Chineseness and a foundational component of the Model Minority myth (Wu *Yellow* 47).

The Model Minority discourse as it is known today only became consolidated as a form of political rhetoric during the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s. Although the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which brought an end to the segregation of Black Americans according to the Jim Crow Laws, is more well-known as a pivotal point in history, Canada had its own similar movement during the same period. However, whereas the American Civil Rights Movement was focused on the rights of racialized minority groups in a broader sense, in Canada, the emphasis was on dismantling the long held association between English and Canadian identity (Miki 5-6). Thus, both the Québécois and marginalized European ethnic groups – including Southern and Eastern Europeans – sought formal recognition as Canadian citizens; although they already had access to legal citizenship, they still lacked social citizenship insofar as the idealized Canadian was still of British descent. These movements from marginalized European Canadians were the impetus behind first the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the 1960s, and the subsequent implementation of an official multiculturalism policy in 1971; by comparison, Chinese Canadians were less actively involved in the commission or the fight for recognition as a significant ethnic community in Canada (Poy 123-124). Yet, eventually, the promises of the official multiculturalism policy, including its focus on ethnic pride and racial identity politics, also spread to Asian Canadian communities, including the Chinese, as they asserted both their right to insider Canadian status and the denial of their rights from the state (Miki 10-11). This was a marked shift away from the emphasis on and performance of assimilation that had become the primary means for Chinese Canadians to seek

acceptance by the mainstream during the Exclusion Era (Poy 124). Instead, the implication now was that the required performance that would qualify a Chinese immigrant for belonging in Canadian society would be one that skews towards a stereotyped "authentic" Chineseness: one that closely paralleled the Model Minority discourse in its emphasis on purportedly Confucian values of submission and industry over active protest and resistance against continued systemic barriers.

With the subsequent reforms to Canadian immigration policy culminating in the introduction of the points system in 1967 and the adoption of an official multiculturalist policy in 1971, the Model Minority discourse was given a greater boost as educated, middle-class professional Chinese immigrants arrived from Hong Kong, Taiwan and, finally, mainland China. In addition, Canada became a popular destination for international students, a number of which chose to obtain landed immigrant status after graduation (Poy 94). These new waves of migration have thus been vastly different socioeconomically than the labourers and their families who had come to North America in decades prior. The fact that this new, more successful, demographic has now become the face of Chinese immigration to Canada reveals that a simply progressive model for analyzing Asian Americans and Canadians from the Yellow Peril to the Model Minority is an oversimplification (Yu 25-26). Because the points system overtly favours individuals and families from middle- and upper-class socioeconomic backgrounds, government and immigration officials consciously select those they deem to be the best potential contributors to Canada's economic growth. This immigration pattern, when combined with the continued academic and financial success of the children of many of these Chinese immigrants, reveals that the Model Minority discourse has developed on a cyclical path: as more academically and financially successful candidates are selected for entry, they are granted an automatic

socioeconomic advantage upon arriving in Canada, which further perpetuates the stereotype of Chinese Canadian success in the eyes of the majority.

Similarly, we see a growing market and prestige attributed to multicultural literature, as noted in Chapter 4 by Rak's "memoir boom," in which the publication of autobiography and memoir no longer solely functions as the result of socioeconomic success, but can also serve as a precursor to it (9). Asian Canadian authors such as Joy Kogawa, SKY Lee, Michael Ondaatje, and Fred Wah are now prominent names in Canada, with their works not only standing out as exemplars of multicultural writing, but becoming incorporated into the broad corpus known as Canadian literature. Thus, as we will see in Chapter 6, the publication of Asian Canadian life writing, including that by Chinese Canadian authors, is not just an indicator of the supposed veracity and resonance of the Model Minority discourse, but also a means through which one could enter its ranks of "successful" Chinese Canadians. In that sense, the Model Minority discourse and Chinese Canadian life writing actively feed into each other.

Chapter 6: Performing the Model Minority Discourse in Chinese Canadian Life Writing

With the implementation of Canada's official multiculturalism policy, interest in the stories and experiences of so-called visible or ethnic minorities grew as they became more broadly accepted as part of Canada's cultural makeup. Given how, as discussed in Chapter 5, the Model Minority discourse acts to elevate the perceived success of Asian immigrants and their children, it is little surprise that within the corpus of Chinese Canadian literature of the late 20th century, many of the narratives appear to adhere to the arc of the myth itself. Oftentimes working in English, Chinese Canadian authors are part of a growing group of non-white writers and artists who are, under the tenets of multiculturalism, finding a market niche as "ethnic" writers. Many of the works produced in this way focus on characters' struggles with identity as hyphenated Canadians or mixed frustration and perseverance in the face of racism. For those Chinese Canadians who engage in life writing, particularly that intended for mainstream publication, these tropes become popular means through which they mould their own lives into a noticeable narrative arc.

One caveat to consider about the sources selected for this study, however, is that published life writing, especially pieces written in our official languages of English and French, is subject to market considerations. These, like the points system for immigration, favour those authors who have attained a particular level of economic, social, cultural or political success. This is particularly the case when considering autobiographies and memoirs, as publishers will focus on writers who promise the greatest financial gain: which, in the context of multiculturalism policy and the memoir boom, now also includes the narratives of minority

writers, who are able to either share about their successes or become successful through the very act of publication itself. In this way, like the points system that exaggerates the image of Asian immigrants as middle- or upper middle-class professionals with significant educational and economic achievements both prior to and after arrival to Canada, the mainstream publishing industry promotes an impression of Asian Canadian life writing authors as exemplars of the Model Minority.

However, as much as "ethnic" or "multicultural" life writing could thus be perceived as a means by which mainstream society chooses to commodify the experiences of racialized minorities and uphold those who succeed as paragons that others ought to follow, I argue that there are also benefits to this form of writing. For many Chinese Canadians, the Model Minority discourse still holds considerable appeal as a positive alternative to the Yellow Peril discourse. In addition, as will be seen in a number of the works I intend to discuss in this chapter, writers whose life experiences already fit those expected by the Model Minority discourse are oftentimes people with significant social, cultural and/or political influence. For instance, I will return to the interviews featured in *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community*, many of which focused on individuals with notable achievements in business, science, art, and politics, among other fields. Memoir, too, finds its marketability and profitability in the ways in which authors can present something that is purportedly private and intimate in a manner that is public and capable of generating both personal and social influence:

> In that sense, the attraction of memoir must lie in both things: it provides the story of others in a way that creates a private self alongside the self of another, and it is the means of *mobility* from the private to the public. In memoir, lives *go public* as they *become public*. It becomes a way for readers to think publicly, but from the private sphere. It creates the possibility of social movement through personal movement. In this sense, memoir as a genre has the potential to create social action. (Rak 33)

Thus, in this chapter, I will also examine memoirs by two of the most prominent Chinese Canadian political figures in recent history: *My Journey* by Olivia Chow, and *Heart Matters* by Adrienne Clarkson. My goal here is not simply to showcase the ways in which Chinese Canadian life writing has attempted to conform to the Model Minority discourse, but to observe how individuals whose experiences follow this pattern have then used their places of influence to benefit both Chinese Canadian communities, and Canadians as a general whole. In other words, while much that can be found in these pieces of life writing is a performance of conformity to the Model Minority discourse, there is also a concurrent re-imagining of the Chinese Canadian subject as someone who could stretch the boundaries of what exactly constitutes Canadian citizenship and belonging.

6.1 Achievement in the Face of Adversity: Selecting Success

How does one collect a sample of Chinese Canadians' personal stories for publication? What elements, if any, should an editor focus on? Previously in Chapter 4, I have featured *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community*, edited by Evelyn Huang and Lawrence Jeffrey: a collection of transcribed interviews featuring a number of Chinese Canadians who have achieved economic, social, cultural, or political success. There are scientists, TV personalities, entrepreneurs, and musicians; several of those interviewed are also active members of their respective communities, advocating for the betterment of Chinese Canadian rights as well as improvements for Canadians of all ethnicities. As *Chinese Canadians* was published in the early 1990s, many of the interviewees are also asked to comment on the newest wave of Chinese immigration from Hong Kong immediately prior to its handover to the People's Republic of China in 1997. Given this context in international political and demographic shifts, as well as suggestions of a movement calling for a governmental apology and monetary compensation for

immigrants who had been forced to pay the head tax, it is clear that Huang and Jeffrey are seeking to create a time capsule of sorts: preserving an image of Chinese Canadians as they were before what they anticipated would be significant changes in the years to come.

Perhaps because of these shifts, the accounts in *Chinese Canadians* are overtly constructed texts. Interviewers' questions and comments are included along with the interviewees' responses; and although it is impossible for a reader to access the amount of editing which has gone into the process, it is noticeable that the interviewers wished to create certain particular impressions through their choice of subject matter. In addition, it appears that the interviewees were complicit in constructing this image, as the emphasis in their accounts also focused upon narratives of perseverance and determination as forerunners to success. For instance, a common focus in the accounts given is whether those interviewed achieved particularly exemplary levels of success, such as being the first Chinese Canadian to study law at Osgoode Hall (Huang 7), or being inducted to the Order of Canada (43). Those who rose to prominence despite rougher beginnings due to racism prior to the implementation of multiculturalism were also featured; for example, Bob Lee only received a single job offer after his graduation from university – in contrast to the numerous opportunities accorded his classmates – yet became a successful real estate agent, and even Governor at the University of British Columbia (51-55). Interviewees also spoke of feeling an urge to succeed, which they described as a necessity to work "twice as hard" as their Euro-Canadian classmates and colleagues (243). Finally, respondents were also asked to comment on their service to both Chinese and mainstream Canadian communities, which included both the provision of services via their jobs, and lobbyist activism for better rights. In all these ways, the editors and respondents of *Chinese Canadians* emphasized educational and occupational success as

something far greater than individual, noteworthy accomplishments: they were also means to imply and achieve upward social mobility for the Chinese Canadian community as a whole.

Consequently, it is worth noting that the interviewers in *Chinese Canadians* asked their respondents, as community role models, to provide opinions on and advice to newer immigrants who were starting to come from Hong Kong in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Among the comments given were ones asking more recent immigrants to cultivate awareness of Canada's distinct identity as a social democratic nation, including paying attention contributions made by previous generations of Canadians to create such a society (183). In addition, some respondents exhorted newer arrivals to work towards integrating into mainstream Canadian society as they themselves had done, rather than isolate themselves into ethnic pockets or constantly compare between Canadian and Hong Kong ways of life (109). In addition, those who were born in Canada ask for understanding from more recent Chinese immigrants, who may look towards linguistic fluency or dietary choices as markers of cultural authenticity (94). These last points are particularly relevant: because of their history alternating between being excluded and desired by turns depending on Canada's economic and political policy, Chinese Canadians are simultaneously examples of the Model Minority and Yellow Peril discourses. When they strive for academic and financial achievement, doggedly persisting despite systemic racism, Chinese immigrants are examples of the Model Minority; however, when their ambitions encroach upon places viewed as rightfully belonging to the mainstream majority, or their desire for intra-community ties leads to an emphasis on ethnic neighbourhoods and businesses, they become associated with the Yellow Peril once again (54).

Thus, in order to shift the balance in favour of the more positive Model Minority stereotypes, both the interviewees and interviewers in *Chinese Canadians* prioritize integrating

into mainstream Canadian society. Note, however, that a strong distinction is made between integration and assimilation in such instances; for example, Bob Lee takes pride in being both Chinese and Canadian, but also stresses that he takes more pride in the latter (57). It is particularly revealing that some respondents, like David Lam, acknowledge the persistence of English- and French-Canadian social and cultural norms as a conventional or mainstream Canadian culture (67-68). However, although this could be read as evidence of persisting systemic white privilege, the comments recorded in *Chinese Canadians* are also exhortations to the Chinese community not to withdraw into ethnic enclaves in response to systemic barriers as has been done in the past (67-68). Rather, newcomers should strive to prove themselves worthy and capable by seeking the same educational and occupational betterment that the interviewees themselves or their families had undergone. Yet, as part of their assertion of Canadian identity and social responsibility, respondents also argue that mainstream Canadian society needs to change in its public perception of Chinese immigrants, moving away from tolerance to an active recognition and acceptance (68). Multiculturalism, although flawed, is one of the few protections available to non-white immigrants and their descendants, according to the interviews in *Chinese Canadians*. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all parties involved to keep such multiculturalism policy intact in order to prevent a return to overt racism, and to keep Canada competitive in an increasingly globalized world (79). In all of these ways, then, the respondents in *Chinese Canadians* not only perform and exemplify the tenets of the Model Minority discourse, but expound upon and further propagate them in a prescriptive manner as the key solution to finding acceptance within mainstream Canadian society.

The final section, titled “The Next Generation,” focuses on three younger professionals born in the 1960s and 1970s; at the time of the interviews, they were in their 20s, and had yet to

have fully established careers in the same way their older counterparts did. Although they are noticeably of a younger generation than other respondents, the issues they address are the same, as is much of their thinking as well. Thus, in speaking of their childhood and adolescence, the three respondents recall the impact that the introduction of the points system and multicultural policies had on their schooling. The number of Chinese classmates grew rapidly due to recent immigration, yet these three students at the time felt more comfortable with their Caucasian peers, as their own Canadianized way of life and their lack of fluency in Chinese languages set them apart (251). As for the Model Minority discourse, the respondents' perception of the stereotypes directed at them as Chinese Canadians is generally optimistic. Although they acknowledge the oversimplifications of the Model Minority discourse, and note instances in which they themselves as individuals did not meet expectations, they believe that even the negative aspects of the rhetoric reflect positively upon them: for example, they take pride in being thought of as hardworking and intelligent upon hearing complaints that Chinese immigrants are stealing jobs or academic honours (258). Yet they, too, remark that newer immigrants should take heed of the fact that their children would be born in Canada, and would also identify more with Canada than with Hong Kong or China; thus, it is in everyone's bests interests to become integrated into mainstream society and begin to view Canada as home rather than a temporary respite from the People's Republic of China's policies (261).

Thus, *Chinese Canadians*, as a sampling of prominent voices within the Chinese Canadian community during the early 1990s, acts as both confirmation and propagation of the Model Minority discourse. What is clear from examining these accounts is the extent to which some members of the Chinese Canadian community have internalized the promises of both the Model Minority stereotype and Canadian multiculturalism policy. While interviewers asked

about and respondents asserted the importance of maintaining a distinctively Chinese cultural identity, the ultimate emphasis was on finding a path to success within mainstream culture and on learning to adjust to a new sense of home and belonging in Canada: the creation of a hyphenated identity. Granted, to qualify as an interviewee in this book, it appears as though one needed to have already found influence as a prominent figure in one's chosen field or profession, be it in the sciences, the arts, business, or politics. From this standpoint, *Chinese Canadians* functions not only as a propagation of the Model Minority discourse, but as a conflation between that discourse and the supposed economic meritocracy that marks liberal democracies like Canada: the Model Minority discourse in Canada is a specifically Asian rendition of the so-called "American dream".

However, the contributors to *Chinese Canadians* are also not content to statically rest upon an elevated position. Nor, as it were, are they willing to become pawns of a mainstream culture's attempts to harness the Model Minority discourse for its own benefit, where they would simply be elevated as examples for other racialized minorities to follow. Rather, as can be seen in the remaining texts selected for this chapter, Chinese Canadians who attain a Model Minority status can use this position to challenge the systemically privileged culture that elevated them in the first place. By choosing instead to forge alliances between racialized and marginalized groups and utilize their presence as visible minorities to reconfigure the imaginary Canadian subject, it is possible for individuals to achieve both economic success and significant social and political influence that can enact positive changes for all Canadians.

6.2 Changing Canada from Within: Chinese Canadians in Politics

Although activism and demands for reform can take many forms within a liberal democracy like Canada – including grassroots lobbyist movements advocating for better laws as well as reparations for past wrongs, artistic expressions, and literary exposés – the focus in this section is on individuals who aimed directly at the heart of Canadian policy by pursuing careers in municipal, provincial, and federal politics. Through representing communities with a broad demographic range and becoming highly visible members of Canada's racialized minorities, politicians become the public face of an increasingly ethnically diverse Canadian population. While the presence of visible minorities in public office is not without its criticisms, including accusations that governments allow their presence as token displays of diversity that bar actual progress in eliminating systemic racial barriers, some who have taken this path have become lobbyists from within, using their position to press for changes in Canadian policy that would benefit marginalized members of society.

This section focuses on the memoirs written by two such Chinese Canadian political figures: *Heart Matters* by former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson; and *My Journey* by former Toronto city councillor and federal MP Olivia Chow. Although both books are subtitled as memoirs, and their titles – *My Journey* and *Heart Matters* – suggest an emphasis on narratives of personal growth and the creation of intimacy between the author and the reader, in actuality, they are both political memoirs: more heavily focused upon the writers' careers within Canada's parliamentary system than on personal or emotional matters of subjectivity (Gillis). Thus, it is Chow's and Clarkson's differences as racialized female politicians that ultimately come to the fore in this study. Most notably, although both women are similar insofar as they are Chinese immigrants who became heavily involved in Canadian politics during the beginning of the 21st century, they adopted vastly different approaches in terms of the institutions in which they

participated. As the Governor General, the official head of state and representative of the Crown within Canada's parliamentary system, Clarkson, although open about her Chinese heritage, was part of an institution that some would argue is a perpetuation of an outdated colonial framework that continues to uphold English Canadians as the true Canadian by harkening back to a past of British control. Meanwhile, as a representative of Canada's leftist party, the New Democratic Party, and a councillor in Toronto, one of Canada's largest cities, Chow's career has been marked by a series of attempts to garner equity and broader rights to racial and sexual minorities, among other marginalized groups. While these assessments are undoubtedly oversimplifications, on the surface, at least, Clarkson and Chow seem to represent differing political interests. However, both are notable public figures within the Chinese Canadian community as well as to the broader population, and their memoirs reveal that, in many ways, both have skillfully utilized their positions as influential, albeit racialized, people to redefine what it means to be Canadian in the 21st century.

At the outset, Olivia Chow's story in *My Journey* fits several of the tropes expected from immigrant narratives in the era of multiculturalism and minority literature. Born in Hong Kong, she immigrated with her family to Toronto in 1970, when she was thirteen years old (Chow 21), meaning that the Chows were among many of the educated and professional immigrants who benefited from the introduction of Canada's point system. As a teenager in a foreign country, Chow did not experience a particularly profound sense of displacement as many earlier immigrants did; due to both the repeal of the Exclusion Act, increasingly open policies and the points system, Toronto had a thriving Chinese Canadian community at the time, and she was able to immerse herself into a peer group of both Canadian-born and immigrant youth (22). Yet, like many young people, she claimed a desire to fit into mainstream Canadian society, and

pursued leisure activities she perceived as "Canadian:" ice skating, hiking, paddling, among others (23). Meanwhile, Chow's parents had a more difficult experience, undergoing depreciation in socio-economic status: her father, an educational superintendent in Hong Kong, was unable to find permanent work despite his fluency in English and resorted to a series of short-term menial jobs, while her mother, formerly a teacher, worked in a garment sweatshop (23-24). This had adverse effects on the family dynamic, and Chow's father ultimately descended into violent anger and mental illness (26).

As a result of these rougher beginnings, Chow did not simply seek to achieve her own upward social mobility, nor assimilation into mainstream Canadian society for its own end. Rather, she shaped her political development and career to focus on fighting for the rights of the underprivileged and the marginalized. In the midst of reflecting upon her adolescent experiences, she comments on her part-time job as a waitress and hostess in a restaurant, which she credits for helping her to cultivate the interpersonal and organizational skills which would serve her during her professional life (32). In particular, she emphasizes the importance of engaging with people from a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds, which she continued as a visual arts student at the University of Toronto, volunteering for numerous charitable organizations, including acting as a counsellor for a crisis help line (36-38). As for overt political experience, Chow began to participate in Asian Canadian activist movements in the late 1970s, rallying in support of Southeast Asian refugees fleeing the Vietnam War (46-47). In addition, she looked outside of the headlining socio-political issues of the time and sought to think critically about the everyday injustices present in the city of Toronto, such as homelessness and gender inequality (48). Thus, in Chow's case, we see a different approach towards higher education and upward social mobility compared to what might have been conceived as the norm within the Model

Minority discourse: education for Chow was not solely about achieving her own economic or financial goals, but about equipping herself with the skills she needed in order to advocate for marginalized members of her community and fight against systemic racial, gender, and socio-economic barriers.

Over time, Chow became an active member of the New Democratic Party, which she saw as advocating the social justice causes she was passionate about, and which saw her as a valuable asset in creating ties between the party and Toronto's Chinese Canadian community. According to Chow, many racialized immigrants, including the Chinese, were ignorant of the workings of Canada's government systems and policies, as well as the broad range of services and benefits available to them as citizens: a lack of knowledge she worked to rectify through newspaper columns and radio shows (53). She also participated in municipal politics, beginning as a school trustee in Toronto where she pushed for the introduction of heritage language programs and the eradication of streaming at the secondary school level (64-65). In both cases, her intention was to help the children of racialized immigrants to Canada. Heritage language programs in schools would both serve as tangible evidence of Canada's multiculturalism policy and create an environment where parents and children new to Canada could feel that their cultures and languages are validated by the educational system (64). As for destreaming, Chow noted that many of the students whose poorer academic performance at the elementary level slated them for technical rather than academic secondary schooling, thus limiting their chances for a university education, were racialized or from a lower socio-economic status (65). Later on, Chow also advocated for Toronto's queer students, many of whom faced verbal and physical abuse from their peers; by encouraging youth to speak to the municipal government directly, she prompted the school board to introduce policies against homophobia, which eventually spread to the

provincial level as well (68-71). Activism on behalf of such marginalized groups – racialized minorities, the poor, and sexual minorities – became a common theme throughout much of Chow's political career, both at the municipal and federal levels.

In addition to her political involvement, Olivia Chow is perhaps best known for her marriage and partnership with Jack Layton, whose own career culminated in acting as both the leader of the federal NDP and the official opposition. However, what is worth noting here, perhaps in direct contradiction with readers' expectations, is how little Chow actually divulges of her private relationship with Layton. Clearly, *My Journey* is not so much a personal account, but a political one: a memoir that highlights Chow's career as a political activist at the price, according to some reviewers, of generating emotional resonance with the reader (Allemang; Gillis). Thus, it is worth noting that Chow's main focus in her discussion of her relationship with Layton is that it was one between equals, where he worked to attain fluency in Cantonese in addition to his more overtly political work on behalf of the Chinese Canadian community (86). According to Chow, she and Layton possessed temperaments that strongly complemented each other (99), which is clearly conveyed in her memoir through her use of a tandem bicycle to symbolize her marriage: "we were in step, in time, in rhythm – going in the same direction" (94). Their family home in downtown Toronto also became the locus of their social and political lives: dinner party conversations could transition into discussions about housing or childcare or whatever issues were relevant to them and their guests at the time (103). In this way, and through her work as an advocate for programs combatting child poverty within the city of Toronto, Chow realized that the changes she hoped to make would need to be done at the federal level in order to obtain the funding necessary for widespread permanent improvements (123). However, after attaining a position as an MP for the NDP in the federal government, her attempts to establish a

reformed nationwide childcare system failed under a Conservative government; yet Chow remains optimistic in her memoir, arguing that such changes will simply have to wait until an NDP government could be established at the federal level (133).

As a memoir, *My Journey* is structured in both a thematic and chronological order. Chapters are devoted to particular political and social justice causes that Chow participated in over the course of her career as a Toronto city councillor and a federal MP. While much of the narrative is focused on her activism and advocacy, Chow also offers readers a glimpse into the inner workings of Canada's federal government, including accounts of behind-the-scenes negotiations between political leaders (217-222). In addition, while much of her work was for the benefit of all Canadians, Chow also appealed for a formal apology and redress for the earlier Chinese immigrants who had been subject to the head tax; although mentions of the movement appeared throughout *Chinese Canadians*, which was published in the early 1990s, it did not come to fruition until 2006 (235-236). Although this could be interpreted as an act directed towards Chinese Canadians in particular, Chow saw her involvement in much broader terms: "the formal apology would and should affect all Canadians – not just Chinese Canadians – because it would be an affirmation of the right of all citizens to be treated equally under the law" (233). If there was a statement that encompasses Olivia Chow's political intervention over the course of her career at both the municipal and federal levels, I argue it would be the one above. As an individual who achieved immense social, cultural and political success, she was both an example of the Model Minority discourse and a repudiation of it: someone who used her journey and narrative of success to interrogate and dismantle the systemic racism that had marginalized so many immigrants and Canadian citizens.

In contrast to Olivia Chow's political career as an open advocate for the marginalized, Adrienne Clarkson, as a former Governor General and, thus, the Canadian representative of the British Crown, is situated deep in the heart of the country's parliamentary democratic apparatus. At the beginning of her memoir, *Heart Matters*, it appears that this association with British institutions is also a part of her family background: she was born in colonial Hong Kong shortly prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, and her father was one of the few ethnic Chinese who took part in the defense against the Japanese invasion in 1941 (Clarkson 6). It is perhaps also because of this connection that Clarkson's family, the Poys, have a particular distinction within Chinese Canadian history. Her father had been attempting to escape the Japanese occupation through various Commonwealth contacts in Australia and Canada and, for reasons unknown to the young Adrienne herself, the Poys had been included in a list of Canadians who qualified for an exchange of nationals between Japan and the Allies (10). In this way, the Poys, upon entering the country in 1942, became a rare instance of a family of ethnic Chinese who entered Canada in contradiction to the Exclusion Act. As refugees, the family found a warm reception from neighbours in Ottawa: serving as visible reminders of the need for patriotic fervour in maintaining the war effort, and as evidence of the newfound sympathy for the Chinese in the face of Japanese aggression that arose during the 1940s (21).

Yet, unlike many others who came to Canada prior to the repeal of the Exclusion Act, Clarkson's parents maintained only minimal ties to their Chinese homeland, due to the rise of the Communist Party of China after the conclusion of the Second World War. A staunch critic of Communism, Clarkson's father made it clear to his children that their home was not China, but Canada; as Clarkson phrased it in her memoir, "that door was closed" (23). In addition, according to John Burns's review of *Heart Matters* in *The Georgia Straight*, Clarkson's father

had no desire to move to the larger Chinese Canadian communities in British Columbia, like Vancouver, which he felt was marred by its history of anti-Orientalism (Burns). Instead, the Poy family believed emulating and performing Canadianness would be the best means by which the children could attain social acceptance. Thus, while some vestigial remains of Chinese culture were retained, such as food and an appreciation for the arts and languages, and their distant relatives in the homeland were sorely missed (Clarkson 26, 30), Clarkson and her older brother were encouraged to assimilate. Priding themselves as educated British colonials from Hong Kong, the Poy parents primarily socialized with their Euro-Canadian neighbours and made sure that the children spoke fluent English (46); they also made conscious efforts to distance themselves from what they perceived to be an overly patriarchal traditional Chinese mindset, raising their daughter, Adrienne, to value education and develop a strong will (47). They even fostered in her a desire to learn French as well as English, a dream she accomplished as an adult by living in Paris after completing her Masters of Arts at the University of Toronto (90).

Thus, Clarkson had a very unique upbringing; although many young Chinese Canadians growing up during and immediately after the Exclusion Era assimilated due to social pressure or the lack of a thriving Chinese community, the Poys, although recent immigrants, did so in order to distance themselves from others like them: an action similar to the performed assimilation of Chinese Canadians during the Exclusion Era and in sharp contrast to the performed Chineseness that is considered ideal under the multiculturalist interpretation of the Model Minority discourse. In this way, the Poy children's upbringing is an example of Roland Sintos Coloma's concept of "ethno-nationalism", in which racialized Asian Canadians "asserted and privileged one's Canadian-ness, or rightful belonging to Canada, albeit from the vantage point of a racialized minority, while simultaneously distancing oneself from and rejecting one's Asian-ness" (590).

While Clarkson's father likely saw such ethno-nationalism as a possible means to overcome racial discrimination through an assertion and performance of so-called Canadianness (592), its reliance on equating Canadian culture with Euro-Canadian identity whilst colouring Asian – in this case, Chinese – culture as foreign is a pattern that we continue to see throughout Clarkson's life as depicted in *Heart Matters*.

Prior to entering politics, Clarkson worked as a television host, headlining several shows on the CBC. Through educational and investigative programs such as *Take Thirty* and *the fifth estate*, Clarkson was able to engage with Canadians from a variety of backgrounds, and found a sense of fulfillment in transmitting knowledge to an ever-curious public (128). Reaching out to viewers and interacting with them through both televised interviews for her programs and through reading and responding to letters, she developed the interpersonal skills that she argues were instrumental to her later position as Governor General (131). While *Take Thirty* was a more casual daytime show in which topics ranged from book reviews to cooking lessons for their predominantly female audience, *the fifth estate* was more political in nature. The program was investigative and international; the stories Clarkson selected always centred on political and social injustices, and her attempts to investigate such incidents took her to many countries around the world (137). It was through interviewing and examining political leaders in this context that Clarkson gained a strong political sense and a determination to reveal truths to the public – at times against the wishes of the influential people she was criticizing (144).

It was ultimately Clarkson's contribution to Canadian arts and media culture that started her political career. In 1982, she was appointed to be Ontario's Agent General to Paris: a new position, as Canada's cultural representatives in France were historically mostly from Quebec, and the province of Ontario wished to have Anglo-Canadian representation there as well (148).

She attributes her appointment to her own bilingual fluency in both English and French, stating, "I felt that if I went to Paris as Ontario's Agent General, my French education would have counted for something. When I thought about it, I could not think of many Canadian anglophones [sic] who knew French as well as I did" (148). However, it is also worth noting that Clarkson's appointment, as well as the establishment of an Anglophone Agent General in Paris at all, coincides with the shift in official Canadian policy towards "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Canada 8545). Thus, as a scholar who is studying both the multiculturalist and Model Minority discourses, I cannot fail to note the fact that Clarkson, as a public face of Anglophone Canada to the French government in her capacity as Ontario's Agent General, is also a member of a visible minority. Even though she personally identifies solely as an Anglophone Canadian (Clarkson 181), it is impossible for Clarkson to escape the interpellation that comes from being a member of a racialized minority: both within Canada, but more especially abroad. Despite her attempts to downplay her heritage over the course of her career, she is still visibly of Chinese descent: a phenotypical reality that simply cannot go unnoticed or unremarked upon. Still, Clarkson maintains throughout her memoir that she is not a token Asian in Canadian politics, but simply an individual whose credentials have allowed for her to excel in a meritocratic liberal democracy regardless of her racial/ethnic background.

It is with this mindset of simply representing Canada without any allusions to racial identity that Clarkson seeks to promote what she perceives to be Canadian cultural interests in her role as Agent General. Although it was initially difficult to for Clarkson and the Anglophone interests she represented to become relevant to the French government officials she worked with during her term, an opportunity arose when an international competition was held to design the new Parisian opera house; the winning design was contributed by Carlos Ott, a Uruguayan

Canadian architect from Toronto (158-159). However, in discussing this event in *Heart Matters*, Clarkson expresses frustration at both the international and domestic response to the outcome of this competition. It is perhaps understandable that the French public reacted to Ott's victory with surprise, then by incorporating his design as a part of French culture: "once you had created something for their city, by all intents and purposes you became French" (159). However, Clarkson derides the tepid response by the Canadian Embassy in France, citing their lack of enthusiasm at a Canadian's selection as the architect for the Parisian opera house as an example of what she termed the "colonial cringe:" a tendency towards self-deprecation and a belief that Canadians lacked culture, particularly in comparison with Europe or the United States (158-159). For Clarkson, the truth about Canada and Canadians as she knew it was anything but (161), and a frequent theme throughout *Heart Matters* is that Canadians should take pride in their achievements both as individuals and as a nation. What she was advocating for her fellow Canadians was a form of affective performance: becoming a stronger and prouder nation by acting the part, and by working to both defend and promote the contributions of Canadian citizens to an ever-shifting Canadian culture uncoupled from its colonialist narrative of being the underdog to the United States or Europe.

Although it was her television programs that first made her popular with the Canadian public, Clarkson attributes her experience as the Agent General to Paris as the most likely reason why she was appointed Governor General in 1999 (171). In many ways, her actions there in presenting Anglophone Canada to an audience mostly familiar with Quebec reflect her vision for Canada as a whole: to bring together both Anglophone and Francophone Canadians into a common vision for the country (165-166). For instance, she comments on the sense of alienation that many Québécois and other Francophones feel when Canadian culture and politics is focused

predominantly on serving the needs of Anglophones, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging Canada's official bilingualism (167). In addition, in her memoir, she addresses the question as to whether her minority status as both a woman and a Chinese Canadian affected her appointment and subsequent service. Clarkson's response is a refusal to be seen as a token Asian woman in Canadian politics; more importantly, she argues that that was not the intention of those who nominated her for the post either (181).

Indeed, throughout *Heart Matters*, Clarkson rarely discusses her Chinese identity. Although she acknowledges her Chinese ethnicity, she very much emphasizes the parts of her experiences and actions that she considers to be Canadian. In doing this, she seeks to uncouple and dissociate herself from the narrative of the ethnic politician whose contributions are forever marked by her being from a racialized visible minority. By emphasizing her own self-identification as a Canadian, sometimes in exclusion to her own Chinese background, Clarkson is not only re-creating herself into a new image, but also re-imagining the nature of Canadian citizenship under multiculturalism. Rather than carrying herself and presenting herself as a hyphenated Chinese Canadian, who is encouraged to maintain and share her heritage culture or who attributes her success to some mythologized stereotypical Chinese subject per Model Minority discourse, Clarkson portrays her Chinese birth as something almost incidental to her identity as a Canadian.

However, there is no denying that as the Governor General, Clarkson represents a precariously ambiguous role in Canadian parliamentary politics; thus, she explains the realities and implications of her post in considerable detail in *Heart Matters*. Tellingly, although she has stepped down from her post by the time of the book's writing, and she has had intimate access to the internal workings of Parliament, Clarkson maintains her official nonpartisan stance as the

representative of the Crown. Not once does she disclose any potentially inflammatory information about both the Canadian and international politicians around her; Clarkson is also similarly discreet in discussions of her personal life and affairs (Egan). Rather, she focuses instead on educating her readers about the nature of Canada's parliamentary system of government, as well as the Governor General's distinct place within it. On the one hand, as the formal head of state, all bills that are passed by the House of Commons and Senate must be approved by the Governor General prior to becoming law, and he/she is also responsible for the official protocol of Parliament, such as reading the Speech of the Throne and opening sessions (Clarkson 190). In these ways, the position is a direct reminder of Canada's British colonial past and, on a symbolic level at least, is evidence of a maintained connection between Canada and the United Kingdom. However, Clarkson makes it clear that the existence and continuation of her post does not mean that Canada is not a sovereign nation in its own right, nor does she need to act according to the wishes of the British Crown (189-190). Instead, she describes the duty of the Governor General as "the guarantor of responsible government and of our parliamentary democracy," which is valued in Canada separate from its British legacy (190). Because of this, although the Governor General is the highest power in Canada by law, in practice he/she works in accordance with the Prime Minister, save when there is a contradiction between the government's interests and the liberal democratic values that the Governor General is intended to protect (192-193). Yet, the Governor General is not affiliated with any political party; instead, he/she is understood to be positioned both above and beyond the pall of Parliament (197).

Given both the historical legacy and current symbolism of the Governor General, the importance of the question that was raised in the beginning of this section becomes clear: to what extent could a public officer with such a strong association to British colonialism in Canada

actually work to enact changes that interrogate current systems of privilege and marginalization? Of course, unlike an elected Member of Parliament such as Olivia Chow, Clarkson could not present bills calling for policy changes; and although the Governor General has the legal right to veto bills that have passed through Parliament, it is rare that he/she would do so simply to advance a particular ideological agenda. However, as the official Canadian head of state and as an internationally public face for the country, Clarkson as the Governor General could influence Canada's political and social fabric through subtler means. One of the methods she used was to make herself as accessible to the public as possible. Even though she predominantly presented herself as solely Canadian as opposed to a hyphenated Chinese Canadian, she was aware of the way she was physically and visually marked and racialized: an outside observer from within the Canadian public would still see her as Chinese. Consequently, just by her presence alone, Clarkson was already re-creating the imagined Canadian subject into an image that could accommodate racialized and marginalized faces and bodies. Thus, during her six-year term, Clarkson travelled throughout Canada, hosting levees in which she could speak individually with residents in whichever city, town, or village she was in at the time (184-185). This was a means by which Canadians could present their concerns, political and otherwise, to the Governor General; and also a means by which she could stay connected to the everyday realities that members of the public faced. In addition, Clarkson worked to make her official residence, Rideau Hall in Ottawa, a testament to Canada, its people and its culture: incorporating art pieces by both historical and contemporary artists and opening parts of the residence for visitor tours (221-222).

A second means by which Clarkson, as the Governor General, could influence change is through positive reinforcement. As the official head of state, the Governor General imparts

several prestigious awards, including the Order of Canada, to citizens who exhibited excellence in a variety of ways. Success in these terms is not solely about academic or economic success; it can also be read as the drive to rise above adversity and the desire to create a better society (205-206). Although Clarkson does not elaborate about specific recipients of such awards in *Heart Matters*, she does emphasize the importance of selflessness and championing the marginalized and the Other as values that she seeks to reward (206). There is inherently a power dynamic in a society's choice as to which individuals to honour: those who are thus exalted are treated as such in reference to their achievements and the ideas that they represent. While official awards and recognitions like the Order of Canada cannot, by themselves, remove systemic racism, sexism, and classism among other inequities, they can function as pedagogical tools through which a nation's government could reinforce particular social norms. As long as those in charge of selecting recipients do so with the intention of eradicating systemic privileges, they could choose to elevate individuals and institutions that embody that same desire.

Thus, for both Olivia Chow and Adrienne Clarkson, who are often viewed as notable individual examples of the Model Minority discourse, social and political elevation is an opportunity to enact positive changes in Canadian society. Whether this is done overtly through activism and legislation, as in Chow's case, or presenting a new face to what would otherwise be a stereotypically white institution, like Clarkson, the presence of Chinese Canadians in positions of power can be a boon to marginalized Canadians. Together with individuals from other professions, disciplines and fields such as those included in *Chinese Canadians*, those in the spotlight are not simply examples of success in a superficial sense. Rather, they are powerful examples of the representation of racialized and marginalized minorities: elevated as role models, but also determined to act the role themselves. In this way, the stories of those Chinese

Canadians who conform to the tenets of the Model Minority discourse could speak on behalf of their communities, and inspire a new generation of youth to continue striving against discrimination. In this way, it is argued, the imagined face of Canada would change to include not only those of European descent, and not only men: women, sexual minorities, and racial minorities can also represent Canada in both domestic and international affairs.

Chapter 7: Collapsing from Within: Asian American and Canadian Criticisms of the Model Minority Discourse

With Asian immigrants and their descendants being praised for intelligence, diligence and both economic and cultural success, what could possibly go wrong? As it turns out, a great deal. Like with Canada's official multiculturalist discourse, the Model Minority discourse is more effective in theory than in reality. What, however, is particularly notable about the scholarly and popular criticisms of the Model Minority discourse is that much of it stems from Asian American and Asian Canadian communities themselves. Among anti-racist scholars and activists in particular, the Model Minority discourse is a stereotyped mythology that has caused substantial harm to the position of Asian immigrants and their children: it is a rose-coloured oversimplification at best; and, at worst, a means of destroying alliances between racialized groups at large. More importantly, those who critique the discourse are accused of ungratefulness in their rejection of an ideology which they are believed to have benefited from.

Is this, then, a simple matter of ungrateful discontents biting the hand that feeds them? Why would someone criticize a discourse that places them upon a pedestal? There are several key points that frequently occur in scholarly rebuttals of the Model Minority image, which this chapter will focus upon. Firstly, the Model Minority discourse is inaccurate in its simplicity; it projects an idealized Asian subject that does not reflect the true diversity of Asian immigrant experiences. Secondly, because of the unrealistic expectations of the Model Minority discourse, it prevents Asian Americans and Canadians from reaching positions of leadership through the beautification of traits deemed undesirable for administrative or managerial positions. Finally, the Model Minority discourse generates tensions between Asian immigrants and other racialized

peoples, when it is used to create distinctions between subservient Asians who have risen above adversity and more aggressive Others who are expected to look up to them as role models.

7.1 Not All Asians: The Inaccuracy of the Model Minority Image

One of the major criticisms of the Model Minority discourse rests upon simple pragmatics: Asia is a vast continent and its people are incredibly diverse along economic, political and cultural terms. For scholars like David Palumbo-Liu, Frank Wu, and Timothy Fong, it is thus impossible to have a monolithic imagined Asian subject; and government or public attempts to create one will inevitably lead to many individuals and communities falling outside of its prescribed characteristics. In regards to the Model Minority discourse in particular, the concern is whether the associated economic success is true for Asian Americans and Canadians of all ethnicities, and the assumption's subsequent impact upon the construction of Canada's economic system as a meritocracy that is open to all should that not be the case. To an extent, the truth that the Model Minority discourse does not point to a pan-Asian story of success over adversity is visible from its origins. Recall that much of the rhetoric was originally centred upon Japanese immigrants and their descendants in particular (Palumbo-Liu 171); and while the term, in the present day, has gradually expanded to accommodate other Asian ethnic groups, the imagined Model Minority still only refers to a select few: most notably East Asians, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Americans and Canadians (Wu *Yellow* 54). Other significantly large Asian immigrant communities, including Southeast Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern Americans and Canadians, are either omitted from the stereotyped Model Minority image, or have a separate identity ascribed to them altogether; in fact, at times they struggle to even be considered Asian despite their geopolitical ancestry, as the popular usage of the term is so strongly associated with the narrower region of East Asia (Okihiro 3).

The disparity, however, comes when those groups and individuals who do not fit the projected path of the Model Minority immigrant are still expected to follow it. Timothy Fong presents the example of Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees who came to the United States during and after the Vietnam War. Because many in the initial wave of displaced immigrants were wealthier and well-educated urban elites fleeing from the Communist forces, they were perceived as more westernized and better equipped to find economic success as Model Minorities (Fong 35). However, subsequent waves of migration consisted of a more diverse group, where many individuals were poorer, had had little access to education, and came from a broader range of ethnic and linguistic communities (35). Among these, the Hmong stand out in particular as an Asian immigrant group that primarily settled in rural regions as agricultural workers, in contrast to the popular Model Minority image of either urban industry or suburban prosperity (51). In addition, Fong notes that the Model Minority discourse, which paints Asian Americans and Canadians in broad strokes, obscures the real disparity in socio-economic status across large communities: for instance, a business owner could work anywhere from mega-corporations to inner city convenience stores, nail salons, and family-run motels and restaurants (54-57). While it is certainly possible to read all of these instances as examples of entrepreneurial success, that would require a broad definition of success that is based upon factors other than socio-economic status or net income.

In addition, even among the imagined successful Chinese Canadians, there is a vast range in terms of financial and economic success. Although statistics show that Chinese immigrants to Canada and their descendants have attained increasingly higher positions in the workforce, and are less reliant upon manual and service labour than their predecessors who primarily opened family-run restaurants and laundries to get by, this does not necessarily serve as evidence that

Chinese Canadians have attained success. Note, for instance, that many of the Chinese immigrants who attain managerial and professional positions in Canada were already highly educated and wealthy professionals in their countries of origin (Li *Chinese* 131). This is particularly the case once we factor in the large group of business and investment immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China since the 1980s: they have not only imported significant capital, but are oftentimes transnational entrepreneurs creating and cementing economic ties between North America and East Asia (132). However, correlation does not equal causation; in the case of the Chinese Canadians' meteoric rise in financial and economic status, observable patterns can be attributed to East Asia's own rapid economic boom in recent decades, as well as the points system in Canada, which favours prospective immigrants from the upper and middle classes. In addition, the image of success may be true for many Chinese Canadians, yet many still actually struggle with poverty and lower wages than their fellow Canadian colleagues (136).

7.2 That's So Asian: The Model Minority Discourse's Reflection on Cultural Character

Despite the fact that the imagined success within the Model Minority discourse does not apply to a large portion of the Asian American and Canadian population, it continues to persist: not only in descriptive terms, but prescriptive ones as well. Although it began as a means to understand a real-life upward social mobility in Japanese and Chinese diasporic communities, and was also created in part as a self-representation by community leaders determined to remove systemic racial barriers against their constituents, the stereotypical image of the diligent, intelligent Asian immigrant has become so prevalent that members of these ethnic groups are now expected to conform to it. The success of Asian Americas and Canadians, by extension, is interpreted not as a response to systemic racism, but in an increasingly culturalist sense, as

though there was something within Asian ethnic communities that makes them inherently likely to thrive. Again, however, because the Model Minority discourse is based on a stereotyped ideal rather than the broader reality of Asian immigrant experiences, this assumption carries several negative implications.

First of all, the emphasis on a Confucian basis for success within the Model Minority discourse allows only a limited degree of upward social, economic and political mobility. According to proponents of the Model Minority, Asian cultures are driven by a strong foundation in Confucian philosophy, which emphasizes intelligence and thoughtfulness over physical strength and assertiveness (Tizon 167). This is conceptualized in the phrase *zhong yong*, "The Doctrine of the Mean":

> The aim of Confucianism is to bring harmony to society, thus the theory of Zhong Yong (The Doctrine of the Mean). Zhong Yong dictates that it is a virtue to be able to live in obscurity and be submerged in the mass. In fact, only people possessing lots of strength and ability can be totally fair, tolerant, and judicious and harmonious with the universe. These ideas lead to prudence, caution, and, most important, modesty and moderation. Self-promotion goes against the Zhong Yong ideas. (Beckett and Zhang 244)

Thus, it is not that an individual who lives according to Confucian values is a pacifist or a pushover. Indeed, from my previous discussion in Chapter 6 of the interviewees featured in *Chinese Canadians* as well as the testimonies of political leaders like Olivia Chow and Adrienne Clarkson, we can see many instances where more proactive attitudes towards both economic success and political activism are upheld as virtues to the broader Chinese Canadian community. What we actually see in Confucianism, then, is an alternate form of leadership, in which respect is given to those who seek alternatives to violence and direct confrontation in conflict resolution: "The perfect man is the brilliant scholar who also happens to know the fine art of throwing a roundhouse kick to an opponent's head – but figures out a way not to have to throw it" (Tizon

168). The wisdom that is sought to create the "perfect man" – or, for our intents and purposes, "perfect person" – can only be found in education and a deference to the experience of elders and authority figures, who, to borrow a Cantonese colloquialism from my own upbringing, have eaten more salt than the youth have rice:

> Chinese society…has been historically oriented toward tradition, and it honors individuals who have mastered proven knowledge. The Chinese believe that acquiring huge amounts of basic knowledge and skills is more important than creativity. From a Confucian perspective, acquiring historical knowledge is highly regarded because, according to this perspective, the present cannot be understood without the past. (Beckett and Zhang 244)

In this way, therefore, Confucianism teaches that diligence and self-restraint would be rewarded by the cultivation of a moral superiority and higher intelligence. People who could live by these standards would thus be better equipped for social relationships than those who resort to more confrontational, abrasive tactics.

It should be clear how these philosophical tenets have led to the development of a group of cultures – mostly from East and Southeast Asia, where Confucianism held sway due to centuries of Chinese hegemony – that uphold educational prowess and submission to authority and tradition as the proper means for survival in a harsh world. Consequently, it was these values that were immediately noted by the Euro-American and Canadian majority from the beginning of Asian immigration, as noted in the *Report of the Royal Commission* in 1885; and they still persist in the present day as visible markers of Asian cultural identity. It is Confucianism, for instance, that is still credited for the high levels of academic achievement among Asian American and Canadian youth, both immigrant and native-born (Tizon 172). In addition, Confucianism emphasizes the needs of the group over those of the individual; true morality, according to its principles, is based upon sacrificing one's own individual desires in favour of making choices

that benefit one's family, community or country (Cain 188-189). Finally, Confucianism functions as an Asianized version of the Protestant work ethic that has predominated North American discourses surrounding capitalism and liberalism: the means towards success is diligence, and respectability comes from a demonstration of merit and good character (Palumbo-Liu 195-197). As we have seen in the interviews featured in *Chinese Canadians* discussed in Chapter 6, in which respondents spoke with pride about the stereotypical portrayal of Chinese culture and identity as one focused on ideals such as hard work, a communal group-oriented mindset, and non-confrontational perseverance, Confucianism is seen as the impetus behind the Chinese Canadians' meteoric rise to academic and economic success: both by the mainstream Canadian society, and by a number of members of the Chinese Canadian communities themselves.

The problem, however, is that these same traits could work against Asian Americans and Canadians as well. This happens when the Euro-American and Canadian mainstream adopt an oversimplified understanding of Confucianism, such that any reference to heritage or tradition is coded as inscrutable, backward, and – ultimately – wholly un-Western. For instance, let us return to a comment by David Palumbo-Liu that had already been featured in this dissertation's Introduction:

> Another example of the transitory nature of Asian America is the contemporary notion of the 'model minority,' founded upon the supposed persistence and rearticulation of '*traditional* Confucian values' in Asian Americans, whose success lies in in their ability to adapt Asia to America as well as to transform America through the application of a 'Confucian' ethos. (21, emphasis original)

Diligence, intelligence and group-orientedness are positive traits at school and in the workforce, but only insofar as there is no need for individuals to hold any positions of authority. A non-confrontational attitude and a strong respect of those in power are desirable characteristics for an

employee, but not an administrator, manager, or executive (Tizon 165). For Asian American and Canadian men, Confucianism within the Model Minority discourse is a form of emasculation that prevents them from being taken seriously as leaders in a society that looks to assertiveness and individuality over the ideals of *zhong yong* as signs of strong leadership (171). This is compounded for women of Asian ancestry, as the complacency associated with Confucian forms of conflict resolution is combined with a host of gender-based stereotypes; if Asians are painted as submissive, and women regardless of racial background are expected to be quiet and docile, then an Asian-descended woman is expected to be all of those things (Shrake 182). Eunlai Kim Shrake, speaking from personal experience as a university professor, explains that Asian American and Canadian women are pressured to hide their true temperaments in lieu of a carefully schooled exterior that is polite, kind and non-confrontational; attempts on her part to act with a more assertive and authoritative air met resistance from both colleagues and students (185). In addition, the colonialist association between the stereotypical Asian woman's gentleness and visible exoticism lead to an increased risk of sexual harassment in the workplace. Shrake herself was subjected to inappropriate comments from students and colleagues about her appearance, and took to dressing more conservatively as a means of personal protection: a reaction that she now admits continued to perpetuate the stereotype of Asian people's complacency and passivity (189). Consequently, because the Model Minority discourse leads mainstream society to expect Asian Americans and Canadians to be silently diligent and politely deferential in the face of adversity as a means to higher excellence, Asian immigrants and their descendants are seen as less desirable candidates for promotion into managerial or leadership positions, and believed to be less likely to resist when systemic racism does occur in the workplace.

Within Canada itself, a related consequence of the rise of the Model Minority discourse is the way in which it intersects with multiculturalism policy. Recall from Chapter One that the official multiculturalism policy emphasizes ethnic and cultural heritage as something that Canadians of all racial and ethnic origins should have the right to protect and maintain without being pressured to assimilate. While this carries the risk of visible markers and outward signs of culture – food, music, costume, dance, etc. – becoming the sole indicators of ethnocultural diversity, it also means that anything that is associated with a particular culture's historical past becomes static: suspended in time as a relic of heritage that should be maintained and transmitted intact from one generation to the next. In terms of the Model Minority discourse, the problem arises when the same traits that make up the stereotypical image – that Asian Canadians are industrious, studious, submissive, and deeply "traditionalist" and "Confucian" – become incorporated into this vacuous package that is labeled as "cultural heritage": with no consideration given to the many ways that Asian Canadians, Chinese Canadians among them, have, as I have argued thus far in this dissertation, been engaged in a continuous process of re-imagination and re-creation through affective performance (Miki 92-94).

This culturalist assumption that the Model Minority stereotype is somehow innate to Asian American and Canadian identity places enormous pressure upon Asian immigrants and their descendants to perform high achievement. As stated in previous chapters, many immigrant parents, such as Adrienne Clarkson's, saw academic and professional excellence as the road for their children's upward social mobility, as well as the means by which they could supersede the systemic barriers they faced as racialized minorities and achieve full belonging in mainstream Canadian society. However, as the Model Minority discourse reached beyond mere sociological description into a set of prescriptive expectations for "proper" Asian American and Canadian

behaviour, including an "authentic" Chineseness recognized and upheld by the heritage-driven multicultural policy in Canada, the pressure to conform and perform intensified. Asian-descended youth, whether immigrant or native-born, were expected to excel at school, facing demands not only from their own ethnic communities, but from the majority society as well. Even those who performed well by any other standards could be seen as failing as Asians if they were not top of the class or skilled in fields associated with the professions where Asian immigrants have made significant inroads: maths, sciences, technology, and business. This phenomenon is self-deprecatingly referred to as "Asianfail," as described by Eleanor Ty in her book by the same name: "Asians make insider jokes about their own inability to pick up food with chopsticks, to cook rice, or to shine at math or computers…riffing on cultural stereotypes of Asians who are supposed to excel at playing the violin or who are so nerdy that they have no social or sex life" (1).

However, despite its humorous tone, "Asianfail" is no joking matter. Due to the Model Minority discourse, well-intentioned parents are at risk of becoming increasingly demanding; the infamous memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua details her own draconian approach towards raising her children, believing it to be the source of American academic and economic success (Wu *Colour* 254). All of these pressures, from home, school, the workplace, the media, and general society, also lead to Asian American and Canadian youth becoming susceptible to depression (Fong 62-63). Ty argues that "[although] "Asian Fail" Tumblr blogs feature jokes about Asians, usually posted by Asians who laugh at their own foolish mistakes and quirky characteristics, there are serious social, psychic, and physical consequences for Asian North Americans who see themselves as failures" (107). Not only is failure seen as an inability to achieve upward social mobility, a constant goal for racialized Asian communities who are all

too aware of their own continued marginalization, but because of the Model Minority discourse, it is constructed as a failure to be Asian – to be Chinese – in and of itself. "Asianfail," then, is similar to Wayson Choy's self-deprecation in *Paper Shadows*, as previously discussed in Chapter 4, in which he labels himself a *"mo-no"* and a "banana" due to his difficulties in learning Chinese dialects and traditional customs (78, 84); perhaps the designation is meant to be taken tongue-in-cheek, but the implied ostracism and criticism from within the Chinese Canadian community for such failures is still vividly clear.

Thus, the Model Minority discourse, in its present day application, is an example of culturalism, in which the basis for discrimination is not one's biological features, as in scientific forms of racism, but one's ethnic culture and its values. By upholding seemingly positive characteristics such as intelligence, obedience, and group-mindedness as pivotal components of an Asian cultural psyche, the Model Minority discourse allows systemic racism to continue. It posits Asian immigrants and their descendants, Chinese Canadians among them, as perfectionist students at school and submissive and hardworking employees in the workplace, based upon the assumption that these traits stem from a traditional Confucian mindset that has migrated with them from China. However, by a similar token, those same traits prevent teachers and employers among others from seeing their Chinese students and workers as potential assets in creative fields and leadership roles, and those who do break out from the conventional mould are presumed to have lost their "Asianness" in the process. Consequently, while the Model Minority discourse, in its ascription of economic and social achievement to Asian minorities in North America, has allowed them a position of prominence in a multicultural society, it also places limits upon them: they could rise, but not all the way to the top, where Eurocentric hegemony is still the norm.

7.3 Divide and Conquer: The Model Minority Discourse as a Counter-Resistance Tactic

Along with preventing Asian Americans and Canadians from rising to positions of prominent leadership and influence, the Model Minority discourse is also criticized by anti-racist scholars such as Pawan Dhingra, Timothy Fong, and Frank Wu because of how it has been harnessed by those in power to prevent the marginalized from uniting in an alliance to challenge their authority. The critique of the Model Minority discourse here is similar to that which anti-racist scholars have also leveled at Canada's multiculturalist policy: it creates the false sense of security that Asian American and Canadian success is proof that racism has been eradicated. In addition, from an anti-racist perspective, the Model Minority discourse provides the privileged majority an excuse to justify the marginalization of racialized minorities – or, if nothing else, to resist the protests of activists and lobbyists demonstrating against systemic racism. This is done by emphasizing the "Model" component of the Model Minority discourse: Asian Americans and Canadians' stereotypical non-confrontational complacency and economic success are made into a standard that other racialized minorities, particularly Blacks, Latinos, and Indigenous peoples are supposed to emulate. It is, to put it colloquially, a demand for those suffering from racialized violence and systemic inequalities to shut up.

Anti-racist scholars who criticize the Model Minority discourse usually trace their argument to its origins during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Lobbyists and sympathetic politicians protested against segregationist laws by arguing that the poor academic and economic prospects for African Americans were not caused by any moral or intellectual inferiority, but on systemic racial barriers that limited their progress. They were joined by activists from a host of different racialized minority groups, including second- and third-generation Asian Americans, who were beginning to see themselves as a viable political unit that

traversed ethnonational ties to include members from different countries of origin (Kwong 75). Alongside African Americans, Latinos, and Indigenous peoples, among others, Asian Americans worked to protest the barriers that had been placed before them by Euro-American powers. Even though scientific rationalizations for racism had died out with the end of the Second World War in popular discourse, the lack of access for racialized minorities to higher levels of education, administrative and managerial positions in the workplace, and places of political power had still been kept in place, seemingly without reason. The only possible explanation, for the anti-racist activists of the Civil Rights Movement – and other affiliated movements such as Black Power, Red Power, and Yellow Power movements – was that those who were privileged were unwilling to relinquish their exalted status, and thus used race as the means to justify an internal oppression and colonization on their fellow Americans and Canadians (Dhingra 105).

All things considered, the Civil Rights Movement won racialized minorities in both the United States and Canada many of the rights that had been denied to them, including an end to formal segregation laws. In later years, this even led to the emergence of affirmative action policies that could give individuals from marginalized groups a slight advantage in seeking employment or admission to universities. For instance, institutions might be required to admit a minimum of individuals from groups that had previously been underrepresented; or, in the event that two applicants for a job, one Caucasian and another from a racialized minority group, were equally qualified in terms of education, credentials, and prior work experience, the company might be obliged to choose the racialized candidate. Finally, yet another outcome from the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s was the move by both American and Canadian governments to open their immigration policies and officially remove race as a deciding factor for admission or refusal (Fong 27).

However, in spite of all the good that these earlier anti-racist movements have achieved, the alliances that they spawned were ultimately short-lived. The reason is because race in North America cannot simply be understood as White vs. Non-white; rather, all ethnicities occupy different positions on a sliding hierarchy. Historically, Mediterranean and Eastern Europeans, as well as Jews regardless of geographical origin, have been marginalized despite their "white" phenotypical features. Similarly, racialized minorities are not all equally marginalized: some are seen as more desirable candidates for acceptance into mainstream society than others. The Model Minority discourse, as it was employed as a countermeasure to the Civil Rights Movement, is an example of the latter view. The success story of Asian immigrants and their descendants was thrown back at Civil Rights Movement protesters as an example of activism-done-right: instead of demonstrating or lobbying for better rights, Black Americans should take the example of Asian Americans, who, it was believed, rose to status through dogged determination and labour (Wu *Yellow* 67). Note, however, that what concerned parties who used the Model Minority discourse as a prescriptive standard for other racialized Americans was not the reality of Asian American and Canadian experiences. Rather, their entire rhetoric was based upon the imagined version that stems from the limited understanding of Confucianism discussed earlier in this chapter. For instance, in reference to the American context, Robert Lee notes:

> Asian American "success" is a product of an *unspecified and decontextualized traditional Asian culture*. Tradition is reduced to the values of obedience, discipline, and motivation enacted by the family, those traditions most valued in the late capitalist economy. (186, emphasis mine)

Sometimes, such mythologizing of the Asian American subject, completely separated from lived reality, even descended into the ridiculous. For example, some permutations of the Model Minority discourse even went so far as to revert to a scientific basis for racism, arguing that

Asian Americans were simply more intelligent than their Black, Latinx, and Indigenous counterparts (Wu *Yellow* 62).

The establishment of Asian Americans and Canadians as a Model Minority in comparison to Black and Latinx Americans and Canadians exacerbated pre-existing tensions within alliances of racialized minorities. For better or worse, much of the discussion surrounding race in North America has worked on a Black-White divide: a system that, in addressing two poles of a spectrum, neglect the disparate experiences of the vast middle ground. Thus, for instance, while segregationist laws and strict immigration controls were intended to preserve white spaces for whites, the Civil Rights Movement, for some activists, was a predominantly Black activity (336). Making matters even worse, the Model Minority discourse, used in this manner, fed into a desire already evident within Asian American and Canadian communities: the desire to be validated; to be told that they were doing the right thing in the face of racial discrimination and inequality; to be told that they were innately good people and worthwhile assets to society (66). Indeed, the schisms that have been created by this rhetoric have sometimes even reached the point of violence and overt division along racial lines. For example, in the summer of 2018, protests erupted in the city of Markham, a municipality just north of Toronto that claims itself to be one of Canada's most ethnically diverse, against purported "illegal border crossers": most notably for our purposes is that the protesters were predominantly Chinese Canadian, and the so-called "illegal border crossers" were said to be mostly Nigerian (Kelly).

In Canada, where multiculturalism policy places such a strong emphasis on one's specific ethnocultural background and heritage, such schisms can go even further. Eleanor Ty and Donald C. Goellnicht argue that this impetus has not only led to a fragmentation of potential alliances across different racialized groups, but also creates divisions amongst Asian Canadian

communities themselves: “Canadians of Asian origins often identify themselves as Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians, or more recently, Sri Lankan Canadians or Filipino Canadians, rather than Asian Canadians” (6). It is a pattern that can be traced back to the beginning of the Model Minority discourse in Canada during the Second World War: an arbitrary and artificial competition between Japanese and Chinese Canadian communities for acceptance into the mainstream Canadian society based upon the divergent policies in their nations of origin. Thus, even into the present day, the conflation between the Model Minority discourse and various Asian cultures – in our case, Chinese – is manifest in a performance of conformity to a racialized interpellated subjectivity by Chinese Canadian communities in order to garner respect and citizenship rights from the governments that had passed exclusionary legislation against them (Kelly). To have their and their descendants’ achievements lauded in such a manner, for many Asian Canadians, is simply too good of a potential reward to resist.

Consequently, Asian Canadian activists and critics who act otherwise by criticizing the Model Minority discourse are painted as ungrateful discontents who were unable to be thankful for the compliments the discourse is giving them. As for members of other racialized minorities, attempts to critique the Model Minority discourse set them up as examples of the very protest the discourse was meant to denounce. The end result, for all parties, is schisms developing between racialized minorities, who are now vying for higher positions in a racial hierarchy while those on top to begin with are comfortably seated in their place of power. Under such circumstances, then, perhaps the only viable solution would be an interrogation of the history of division at the core of the Model Minority discourse, combined with efforts from those Asian Canadians whom the discourse exalts to transcend racial boundaries and return to forging alliances with other

racialized and marginalized groups, as shown in Chapter 6 through Olivia Chow's grassroots and parliamentary activism in *My Journey*.

7.4 Should We Be Grateful?: Negotiating the Model Minority Discourse and Its Criticisms

In many ways, my presentation of the pitfalls and drawbacks of the Model Minority discourse function like the ones I have discussed in regards to Canada's multiculturalism policy. While there are many significant flaws in the discourse, and it has been abused in many ways to maintain systemic racial privileges and inequalities, there is no denying that, for many Asian Americans and Canadians, the discourse is still seen as a beneficial change in their social status. Reflecting back on the ways in which the Model Minority discourse initially developed as a means for East Asian immigrants to assert their assimilability and fight for their proper rights and recognitions as citizens, I cannot simply treat it as a tool for enforcing Eurocentric hegemony in North American racial dynamics. Nor, in all fairness, would it be right to belittle the achievements of those Asian Americans and Canadians whose stories and experiences do, in fact, follow the key points of the Model Minority discourse. However they are used and interpreted by others around them, the literary, academic, economic, social, and political success of individuals such as Olivia Chow, Adrienne Clarkson, or those individuals whose narratives were chosen to be featured in *Chinese Canadians* cannot be discounted, nor should they be.

Nevertheless, I have no qualms with criticizing the Model Minority discourse, as evidenced in this chapter. Rather, as a Chinese Canadian PhD candidate myself, I have to do so with caution and introspection. First of all, no matter what flaws I see within the Model Minority discourse, no matter how much I am in agreement with the arguments discussed thus far, I cannot deny that I am an example of that discourse itself. Secondly, I believe that arguments that

accuse white political institutions of playing racialized minorities against each other in order to maintain their own systemic privilege negates the agency of said minorities. I do not mean this as a form of victim-blaming; indeed, the responsibility for any form of racism should rest solely upon the perpetrator. However, neither the lull of security that the Model Minority discourse offers to many Asian Americans and Canadians, nor the discourse's history as an act of resistance against the Yellow Peril stereotype, can be denied. Given a choice between a seemingly positive and an overtly negative stereotype, it is no wonder that many have chosen the positive one: it is simple pragmatism.

Thus, my proposed solution in this study is not to do away with the Model Minority discourse, nor to condemn it wholescale. Instead, it is to examine it from multiple angles, to understand the many intricate threads – interpellation, internalization, performance, agency, and resistance – that have factored into its creation and evolution. Only by doing this can I as a Chinese Canadian anti-racist scholar restore agency to those who have benefited from it, and thus to rewrite the history of Chinese immigration to Canada. Whether speaking of the Yellow Peril or the Model Minority discourse, the Exclusion Era or today's multiculturalist zeitgeist, Chinese Canadians are not victims of history, tossed by different ideological and political waves with no voice of their own. Instead, throughout this process, they have been working to show the many facets of their experience: both those elements that are desirable to systemic powers, and contradictory to their preferred views of themselves.

Chapter 8: Speaking Up and Breaking Rules: Refuting the Model Minority Discourse in Chinese Canadian Life Writing

Just as many Chinese Canadian writers have worked to construct narratives that corroborate the Model Minority discourse, many others have made conscious efforts to contradict it. The authors and contributors featured in this chapter are among the many Chinese Canadians whose stories offer a more diverse perspective on Asian Canadian experiences, including their negotiations of both the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses. For some, their career choices fell outside of what was considered the norm for the stereotypical Chinese Canadian: pursuing the arts or humanities in lieu of sciences or business, as an example. These individuals saw a commitment to their interests and passions to be more important than outward signs of success: financial prosperity and a place in the upper echelons of mainstream society. For others, their interrogation of the Model Minority discourse stems from its negative effects: the intense pressure on young people to succeed in a very limited number of disciplines; or the taboo surrounding discussions of parental abuse, depression, and mental illness. Put together, these artists and writers offer a broader view on Chinese Canadian culture and experience, acting as living proof that there are options available to young people outside of the stereotypical expectation, and validating the feelings of alienation and loneliness that, while universal, are often neglected in the Model Minority discourse.

This chapter will focus predominantly on three primary sources. The first, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism*, is a collection of interviews of a number of Asian Canadian artists who have used various media, including film and visual arts, to express their ideas to the broader society. For these people, art is never for art's own sake; instead, it is a political act.

Although the book from which these interviews are drawn features individuals of many different Asian ethnicities, my focus will be on those who identified as Chinese Canadian. The remaining two texts, *Runaway* by Evelyn Lau and *Out of the Blue* by Jan Wong, are two memoirs that address realities that are often neglected in the Model Minority discourse's depiction of modern-day Chinese Canadian experiences. Both writers focus on their struggles with depression: for Lau, as a teenage girl who has finally reached the breaking point when her parents deny her her dreams of becoming a writer; and for Wong, as a result of a severe public backlash to an article she wrote for *The Globe and Mail* concerning systemic racism in Quebec.

All of these pieces of life writing present a contrasting form of Chinese Canadian experience: one that not only belies the tenets of the Model Minority stereotype, but also its purported benefits. By showing the discourse's flaws and harmful effects through their personal experiences, these authors allow us to interrogate whether the promised positive outcomes of conforming to the Model Minority discourse are truly worth the risks. Lau and Wong's works in particular reflect the expansion of memoir as a genre to include "embodiment stories of gender and sexuality," and "narratives of breakdown and breakthrough, illness, impairment, vulnerability, addiction, and recovery" (Smith and Watson 128). Therefore, in contrast to the political memoirs by Olivia Chow and Adrienne Clarkson already discussed in Chapter 6, these two works are more of a reflection of Rak's conceptualization of memoir's immense potential to blur the boundaries between the public presence of the text and the private life of its creator (33).

8.1 Speaking Up Through Art: Chinese Canadian Cultural Activism

As with immigrant writing and literature, the visual and media arts have been a means for racialized minorities to reclaim their historical narratives and make their voices heard to a

broader audience. The book *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* by Xiaoping Li is an in-depth study of how Asian Canadian artists have used their work to spread political messages. In essence, *Voices Rising* is two separate works: the first half is a scholarly discussion and analysis of the history of Asian Canadian arts and activism, particularly in how they shaped understandings of culture and identity; the second section, which is the focus of my study, is titled "Voices" and features interviews from twenty individuals who have engaged in cultural activism in various media. It is important to note that *Voices Rising* has contributors from several different ethnic backgrounds whose lives and careers span the latter half of the 20th century. However, for our intents and purposes, I have only included Chinese Canadian artists in this analysis; it is not that the contributions of artists from different ethnic groups have not impacted the development of Chinese Canadian cultural arts or vice-versa, but rather that Chinese Canadian activists, even as part of a pan-Asian identity or a collective racialized alliance, have to address issues specific to their own cultural context and history.

One of the common themes running throughout the interviews in *Voices Rising* is a desire to add depth to representations of Asian Americans and Canadians in the media. Some of the older interviewees who were more experienced in the field by the time of the collection's publication recalled their frustration at the depictions that were available to them in their formative years; for instance, Sean Gunn, a poet and songwriter, noted, "I looked like those Asian guys the American soldiers were shooting [in war movies]. Having internalized all the negative stereotypes of Asians, I had grown with a sense of self-hatred, and of course, secretly, I wished that I were white" (Li *Voices* 145). Like young people of any ethnicity, these Chinese Canadians yearned for role models in popular culture: people whose achievements and morality could become something for them to aspire to. However, for much of the 20th century, North

American media portrayals of Asians focused strongly on the Yellow Peril stereotype: inevitable, perhaps, with histories including the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, but frustrating nonetheless for those children who grew up only seeing their compatriots as villains. Where Asians either in Asia or overseas were not depicted negatively, they were conspicuously absent in accounts of North American history (145).

Even with the increased popularity of the Model Minority and multiculturalist discourses, there were still glaring discrepancies in conventional portrayals of Asian Canadian experiences. For example, Keith Lock, a filmmaker, remarked that there was a normative form that racialized minority artists are expected to follow: "There are a lot of immigrant stories to tell, but they also become cliché if you're not careful. The problem is that this is also the kind of film you are allowed to make" (126). Immigrant narratives, while an improvement from a time when minority stories were simply omitted in favour of ones that focus on official national mythologies of settler colonialism, are still only one aspect of the Asian Canadian experience. If nothing else, the classic arc of the immigrant as the fish out of water struggling to survive in a new environment before ultimately finding success and closure reads too optimistically for artists whose primary interest is in interrogating established narratives. However, there is no denying that such stories, which are strongly reminiscent of the Model Minority discourse, are more comfortable for mainstream consumers, and attempts to present alternative perspectives are sometimes met with hostility for "disrupting their cozy universe" (126). Overly optimistic immigrant narratives are, to return to Marlene Nourbese Philip's criticism of Canada's publishing industry, the ones most likely to be deemed "good" by the mainstream establishment (161).

A similar criticism emerges in relation to what is commonly accepted as ethnic or multicultural art: in accordance to multiculturalism policy's emphasis on cultural tradition and heritage, art forms that are considered historical, authentic or traditional hold precedence in bids for official government funding (Li *Voices* 161). This broad definition of ethnic heritage, linking back to the previous paragraph, also includes the immigrant narrative arc as laid out by the Model Minority discourse: tropes such as struggles between polarities of identity – i.e. between Chineseness and Canadianness – the construction of Chinese culture as being beautiful in its millennia-long history but also irremediably backward and patriarchal; and the bildungsroman-like assumption that hard work will bring about success can, at times, appear to be the only acceptable themes in multicultural art, literature, and media. Yet, in actuality, Chinese Canadian artists and their creations occupy a far broader scope, including hybrid forms that combine elements of mainstream and ethnic cultures and issues. Thus, as noted by songwriter Sean Gunn,

> Vancouver has seen new singer songwriters like Lala; new bands like Silk Road Music, South of Main, Cub, and Yeast; and the establishment of an Asian Canadian techno music scene, pioneered by people and bands like Don Chow, dj Killer D, the duo, and the No Luck club. Through the decade, Jeet K da Tripmaster has been rapping his unique brand of Asian Canadian hip-hop. (151-152)

In the eyes of Gunn and his fellow artists, such as theatre actor and producer Keeman Wong, what ultimately makes these hybrid artistic forms "Asian Canadian" is not so much their adherence to a set criteria based upon traditionalist conceptualizations of culture and identity, but that they are created by artists who identify as Asian Canadian in order to address pertinent issues in the realities that they and their communities face as racialized members of Canadian society (160).

Adding to their interrogation of ethnicity under multiculturalist policy, the artists in *Voices Rising*, while passionate about asserting their place in Canadian arts as members of a racialized minority, also seek to look beyond identity politics. A problem with multiculturalism is that it forces artists and audiences alike to retain certain labels: being thought of as "Chinese" rather than "Canadian" by virtue of one's immigrant heritage. Fortunately, for the interviewees, prospects look promising as a new generation of Asian Canadian youth, having grown up exposed to the presence of these forerunners, are now actively seeking careers as artists: not due to their ethnicity, but out of a passionate love for the art itself (161).

One issue that is particularly worth noting in considering *Voices Rising*'s tense relationship with the Model Minority discourse is that simply by pursuing the arts, the interviewees are breaking the mould. Indeed, according to Ty, the Model Minority discourse is flawed due to its narrow definition of success: one that "define[s] success exclusively as attaining capital and material goods, being accepted at top-tier schools, winning Nobel prizes, and getting on Forbes lists, *with little regard for making a difference in the sphere of arts, culture, or politics or fighting for social justice, the environment, or peace*" (*Asianfail* 10, emphasis mine). Thus, even if the work of the activists and artists portrayed in *Voices Rising* were apolitical in nature, their interests and career choices automatically would mark them out as individuals contradicting the stereotypical image. This was remarked upon not only by mainstream audiences, but from Chinese Canadian communities themselves; for example, William Lau, a dancer, recalled that his parents were initially opposed to his career choice: "They wanted me to go into engineering, like any 'good Chinese kids'" (Li *Voices* 178). Of course, what must be noted is that Lau's parents did not disapprove out of a simple negative bias towards performance art, but rather because they were concerned that life as a dancer was not

financially stable, particularly because they were Chinese. In essence, community pressure on Chinese Canadian youth to pursue interests in the sciences and commerce rather than the arts is not due to an innate aptitude in the STEM fields, as suggested by the Model Minority discourse, but because there was such a dearth of Asian Canadian artists who found acceptance in mainstream society that elders feared for their own children's financial well-being.

Thus, the artists featured in *Voices Rising* are rightfully considered trailblazers in multiculturalist art and culture: as they either find success or lobby for recognition in the face of the lack thereof, they prove to future generations of racialized Canadians that careers in the arts are indeed possible. It is at this point that a consideration of the phenomena observed by Ty in *Asianfail* can provide a key update on the progression of the counter-discourse that was started by the activists interviewed for *Voices Rising*, many of whom began their careers in the final decades of the 20th century. In the new millennium, the advent of digital and online media as a burgeoning communicative tool "allows Asian North Americans to circumvent the gatekeepers of traditional mass media outlets like television, radio, newspapers, and film in order to express their views, tell their own stories, criticize or mock aspects of dominant culture, and most importantly, create a sense of the Asian diasporic community" (Ty *Asianfail* 17). Thus, even though pursuing careers in the arts and entertainment industries is still frowned upon by proponents of the traditional Model Minority discourse – which seeks to divide careers and professions into profitable and non-profitable, "Asian" and "Other" – Asian North Americans, Chinese Canadians among them, are continuing their social, cultural and political activism both as professionals and as politically conscious amateurs. They are using new forms of media to "[highlight] the achievements of Asian American artists and those who do community work on behalf of Asian Americans", to "[call] out racist acts" and to "[foster] identity formation, using

anger, wit, and humor [sic] to articulate resistance against racism directed at Asian Americans" (18).

Yet, although the prospect of alliance-building across Asian North American communities into a broader pan-Asian diaspora has its merits in generating a collective activist voice, the opposite effect has also taken place alongside it. Thus, some of the artists featured in *Voices Rising*, such as Mina Shum and Wayne Yung, openly refute the Model Minority discourse by positioning themselves and their work outside of racial identity politics. While a broader variety of Asian Canadian cultural productions has become socially acceptable in recent decades, and even lauded as part of Canadian artistic culture in general, some of the interviewees in *Voices Rising* still felt that being labelled as "Chinese Canadian" artists limited their freedom of expression. For example, Mina Shum, a filmmaker, prefers to identify herself as an independent filmmaker as opposed to any ethnic or cultural label (219). The reasoning behind this is that she enjoys the broad scope of possibility and imagination in producing films, particularly the agency it offers her as the person behind the process: "I get to exercise all my desires, my various forms of expression – no matter how short the film is" (215). Although she admittedly does not consciously shy away from incorporating her Chinese cultural identity into her projects, that is not a given in her films; and she fears that an overt alignment with Chinese Canadian interests would pigeonhole her into being assigned only to projects with openly ethnic references (219-220).

For some other artists like Wayne Yung, also a filmmaker, thinking beyond ethnicity and immigrant stereotyping entails incorporating intersectionality into their work. As an openly gay Chinese Canadian, he realizes that it is foolish to conceive of either ethnic or sexual identity in essentialist terms (244). In particular, Yung finds it problematic that queer culture in North

America is predominantly imagined as white, when gays of different ethnic backgrounds have their own forms of sexual and personal expression that can sometimes be omitted by the stereotypes (242-243). Additionally, he remarks that the Asian Canadian queer community is itself very exclusivist, assuming that Asian gay men should only pursue others of the same race. Although he concedes that this is because Eurocentrism is still so strong within North American queer culture that racialized minority men would seldom be regarded as equal partners in an interracial relationship, he argues that society should progress to a point where interraciality is seen as an acceptable goal between equals (243). In this way, Yung, Shum, and other Chinese Canadian interviewees in *Voices Rising* seek to assert themselves as individual subjects separate from their ethnic identities. They refuse to be restricted to the "ethnic" or "Chinese" box, which also removes them from the Model Minority discourse and its idealization of Asian stereotypes: after all, there is no room in the image of the strongly patriarchal Confucian Chinese immigrant for queers, or for those who choose not to self-identify in strictly culturalist terms. Thus, through their art, and even by their very existence and visible presence in Canada's multicultural or ethnic artistic scene, all of the artists-cum-activists featured in *Voices Rising* are expanding upon and re-creating Chinese Canadianness to include a greater diversity of experiences and images: no longer a single Chinese Canadian subject, but many existing simultaneously, each of them valid and real.

8.2 Breaking Under Pressure: Consequences of Model Minority Parenting in Evelyn Lau's *Runaway*

In some instances, rebellion against the Model Minority discourse is intertwined with a more universally personal form of resistance. Such is the case for Evelyn Lau, whose teenage memoir, *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid*, is an unflinching look at the darker aspects of youth

homelessness, drug addiction, and sexual exploitation in 1980s Vancouver. An aspiring writer, Lau ran away from home when she was fourteen years old, determined to escape from her parents' aspirations for her, which she felt were too stifling and contrary to her own dreams. In the two years that she was homeless, Lau kept a diary that was later edited and published as a single volume: *Runaway*.

Because this book was originally a private journal, it is textually markedly different from the other works that have been featured in this study thus far. Rather than conforming to a clear narrative arc or focusing on specific themes as memoirs often do, *Runaway* is at times as stream-of-consciousness as Lau's own mind was. Presented intact in its format as a diary, even after editing for publication, *Runaway* needs to be read not simply as an account of Lau's journey, but one that is playing out in real time: not as events in the past, although they did take place in the 1980s, but as events in Lau's own present as she wrestles with her situation, her prospects, and her identity. This is in keeping with the perceived unfinished quality of diary as a form of life-writing: "The immediacy of the genre derives from the diarist's lack of foreknowledge about outcomes of the plot of [his/her] life" (Smith and Watson 266). Thus, unlike a memoir, which can be read as a text that has been carefully constructed and curated by its author, a diary, at least implicitly, is meant to be even more intimate still: a glimpse of its creator as a work in progress.

Because of this format, as Larissa Lai phrases it, "The Lau of this text is both more and less than a full subject. Held together on the one hand by unrealistic parental expectation, torn apart on the other by the most destructive of Althusserian hailings – 'junkie whore' – she oscillates between the sublime and the abject" (*Slanting* 47). Thus, *Runaway* is an account of Lau's quest for self-discovery and autonomy in a society that seeks to make her conform to its norms. It also ends not with resolution, but with a greater sense of the complex social and

cultural forces that dictate her Chinese Canadian woman's body: "a doubly virulent stereotype of the Asian woman as innocent and childlike on the one hand and excessive and sexually deviant on the other" (48). In showing this, *Runaway* serves as a damning condemnation of the Model Minority discourse and its implied binary between Confucian modes of success and abject failure. By the book's conclusion, Evelyn Lau is simply herself: neither bending to the tenets of the Model Minority discourse, nor ashamed in her failure to follow them.

Evelyn Lau begins her account with a brief Prologue that summarizes the significant elements of her childhood and background that motivated her to leave her family home. Even as a small child, she was highly intelligent, with a love for reading and a desire to become a writer from when she was six years old (Lau xi). Her parents, however, hoped for her to become top of her class at school so that she could study to become either a doctor or a lawyer: both of which were acceptable "Model Minority" professions for Chinese Canadians (xi). In this introduction, Lau shows particular hostility towards her mother, whom she describes as a high-strung and extremely demanding woman who frequently lost her temper at the young Evelyn's mistakes (xi). While Lau's father was kinder to her than her mother was, he was also financially unsuccessful, becoming unemployed when she was ten years old (xii). In hindsight, Lau understands that her mother's harsh behaviour towards her as well as her more manic tendencies were driven by frustration at what she perceived as her husband's failure to provide for the family: if the head of the household could not succeed, then the second generation – Evelyn – must (xii). This parental pressure is, according to Eleanor Ty, oftentimes constructed as a conventional trajectory for first-generation immigrants in the latter half of the 20th century: "immigration, assimilation, and the struggle for upward mobility and the 'American' dream" (*Asianfail* 20).

It is thus telling that Lau, although a child of the 1970s and 1980s, reveals in her childhood recollections a very different mindset: one that is focused on "disenchantment, depression, aimlessness, rebellion against the stereotypes of the model minority, and often the negative consequences of the famed hard-working ethos of immigrants" (Ty *Asianfail* 20). She thus describes her own desire to escape from the pressures around her by retreating into her love of books and writing (Lai *Slanting* 46). While in elementary school, Lau escaped into a fantasy world whenever possible; she immersed herself into the fictional narratives she read, living through the characters' experiences (Lau xii). She also began keeping a journal at this point in her life. What is particularly notable, however, is that invention and imagination were already a key component of Lau's reality. She describes her journal entries as "cheerful" – not because her childhood was happy, but in a futile attempt to make it seem that way (xii). As she transitioned from childhood into adolescence, familial tensions began to take their toll in other ways. In her teenaged years, Lau developed both depression and bulimia: a result of both her parents' restriction of her writing – which they saw as impractical – and a worsening self-esteem as her perceived inadequacies continued to pile up (xiii-xiv).

These new developments Lau kept hidden from her family, believing that they would neither understand what she was feeling nor offer her any sympathy (xiv). Indeed, prior to her decision to run away when she was fourteen years old, she displayed few outward signs of resistance: a compliance she later attributed to fear of punishment (xii). Instead, Lau tried ever harder to please her parents, performing the tasks that she knew she needed to play the role of the "proper" Chinese Canadian daughter aspiring to become one of the Model Minority: committing hours to homework and piano practice, foregoing friendships or dating in favour of housework, refusing to experiment with drugs and alcohol, etc. (xiv). Yet, when even these good behaviours

did not seem to appease her mother, Lau finally decided, in the spring of 1986, that she had endured enough. With no real premeditation or planning, on a spur of a moment decision, Lau left her family home in Vancouver and did not look back.

I focus so much upon the Prologue in this analysis because it is an important foundation for how Lau's experiences are simultaneously exceptional and universal. On the one hand, there are many ways in which her story diverges from the imagined path taken by Chinese Canadian youth. Although the Model Minority discourse emphasizes diligence and education as markers of Chinese Canadian identity, Lau engages in them primarily as a temporary coping mechanism to survive what she perceives to be a hostile environment: her own home. *Runaway*, in its open discussion of Lau's rebellion and exposure to drug addiction and the sex industry among other vices, can be interpreted as an example of teenage delinquency; if nothing else, such activities are certainly not what "good Chinese Canadian kids" would do. Yet, on the other hand, the fact that Lau maintained a façade of obedience throughout her childhood makes the reader wonder whether she truly is an outlier. How many Chinese Canadian youth, facing pressure to conform and to succeed, knowing that both society and their own communities expect only the best from them, are also feeling overwhelmed? How many who excel at school or who work diligently towards entering a career in a professional field are also performing conformance to the Model Minority discourse purely as a manner of survival? Although Lau herself does not discuss this in *Runaway* – instead, she often describes feeling alienated from other teenagers, particularly as her experiences on the streets force her to inhabit a very different world from the one that many high-schoolers face – it is worth wondering as readers whether she is in fact speaking to things that are universal, experienced by youth regardless of gender, social class, or ethnicity. Perhaps,

Lau's depression, low self-esteem, and feelings of isolation and alienation are more common than meets the eye; and her exceptionalism is simply in how she chose to act upon them.

Much of Lau's narrative continues in cyclical fashion as she travels between relative shelter and security under the guidance of social workers and psychologists and descending levels of darkness as she becomes addicted to drugs and resorts to prostitution. Throughout this process, however, Lau's frustration at her own helplessness becomes increasingly clear. At certain moments throughout the diary, she regrets having made the choices that she did (41); yet, in the early stages, she continues to assert that a dangerous life on the streets is preferable to what had been her life with her parents (48). However, a pervading theme in *Runaway* is Lau's own sense of guilt and shame, particularly as she begins to internalize the way that she is labelled and interpellated by the society around her: the street kid, the drug addict, the teenaged prostitute, the failed Chinese Canadian. While she despises the men who solicit sexual favours from her, she also comes to believe that she is deserving of the degradation that she associates with prostitution: "Nobody could punish me more than I had already punished myself" (164). At times, she is so conscious of her own situation that when help is offered, she refuses, convinced that she does not deserve empathy; interestingly, at the same time, she argues to herself that her decision to stay away from her parents and their expectations for her is her ultimate act of agency (102).

Yet, as the book winds towards its conclusion, Lau finds herself internally fragmenting. On the one hand, she is a hardened street kid, both addicted to drugs and working in the sex industry; on the other hand, she is a child who is only seeking for love and acceptance (267-268). Lau even admits that prostitution, as dehumanizing as it has been for her, is still a form of recognition, a substitute for what she truly desired most: "That is the response I would like with

my writing, but it hasn't happened yet, maybe never will happen" (258). As she becomes increasingly aware that there is still a part of her deep inside that is fixed in a childlike state, she understands the rationale behind her ability to detach herself emotionally from her clients. She is, in those moments, trying to make herself at least mentally asexual: not claiming ownership over her body, but only the spirit within it (275). Nevertheless, the child within Evelyn finally asserts herself while she is with a lover, and she finds herself declining potential clients in a resurgence of vulnerability and self-loathing (288). It is, however, only at this point, in the denouement of *Runaway*, that Lau comes to understand the core of her mental and emotional instability: a desire to be accepted by her father, who had been ineffectually passive in the face of her mother's abuse (288-289). This realization brings the main body of *Runaway* to a close, after which point it is assumed that Lau's life as a teenaged runaway, drug addict, and sex worker comes to an end.

It is worth noting, however, that *Runaway* does not end simply with Lau leaving her life on the streets behind. In the Epilogue that concludes the book, she notes that despite making more positive changes in her life, she still defies expectation: "I was torn between catering to what people wanted to hear – I'm off the streets, I'm off drugs, life is wonderful – and the truth" (293). By saying this, Lau is not implying that she is either still on the streets or still addicted to drugs; she is honest about a relapse into using tranquilizers while fighting a legal battle to get *Runaway* published, but also reassures the reader that her condition has improved from the dependency described in the main body (294). Instead, this assertion that the truth is not what her audience might expect is Lau's assertion of self and agency, by which she finally claims ownership of her own unusual adolescence. She is not a "model" in any sense of the term, nor does she want to become the "good Chinese Canadian kid" now by acting as the grateful former delinquent who is now going straight (293). Lau refuses to shy away from or abhor the darkness

of her past experiences as a teenaged runaway, strongly aware that they are a formative part of her personal history: without those two years, she would simply not be who she is at the time of the book's publication (294). She continues to desire for love and acceptance, but now makes it clear that she will do so through her writing and not by conforming to anyone's expectations of her.

8.3 The Price for Speaking Out: Writing as Activism in Jan Wong's *Out of the Blue*

In the world of Chinese Canadian writers, Jan Wong is one of the boldest. As a university student, she chose to leave her life in Montreal to study abroad in China in the thick of the Cultural Revolution. She later returned to China as a journalist for *The Globe and Mail*, during which time she witnessed the social, cultural and political upheavals that culminated in the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989. Throughout most of her journalistic career, Wong deeply enjoyed the excitement of searching out new leads to follow and shedding light on stories and issues from around the world; her journalism was investigative and oftentimes political in nature (Wong 53). Her earlier memoirs such as *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now*, and *Jan Wong's China: Reports from a Not-So-Foreign Correspondent* offered Canadian audiences a rare glimpse into everyday realities in Maoist and post-Maoist China, although they also made her a controversial figure in China itself for her unflinching examination of the darker effects of the Cultural Revolution and current Chinese Communist Party policies. Given all this, it is clear that addressing potentially contentious political issues is not uncommon in Wong's writing, and that is also the case in one of her most recent works: *Out of the Blue: A Memoir of Workplace Depression, Recovery, Redemption, and, Yes, Happiness*.

Part-autobiographical account and part-investigative study into cultural views of depression, *Out of the Blue* maintains Wong's characteristically unflinching style as she records her experiences battling clinical depression beginning in 2006. In terms of this study, the memoir contradicts the imaginary Chinese Canadian of the Model Minority discourse in two significant ways. Firstly, it addresses issues of mental health and the taboos surrounding depression in both Chinese and Canadian culture. Asian Canadian communities are no stranger to depression, particularly as a result of the Model Minority discourse's extreme pressure upon Asian Canadian individuals to first attain and then maintain the image of the "overachiever immigrant" (Ty *Asianfail* 107, 114). Although Wong can be said to have achieved the expected success extended by the Model Minority discourse's role within Canada's neo-liberal capitalist economy, her struggles with depression undermine and mar this image of perfection. In its narrative, *Out of the Blue* details her proverbial fall from grace: from being a prominent member of the Model Minority to part of its antithesis. Secondly, it matters why Wong developed depression in the first place. In September 2006, while covering the Dawson College shooting in Montreal, Wong noticed a common denominator between the shooter, Kimvill Gill, and the perpetrators behind two past Montreal campus shootings: Marc Lépine at École Polytechnique in 1989, and Valery Fabrikant at Concordia University in 1992. Remarking that all three shooters had been allophone immigrants in a province that was predominantly French Canadian, and well aware of the various racial and ethnic controversies that had surfaced in Quebec over the years, she speculated in her feature article analyzing the Dawson College attack that Gill, Lépine, and Fabrikant had all been lashing out at a society that marginalized them as racialized minorities (Wong 31).

Whether Wong's assessment of the shootings as the results of systemic French Canadian hegemony in Quebec was correct is not important for my analysis. First of all, the fact that all

three perpetrators may have been racialized as people lacking direct French Canadian ancestry does not guarantee that that was the motivation behind their violence. Secondly, whether Gill, the child of Punjabi immigrants; Lépine, the son of an Algerian immigrant; and Fabrikant, a Belarusian émigré could equally be considered racialized minorities is still up for debate. However, what does matter for this discussion is the controversy that erupted because of Wong's article, most particularly its implication that Quebec has retained a covert system of biological racial superiority based upon a blood quantum. In her recollection of her writing process, she discusses her use of the contentious term "*pure laine*" in reference to Quebec and its people. Literally meaning "pure wool," it is also used to describe the part of Quebec's population that could trace itself back to pure French ancestry; as an example of the prevalence of this rhetoric in Quebec society, Wong reveals that despite the fact that her family has lived in Montreal for generations, she would never qualify as "*pure laine*" on account of her Chinese heritage (31). Although she was aware that the term was controversial, both Wong and her editors initially seemed to relish the notoriety it would bring (32); after all, in journalism, what mattered most was that the reporter could grab the reader's attention, and controversy was one of the oldest tricks in the book.

The fact that Wong's article was a direct critique of systemic racism in Quebec makes the resulting backlash incredibly poignant and ironic. After her feature was published, Wong received thousands of hate messages in the ensuing days, many of them accusing her of racism for her portrayal of the Québécois in the article; other comments emphasized her immigrant ancestry, telling her to "Go back to China" (33). She was even asked by Parliament to issue a formal apology for her article (34). It seems from the beginning of *Out of the Blue* that even if Wong did not welcome the vitriolic response, she acknowledged it as part of life as a journalist:

“I figured that if I wasn’t provoking a debate, I wasn’t doing my job” (44). There even appeared to be an element of poetic justice in the backlash, as Wong remarked that the racial abuse she endured was proof of her argument: “a racist backlash on a minority reporter from Quebec for suggesting racism alienated minorities in Quebec” (33). Although Wong conceded that the large negative response was painful, she did not waver in her stance on the issues she addressed. It is possible to read her article as a minority anti-racist critique of Canadian society, and the response she received – particularly assertions that Canada is not, in fact, affected by systemic racism – is a common one faced by scholars, activists, and lobbyists who claim the inadequacy of official multiculturalism policy. In this light, the comments that demanded for Wong to retract her statement or to return to China act as proof that Wong’s behaviour contradicted what her readers perceived to be appropriate behaviour for a member of a racialized Model Minority. She has become the ungrateful discontent who, by her criticism and her refusal to submit and perform the stereotypical role of the quiet Chinese immigrant, no longer “deserves” to belong in Canadian society.

Matters, however, soon escalated beyond Wong’s immediate control, as the racist comments began to be directed not only at her but at her family. A right-wing extremist website ran a blog post calling on its subscribers to boycott the restaurant run by Wong’s father, utilizing sensationalist Yellow Peril imagery, such as claiming that the establishment served condemned meat (35). For Wong, the fact that the backlash had now grown beyond a harsh criticism of her article into a racialized attack on her family simply for being Chinese became too much to bear; in her memoir, she calls this incident “the exact moment I began my descent into depression” (35). Although *The Globe and Mail* moved to file a lawsuit against the owners of the website in question and the offending page was successfully removed, legal action did not prevent similar

equally racist public attacks from occurring (38-39). Within a week of Wong's original publication, administration at *The Globe and Mail* had finally had enough of the backlash and released a statement saying that she had been in the wrong (39). In retaliation, she accepted a CBC radio interview in which she argued that government bodies, including Parliament, had participated in criticizing her article simply to appease their constituents in Quebec (40). By joining in her condemnation, from Wong's perspective, both *The Globe and Mail* and the Canadian government were belittling her anxieties surrounding the racial aspects of the backlash against her.

Most of *Out of the Blue* focuses on Wong's experiences with clinical depression, particularly its effects on her as an employee of *The Globe and Mail*. Although she initially expected the newspaper to protect her freedom of expression as one of its journalists, it was instead backtracking in deference to the readership response towards her article and ordering her not to lash out in defence anymore lest she make matters worse (44). When Wong then received a death threat in the mail and *The Globe and Mail* was slow to take protectionary measures, the betrayal from her employer became even more strongly felt (46-50). It was at this point that depression began to affect her professional life, as she found herself losing motivation to write. This, to Wong, was an existential crisis: hitherto, she had devoted her entire being to her career as a journalist, but the things she had loved most now seemed threatening and dangerous, particularly as her experiences with the newspaper proved that her superiors were either unable or unwilling to support her when she needed them (55-58).

In the ensuing chapters of *Out of the Blue*, Wong details both her continued descent into depression and her slow pathway to recovery while simultaneously fighting a legal battle with *The Globe and Mail*, which demanded that she return to work after a six-week sick leave before

ultimately cutting her salary and benefits when she argued that she was still too ill to work (90). She notes that part of the employer's response stems from a common socio-cultural view towards depression and mental health in North America, in which melancholy is an outward manifestation for laziness and hopelessness: a refusal to strive towards success in a highly capitalist economy (97). By losing the strength to write, Wong had become a liability to *The Globe and Mail* and, like many employers, it was reluctant to retain a worker who was unable to deliver. In addition, although her physician advised her to travel with her family as part of a holistic treatment plan, administration at *The Globe and Mail* saw it as an attempt to shirk from work and evidence that Wong was, in fact, healthy enough not to require further disability leave (119). Considering the ways in which the Model Minority discourse within Canada's multiculturalist system has made industry, diligence, and submission the main means for success and belonging within the mainstream Canadian society, Wong's existential crisis resulting from her depression and her inability to write was twofold: failure as a journalist, and also failure as a Chinese Canadian for supposedly buckling under pressure when others have persevered and succeeded.

After her return to working at the newspaper, the attacks on Wong resumed, which triggered a relapse (137). Although she was now seeing a psychiatrist who diagnosed her with debilitating depression, her second attempt at sick leave had the same result as the first: a brief stay of absence was allowed, after which her pay was docked (152). Frustration mounted within her as the battle continued to rage on the inside; throughout this process, Wong asserts that what she desired most was to be able to recover enough to return to work as a journalist (182). However, despite her wish for a return to normalcy, the legal process between herself, her doctors, her union, *The Globe and Mail,* and the insurance company created a downward spiral:

as negotiations continued to draw out, they continued to drain Wong's limited physical, mental, and emotional resources; and her determination to return to her career through other means, such as publishing a new book, were treated as evidence of insurance fraud (189). From her perspective, while it was forgivable for *The Globe and Mail* to suspect that her illness was less severe than it actually was, it was highly offensive that the same could be said for the medical insurance company that was meant to provide benefits to its employees (189). Eventually, Wong made the realization that the best way for her to recover would be to leave *The Globe and Mail*, and permanently distance herself from the environment which had triggered the depression in the first place (221). Ironically, she was able to achieve this when the newspaper moved to fire her after she inadvertently broke their requirements for media silence during an interview promoting her newest publication (219-227). Finally, two years after her ordeal began, Wong was able to negotiate formal recognition from *The Globe and Mail* that she had, in fact, been ill (235); by then, she was already recovering.

Wong's story and *Out of the Blue* do not end with her return to health and her reflections on what she has both gained and lost in the process. As it turns out, although she wrote the book as a means to find closure and firmly put this episode from the past behind her (250), publishing it was a violation of a strong social taboo. Indeed, as Wong notes in the "Afterword" to the book, the original publisher withdrew from its side of the deal and refused to proceed with the publication process just days before the memoir was supposed to go into print (252-253). Wong thus argues that the story of her depression, from beginning to end, has been based upon media censorship. Her descent into depression started from a harsh critical feedback to her discussion of one taboo subject – systemic racism in Canada – and her struggles to have her memoir published were caused by her calling attention to another – the poor treatment of clinical

depression in Canada's corporate culture. In both instances, however, Wong refused to remain silent; when the publisher dropped her manuscript, she resorted to self-publication. *Out of the Blue*, therefore, functions as an uncompromising form of political activism, not only because the article that spurred it was focused on a social justice issue in Canada, but because the book's very existence is a call to awareness surrounding issues of mental health.

8.4 Refusing to Conform

In what ways do the writers of the three texts discussed in this chapter – *Voices Rising*, *Runaway*, and *Out of the Blue* – work as refutations of the Model Minority discourse? All of them are involved in forms of resistance and creative activism by drawing attention to elements of their experiences as Chinese Canadians that fall outside of the prescribed educational and professional pathway that the discourse supports. First of all, the activists featured in *Voices Rising*, Evelyn Lau, and Jan Wong all work in the arts: whether as visual artists, filmmakers, composers, or writers. These are professions that typically fall outside of the imagined economic and financial success of the Model Minority discourse, which favours more lucrative positions in the sciences and business. Recall, for example, that several contributors' own families disapproved of their desired career trajectories, worried that jobs in the arts would fail to guarantee financial security. In addition, all of the writers featured in this chapter have addressed social, cultural and political issues directly, raising awareness of problems and agitating for change. This, too, is behaviour that falls outside the norms of the Model Minority discourse, where Asian Americans and Canadians are seen as gentle, submissive, and diligent. Instead of protesting and writing exposés, the stereotypical Asian Canadian as depicted in the narratives presented in *Chinese Canadians* and *Jin Guo* would retreat into their personal employment and simply "work harder" until the tide has passed or they have overcome it; or, in the case of public

figures like Adrienne Clarkson, the stereotypical Asian Canadian would be one who seeks to generate reform through working within the systemic hierarchies of Canada's political infrastructure rather than outside of it.

Yet, by taking unconventional paths towards fulfillment – producing art addressing racial issues, revealing personal insecurities, engaging in "delinquent" forms of behaviour, etc. – the authors here reveal the inaccuracy of the Model Minority discourse and its failure to describe all, or possibly even most, Chinese Canadian experiences. In addition, most notably in Lau's case, the crippling constraints of the Model Minority discourse and the potential damage it could cause to a young person's wellbeing are immediately apparent: while many are genuinely happy to follow its guidelines, those who are not should not be forced into adhering to its rules. Finally, Wong's outspokenness in publishing both her initial incendiary article condemning Quebec's obsession with its own form of ethnic nationalism and her memoir concerning the misunderstanding and abuse faced by those suffering from mental illness show that Chinese Canadians cannot and will not remain silent when change is possible. From the texts examined in this chapter, it appears that the best way to interrogate and criticize the Model Minority discourse is simply to refuse to perform it: an embrace of "Asianfail" as its own distinct form of success and emancipation.

Chapter 9: Too Much of a Good Thing: Negotiating the Yellow Peril and Model Minority Discourses in Present-Day Canada

In 1979, a Canadian news program, *W5*, broadcast "Campus Giveaway," a documentary arguing that Canadian universities were being inundated with foreign students, many of whom were Chinese, taking spots that should rightfully go to Canadian students. In 2010, the news magazine *Maclean's* published a similar piece, "Too Asian?", where Euro-Canadian university students complained that the presence of significant numbers of students of East Asian descent was making the university environment too academically focused, forcing them to forego their own social lives in order to compete. In 1995, Carole Bell, the Deputy Mayor of Markham, a municipality just north of Toronto, publicly stated that the sudden influx of Chinese residents, Chinese shopping centres, and Chinese signage was alienating long-time town residents, causing them to move out. At the same time, public outrage arose in Vancouver concerning Chinese immigrants and their "monster houses:" large mansion-style homes built to utilize as much of the lot as possible, at the expense of the landscaping associated with the West Coast's love for nature. In the present day, rising housing costs in major Canadian cities like Toronto and Vancouver are blamed on foreign investors from China, whose new money and international capital allow them to pay far more than average Canadian citizens, thus driving up prices beyond affordability.

What is happening? It appears from these examples, which are only a few of the many controversies that have erupted surrounding Chinese immigration to Canada in recent decades, that hostility is now being directed at the very academic and economic success of Asian immigrants. The Model Minority discourse, which was used by both Asian Americans and

Canadians as a means to assert their rightful place as citizens, and by the hegemonic systems of government and popular discourse to uphold a preferred form of response to racial barriers, is also the source of intense debate. Although anti-racist and Asian American and Canadian activist criticisms of the Model Minority discourse have already been discussed in Chapter 7, this chapter focuses instead on a form of criticism that has emerged from within the state apparatus itself, as opposed to in contradiction of it. The arguments raised in this particular school of thought bear remarkable similarities to the Yellow Peril discourse, which progressivist models of Canadian immigration and cultural history would have us believe have died out with the invocation of official multiculturalism policy in the 1970s.

It should be noted that a precarious tug-of-war between the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses has existed from the beginning of Chinese immigration to Canada. Any patterns or divisions into periods that I use in this dissertation are indications of which of the two predominated at that specific historical moment, but never to the point of full monopoly over the way the Canadian government and public have imagined the racialized Asians in their midst. However, I would argue that the final decades of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st are a point in which both images are, at times, equally prevalent. On the one hand, the economic and social success of many Chinese Canadians has made the Model Minority discourse seem truer than ever before. Coupled with the continued rise of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China, among other East Asian nations, as major global economic centres, the Model Minority discourse could feasibly be applied not just to Asian Americans and Canadians, but Asians writ large. Yet, on the other hand, it is this same economic boom – and the rise of the People's Republic of China in particular as a potential global superpower – that has North American governments and societies on edge, as the potential for Chinese people in both their

countries of origin and overseas diasporic communities to supersede Western hegemonies has also increased. Thus, as noted by Robert Lee, "The model minority has two faces. The myth presents Asian Americans as silent and disciplined; this is their secret to success. At the same time, this silence and discipline is used in constructing the Asian American as a new yellow peril" (190). Conflicts over Chinese immigrants to Canada and their descendants in the present day are the points where Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses clash, sometimes in explosive ways.

However, unlike in the Exclusion Era or immediately afterwards, today's Chinese Canadians are also better equipped to resist racial discrimination compared to their predecessors. Thus, in this chapter, I will examine in greater detail both several of the conflicts that have developed between the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, as well as Chinese Canadian responses to these challenges. I will begin with an overview of some of the more noteworthy controversies that have developed: debates over university admissions in "Campus Giveaway" and "Too Asian?", and the impacts of Chinese Canadians moving in large numbers into suburbs of Vancouver and Toronto. I will then examine a 2014 reality web series, *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*, where both images collide into a display of Chinese Canadian wealth at its most extravagant. The subjects depicted on the show, all young socialites living in Vancouver, live an extremely hedonistic lifestyle with luxury villas, shopping trips to Europe, and fine food; unapologetically displaying their wealth in the midst of harsh criticism from both general viewers and anti-racist activists. Yet, despite this, they portray themselves as refusing to take their wealth for granted, acting in ways that suggest a determination to succeed on their own merits as their ancestors have done.

9.1 Poised to Take Over: "Too Many Asians" in Canadian Schools and Neighbourhoods

To begin, it is important to note that modern-day representations of the Yellow Peril have evolved substantially from the version that led to both the Chinese head tax and the Chinese Exclusion Act a century ago. Although it is still centred around the fear of a large influx of Asians flooding the Canadian job market, rather than uneducated, poverty-stricken hordes who are willing to work for less pay, the concern is now about a wealthier middle class that is capable of swinging markets in their favour. Rather than moralist outcries surrounding opium addiction, gambling, and prostitution, the emphasis is now on what is perceived as Chinese greed and ambition: the propensity towards hedonism to the point of vulgarity; the preference for urban cosmopolitanism over Canadian self-imaginings as wilderness-loving northerners; and workaholism that stifles social growth and development among youth. It is the fear of the "tiger moms," the child math and science prodigies, and the incredibly wealthy real-estate investors. In other words, the modern-day Yellow Peril discourse depicts Chinese immigrants and their descendants as economic competition not for the Canadian working class, but for its middle and professional classes.

How is it that Chinese Canadians are still seen as economic and cultural threats to the rest of Canadian society despite the prevalence and popularity of multiculturalism? The answer lies in what Frank Wu has called the Perpetual Foreigner stereotype. This is the implication that Asian Americans and Canadians, even those whose families immigrated generations ago, are still interpellated as immigrants and racialized minorities (Wu *Yellow* 80): similar to the "externalization" and "orientalization" described by Roy Miki (97). They are consistently thought to be from someplace else, and cannot simply self-identify as "American" or "Canadian" without having to also qualify the statement with a reference to their ethnicity, such as "Chinese Canadian." The Perpetual Foreigner discourse also includes the assumption that Asian

Americans and Canadians naturally retain loyalties to their nations of origin. While this may be true for certain individuals – and they are certainly within their rights to think so – the problem arises when entire diasporic communities are perceived to prioritize their belonging to China, Japan, or Korea over their connection to Canada or the United States, a phenomenon exacerbated by the fact that these countries of origin do retain ethnic nationalist citizenship policies (Wu *Yellow* 86-87). Because of this, international diplomacy has a tendency to blur into domestic culture; and mainstream society's fear of the government or corporate executives of mainland China or Hong Kong ends up being projected upon Chinese Americans and Canadians whose ancestry could be traced back to the nations in question (90).

This revamped Yellow Peril image of Chinese Canadians as Perpetual Foreigners is the rationale behind many of the controversies and moral panics surrounding Chinese immigration to Canada in recent decades. Consider, for instance, the documentary "Campus Giveaway," which was aired as a special for Canadian public affairs program *W5* in 1979. The television broadcast claimed that Canadian universities were becoming inundated by international students who were crowding out otherwise qualified Canadian applicants (Li *Chinese* 145). In addition to grossly inflating the number of foreign students studying in Canada at the time – "Campus Giveaway" claimed that there were 10,000, a statistic that was later refuted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education – it selected footage of Chinese students to serve as examples (145). There were, therefore, two main problems with the television broadcast. First of all, there was a clear manipulation of statistics to either create a problem that did not actually exist or to exaggerate an otherwise small issue (145). Secondly, the fact that Chinese students, regardless of their actual birth or citizenship status, were used as the visual representation of foreigners in

Canadian universities implied that *W5* thought a sensationalized use of the Yellow Peril discourse would boost viewership ratings (145).

This second point is particularly important because it draws attention to a question at the core of Canadian constructions of cultural and national identity: how is it that the default image of a Canadian is someone of European descent, and the default image of a foreign threat is someone of East Asian descent? What I mean here is that "Campus Giveaway" was not the originator of the conflation between Chinese students and a foreign threat. Rather, by using this as part of its visual language to communicate to viewers, the program's producers must have been tapping into a visual equivalence that already existed in the Canadian popular imagination. Such is the nature of the modern-day Yellow Peril discourse: it conflates Chinese in Canada with Chinese in China, and thus allows Canadians to maintain systemic racism by saying that their vitriol is not being directed at their fellow citizens, but at imaginary "foreigners." In this, "Campus Giveaway" was no different from the government policy during the Exclusion Era that interpellated and labeled all Chinese Canadians – immigrant or native-born – as "resident aliens" regardless of their actual place of birth. It assumed, without any further questioning or contextual analysis, that all those who appeared phenotypically East Asian were automatically the foreign parties who were threatening the educational and career prospects of the imagined Canadian subject: the white "*Canadian* Canadian". A massive protest by Chinese Canadians and sympathetic allies in response to the program ultimately prompted CTV, the television network behind *W5*, to issue formal apologies for the scandal (145).

In its defence, "Campus Giveaway," through its use of exaggerated statistics and misleading footage, could be counted as an example of poor journalism in Canada; and its broadcast in 1979 can certainly lead 21st century Canadians to relegate it into the annals of a

more backward-thinking past. However, by doing so, the core problem, the racist ideology that allowed the program to be aired in the first place, remains unaddressed; and more recent examples reveal that Canadian popular discourse has not improved as much as we would like to think. In 2010, more than thirty years after the "Campus Giveaway" controversy, the Canadian news magazine *Maclean's* published an article that closely parroted the *W5* program's argument from the 1970s. Titled "Too Asian?", it presented a problem that arose when Euro-Canadian high school students were interviewed concerning their university prospects: top institutions such as the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto were too academically competitive for them to have a viable chance to gain admission (Weinfeld 28). The reason these students cited, however, was not an increase in standards on the universities' part, but the presence of "too many students of Asian descent" at both the secondary and post-secondary levels (28). Painted as marks-crazed workaholics, students of East Asian descent, including Chinese, were claimed in the article to be achieving significantly higher grades than their Caucasian peers, which, in a university admission system that typically counts down from those with the highest scores to fill their quotas, leads to them being overrepresented in Canada's most prestigious academic institutions. In addition, their quiet diligence, according to the Caucasian applicants interviewed, dampened the social life on campus. From their perspective, socialization was a crucial part of the self-actualization that came with coming of age and achieving personal independence, and the academicization of the university environment to accommodate their more "studious" Asian counterparts was preventing them from realizing this goal (Ghabrial 46).

More than any economic threat, the root of the scandal discussed in "Too Asian?" is in the perception that Asian Canadian students presented a cultural threat. The Asian students' stereotypical studiousness was based upon a culturalist interpretation of the Model Minority

discourse, in which Asians – both in Asia and abroad – were inherently disposed towards diligence and determination, which led to higher grades at school. While such academic success was not a problem by itself, the issue raised by the authors of "Too Asian?" was that this led to the imagined threat of a significant group of students with one-track minds geared solely towards achieving the greatest academic accolades possible (46). The reason why this qualifies as a cultural threat instead of simply an economic one – i.e., solely about competition for grades and potential employment in the future – is that the students interviewed for "Too Asian?" believed the stereotypical Asian mindset was affecting the university environment as a whole (46). In other words, the concern was that universities, which were ultimately educational institutions, encouraged this diligence among its Asian students, creating an atmosphere that was directed more toward achievement than fun (46). Cultural differences, real or imagined, are not problematic in and of themselves; instead, the fear in this case was that these differences were leading to a paradigm shift within Canada's university campus culture, thus alienating those who were intent on maintaining the status quo.

As with the controversy surrounding *W5*'s "Campus Giveaway," a strong public backlash from both Asian Canadian and mainstream audiences led to *Maclean's* decision to alter the title of the offending article to "The Enrolment Controversy." However, the magazine did not apologize for the racially inflammatory comments in the article, arguing that any anti-Asian sentiments readers saw were a misunderstanding and that the true intent was to compare Canadian universities, which had large numbers of Asian students, with American universities that were moving to implement caps on admitting Asian applicants (Yu 17-18). Understandably, this statement was met with scepticism from many of the article's original critics, who believed that *Maclean's* was now simply backtracking in order to recover its own image. However, even

if this statement of *Maclean's* intentions was true, the fact remains that, like "Campus Giveaway," the magazine made use of sensationalist racial imagery that assumed Asian Canadian cultures were inherently foreign from what was perceived to be Canadian cultural norms and values. As a respected news publication in Canada, *Maclean's* and its editors should be aware of the racialized discourses that continue to exist within our society, and should be working to eliminate them rather than capitalizing on them.

Education is not the only sector in which Chinese Canadians have been recast as the Yellow Peril due to their Model Minority traits; housing has been another notable source of anti-Asian sentiment in Canada in recent years. As Canada began to favour middle- and professional-class Chinese applicants in its immigration policy and Canadian-born Chinese also gained greater access to higher education and better-paying jobs than their predecessors, the Chinese Canadian population had higher levels of disposable income than in the past. This, in turn, meant that more Chinese families could afford to live outside of the densely-populated Chinatowns, and many did so by relocating to the suburbs (Li *Chinese* 146). In doing so, they moved into neighbourhoods traditionally thought of as "white" and "middle-class," thus permanently changing the demographics in those areas. Also, the large numbers of Chinese Canadians moving into areas outside of the conventional ethnic enclaves opened up a niche in Canada's goods and services markets. Prospective business owners, realizing the potential for a new consumer demographic, began to develop restaurants, shopping centres, and service offices that catered specifically to local Chinese residents (146). This ultimately meant that Chinese language and customs were more visible and tangible to existing residents in these neighbourhoods than ever before; and for some, it was a blurring of comfortable boundaries between themselves in their "Canadian" homes and the Chinese of Chinatown.

Controversy around newly developing Chinese neighbourhoods and retail spaces erupted several times in the Greater Toronto Area in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the first areas to provoke intense debate was the neighbourhood of Agincourt in Scarborough, a town situated northeast of Toronto's downtown core[13]. Several Chinese shopping centres, most notably the Dragon Mall, were constructed in close proximity to each other, drawing large waves of customers from both the immediate neighbourhood and surrounding areas. The resulting traffic congestion and intense competition crowding out pre-existing businesses prompted ire from local residents, and in 1984, a town hall meeting was held to address the issues (Yee 85). Although problems such as congestion and a lack of proper parking spaces are common concerns in any instance of rapid urbanization, blame quickly fell upon the newly arrived Chinese developers for erecting these shopping centres, and upon Chinese residents for creating the market niche that appealed to them (85). Two years later, a proposed new shopping centre in the area was opposed for similar reasons. However, it is worth noting that while in this second instance protesters were careful not to allow themselves to descend into anti-immigrant rhetoric, local Chinese residents also opposed the project in fear that a rise in anti-Asian sentiment would happen again (85).

Just north of Scarborough, in the town of Markham, similar tensions were arising between long-time residents and Chinese newcomers entering the suburb. In comparison to the controversies addressed above, it is notable that in this instance, the one to express concerns was not simply a town resident, but a public servant. In 1995, town councillor and deputy mayor Carole Bell raised concerns that new development was overwhelming the area, driving out a number of earlier residents (85). The reasons she cited were that new housing developments were catering specifically to a Chinese market, and that new retail developments utilized

[13] Since the incidents described here, Scarborough has become incorporated into Toronto itself.

extensive Chinese-language signage, which alienated non-Chinese residents who could not understand them (85). The fact that a municipal leader was making such overtly anti-Chinese statements caused a scandal, generating both public and official outrage. Many Chinese Canadian and other residents protested Bell's statements, and she was also criticized by twelve mayors in the surrounding areas (Li *Chinese* 147). In addition, some of her observations were misleading; for instance, although Chinese-owned retail developments did indeed use extensive Chinese-language signage, they were, in fact, oftentimes bilingual, displaying them alongside English-language signs (147). Nevertheless, at the time, Bell refused to retract her statement, claiming that they simply reflected what she understood to be the views of the community (147). However, even if that were the case, it does not make her words any less offensive. Rather than justifying her comments, the explanation that they are an expression of popular public sentiment reveals that anti-Asian racism still existed in Markham in the 1990s – which, to anti-racist critics and scholars, is an even larger problem than a single politician's personal opinions.

Vancouver, too, has had its share of controversies surrounding large numbers of Chinese Canadians moving into neighbourhoods considered traditionally "white." One particularly infamous example is the public outcry over what were then known as "monster houses:" large mansion-style homes that were built to maximize a lot's surface area and, thus, property value (Li *Chinese* 148). These developments sprang up in several of Vancouver's middle-class neighbourhoods in the 1980s, and were popular with newly arrived business immigrants from Hong Kong (148). Given that much of the emigration from Hong Kong at the time was in anticipation of the region's handover to the People's Republic of China in 1997, it is little surprise that the newcomers were oftentimes significantly wealthy, leaving now out of concern of what union with a Communist state would do to their financial prospects. With their

substantial investment capital from transnational business, these immigrants from Hong Kong were able to afford the more expensive mansions, which prompted real estate developers to build even more to meet demand (148). The increasing popularity of the new mansions led to a sharp rise in housing prices, and also significantly altered Vancouver's suburban landscape, prompting earlier residents to dub them "monster houses" or "unneighbourly houses" (148).

"Monster" and "unneighbourly" in this case suggest more than meets the eye. Although the words were used in reference to the mansions, the true targets of the public's ire were the Chinese immigrants themselves. "Unneighbourly" is an emotional term that suggests a particular set of behaviours and personality traits; it makes little sense to speak of a house in such a manner, but certainly works to describe the people living inside. "Monster," on the other hand, can be in reference to the houses' enormous size, but its distinctly negative connotations in relation to the freakish and bizarre imply that they and their inhabitants are blights on the existing landscape and should be feared. Indeed, much of the controversy was directed not at the houses as static objects, but as representations of a new wave of affluent Chinese immigrants who, unlike their predecessors, had sufficient capital to enter an increasingly expensive real estate market without ever having to start at the bottom rungs of society (Li *Chinese* 149). Although they exhibited the wealth of the Model Minority, for many Vancouver residents, the newcomers were not part of the Model Minority per se, because they did not have to prove themselves through diligence in the face of discrimination. Instead, from the outset, they were either at financial parity with or superseding many middle-class Euro-Canadian residents; and that was a frightening prospect for those individuals and communities used to a racialized socio-economic hierarchy that placed them on top. In other words, the "monsters," for critics of these

new developments, were not the mansions themselves, but the Chinese immigrants who bought them.

As with the debates surrounding university admissions, the concern here was not simply that Chinese were perceived as economic threats; they were perceived as cultural threats, too. Consider, for instance, the role that nature and the wilderness have in the popular Canadian imagination; although the majority of the population is urban, the emotional resonance of the natural landscape cannot be denied, particularly in a city such as Vancouver, built in close proximity to such dramatic geographic features as the Rocky Mountains. Add to this the "colonial cringe" discussed by Adrienne Clarkson in her memoir *Heart Matters*, in which the Canadian national imagination seems to take pride in its own self-deprecating modesty (158-159), and the dominant narrative of Canadian culture as expressed through housing would be a smaller house set within a natural landscape. Thus, the "monster houses," in their ostentation, served as evidence of what was perceived to be a vulgar degree of conspicuous consumption among more recent Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong (Li *Chinese* 148). The argument was that by favouring the larger mansions, they were acting in direct contradiction to traditional Canadian values, and showing to developers that such changes were not only acceptable, but desired (150).

Ire has arisen against the Chinese Canadians in Vancouver yet again in recent years, this time due to the mass accumulated capital of wealthy immigrants from mainland China itself. In a pattern that strongly parallels the controversy surrounding immigrants from Hong Kong during the 1980s, moneyed investors from mainland China, which is undergoing an economic boom, have come to Canada in the years following the turn of the new millennium. These immigrants are stereotyped as "big real-estate investors, vacant-house owners, the parents of spoiled rich

kids, investors parking their money [in Canada] as a hedge, or corrupt Communist Party officials" (Bula). The children of these new Chinese immigrants, known as the *fuerdai*[14] in Mandarin, are characterized as committing a double-crime: not only do they, as part of the large group of economically successful Chinese Canadians, appear as proof of the threat discussed in news articles like "Too Asian?", but they are believed to have acquired their wealth simply by reason of their birth rather than through their own efforts (Bula). Not only that, but the *fuerdai* are stigmatized by their own Chinese Canadian peers due to the negative stereotypes that are attributed to the community as a whole as a result of their excessive wealth: "they are a minority whose antics have overshadowed the reality of thousands of other bright, hard-working children [in Vancouver] studying, sometimes managing their parents' investments, and becoming an asset to the city when they move into the workforce" (Bula). Thus, even within the Chinese Canadian community, although their socio-economic success and outward display of wealth might have qualified them for the Model Minority stereotype, the *fuerdai* are a distinct form of Asianfail. They are the ones who have sacrificed the Confucian values of diligence and inconspicuousness as encoded by *zhong yong* for their own individual hedonism and "self-promotion" (Beckett and Zhang 244), to the detriment of the communal needs and rights of the group as a whole by reviving the Yellow Peril stereotype in Vancouver.

It is important to note, however, that many of the controversies and scandals presented in this section have not been entirely one-sided. On the contrary, protests from mainstream society are frequently met with counter-protests from Chinese Canadian communities and their supporters of varying ethnicities. The responses are characteristically unapologetic; for instance, Chinese Canadian business owners will not apologize for erecting Chinese-language signs in

[14] The term *fuerdai* literally translates to "affluent second generation".

their shopping malls or switch to English-only signage in deference to popular opinion. These counter-protests are similar to those raised by lobbyists agitating against exclusionary practices half a century ago: namely, they are an assertion of the legitimacy of Chinese Canadians as citizens and a demand that, as citizens, their place in mainstream society be respected and acknowledged. The problem, for these protesters and activists, is not the wealth of Chinese immigrants or their marked academic and economic success; rather, it is in the persisting covert racism of Canadian society, which looks to these factors as positives when they desire investment capital, but as negatives when Chinese immigrants refuse to "know their place." Thus, to retreat in such instances is an acknowledgement either that the original Yellow Peril-based complaints were correct or that, as many have said in the face of Asian Canadian protests, the problems are strictly economic and not racial. A refusal to budge is affirmation of the continued intersections between race and social class in Canadian society, including the discriminations that develop; and a demand that these connections never be forgotten until they truly no longer exist.

9.2 Refusing to Apologize: Performance and Self-Actualization in *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*

In the fall of 2014, the trailer for a new online reality show was uploaded on *YouTube*. The series, titled *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* would follow the daily lives of four young Chinese Canadian women: Chelsea Jiang, Florence Zhou, Coco Wang, and Joy Li, all remarkable for their immense wealth. Almost immediately after its announcement, the show generated significant debate on social media; *CBC News* reported comments that referred to the cast as the "Chinese version of trailer park trash," and expressed concerns that the show would glorify a degree of wealth and ostentation that many Canadians lacked access to (Chau). A scan of online comments on both the *YouTube* videos themselves and news articles about the show reveal that

among the critics are a concerned demographic of Chinese Canadians, who fear that *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* will revive Yellow Peril sentiments by focusing on what is in reality a small segment of the diaspora community at large (Zhou).

However, in spite of protest, the show's producer, Kevin Li, who broadcast the show under the label HBICtv, meaning Hot Bitch in Charge, insisted that his work was intended to be ethnographic in nature (Chau). A filmmaker specializing in Chinese Canadian history and culture, he realized that a reality show format that allowed viewers a voyeuristic glimpse into the lives of Vancouver's richest Chinese Canadians would generate more interest than a conventional documentary (Chau). Hence, while the formatting is the same as similar reality shows focused on conspicuous consumption, such as the *Real Housewives* franchise or *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, Li's hope was that *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* would achieve something deeper than what it appeared to be on the surface: an anthropological examination of how Chinese Canadian culture has evolved and adapted alongside East Asia's recent massive economic boom (Chau).

Before discussing *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* in greater detail, it is important first to note that this text is vastly different from others used in this study: whereas the previous texts I have analyzed are written publications, albeit with some degree of oral input in the cases of anthologized interviews like in *Chinese Canadians* or *Jin Guo*, *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* is an online reality series. Thus, in order to understand Li's vision as its producer and the means by which the cast members either conform to or subvert this image, one must consider the distinct historical and social contexts of both reality television and Internet media representation.

Reality television stemmed out of televised documentaries in the final decades of the 20th century, and reflected a shift in the types of stories and narratives to which audiences were drawn. Rather than reporting facts and events directly, the emphasis shifted to what John Corner has termed the "inner story" (45): the conveyance of individualized experience and personal narratives as a means to humanize broader and more abstract issues. In order to achieve this connection with the audience and generate empathy and pathos, reality television producers incorporated narrative devices and tropes from both talk shows and fictional forms of television media such as serial dramas and soap operas: these include the use of dramatizations, interviews, and confessionals. The resulting effect is one of "high-intensity incident (the reconstructed accident, the police raid)", "anecdotal knowledge (gossipy first-person accounts)", and "snoopy sociability (as [the viewer is] an amused bystander to the mixture of mess and routine in other people's working lives)" (50) – in other words, a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction, where the narrative devices of the latter are used to convey the former.

However, as with the broadening definition of life writing as previously discussed in Chapter 2, any claim to truth within reality television is debatable. Television as a visual medium is highly constructed; through the use of casting, selective directing and filming practices, and post-production editing, reality television is not so much a reflection of reality as a lens into an artificial world (Kraszewski 205-207). Participants in reality television programs are portrayed through these devices as acting on screen in their authentic selves, but in actuality, they are asked to conform to a set of rituals and social norms that have come to be expected by audiences. Nick Couldry uses the term "media rituals" to describe this phenomenon:

> Media rituals are actions that reproduce the myth that the media are our privileged access point to social reality, but they work through the boundaries and category

distinctions around which media rituals are organized, not through articulated beliefs. (85)

It is these boundaries that mark the genre of reality television as, once again, an exercise of subjectivity and an affective performance. The image of the cast members as shown on screen, produced under the constant surveillance of a camera and privy to the prying eyes of both the film crew and the viewing audience, is thus a biased one: filtered through first the lens of the cast member's performance, then through that of the producers in the editing process.

This performative element is visible in *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* from its pilot episode[15], when the four cast members meet each other for the first time. Thus, while they are strongly aware of their identities as Chinese Canadians, all four women seek to be perceived as cosmopolitan and worldly in some way: they brag to each other about being connoisseurs of fine wine and luxury cars; and Coco and Florence even display their proficiency in languages other than Mandarin or English, delivering several lines in Japanese, French, and Italian in their confessional interviews (HBICtv.) In addition, both to their fellow cast members and to the audience in their introductory interviews, all four women emphasize strong aspirations for their own careers and explain in detail the steps they are actively taking towards their goals: both Chelsea and Florence are fashion designers; Joy is studying fashion marketing at university while working as a model; and Coco, a theatre student, is training to become a singer (HBICtv). While this career-oriented focus does not prevent any of the four main cast members from indulging in very ostentatious and hedonistic ways, it does imply from the start that there is more going on in their minds than simply the next big luxury fix.

[15] It should be noted that although *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* ultimately ran for multiple seasons, featuring different cast members with each reincarnation, the focus in this study is on the first season, which ran from October to December 2014.

Indeed, from the first episode, when the cast introduce themselves to the audience in a sequence that is also intercut with their first official meeting at a Vancouver restaurant, they emphasize their determination to be more than just decorative wallflowers and trophy daughters of their rich parents, but independent career women in their own right. For instance, Coco remarks in a voiceover in reference to her training, "I take lessons and fight for any chances to go on all kinds of auditions, but I won't seek help from my family. That's my rule"[16] (HBICtv). Minutes later, in a confessional camera sequence, Florence adds, "How I see modern women: I think first she has to be very confident and very independent, she should be responsible for herself. We are not limiting ourselves to other people's standards, and we look amazing while doing it" (HBICtv). This second statement in particular allows viewers to see, from the first moments of the series, Li's dual purpose in producing *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*. On the one hand, these four women – and, by extension, the moneyed class of newer Chinese immigrants and *fuerdai* to which they belong – are incredibly privileged and oftentimes out of touch with the realities that the majority of Canadians with lower incomes face. Yet, on the other hand, there is a strong drive towards personal agency and self-sufficiency, and all four cast members wish to show that they do not take their high socio-economic status for granted.

As it turns out, it is almost impossible for these four women to take their families' wealth for granted anyway, because their parents have sacrificed healthy relationships in the name of pursuing financial prosperity. The reality is that many of today's Chinese immigrants are transnational, and it is not uncommon for the breadwinner of the family to become an "astronaut:" an individual who continuously travels between East Asia and North America for

[16] Although the quotations in this dissertation will all be provided in English, in reality, all four cast members frequently code switch between Mandarin and English. The show itself also offers both Chinese and English subtitles throughout, which is where I have derived the wording used here; however, the subtitles were oftentimes not punctuated, so punctuation markings are my own conjecture based on context.

business[17]. Thus, for example, among the cast members, both Chelsea and Coco are estranged from their parents. Chelsea explains that although she was spoiled as a child and had access to vast material wealth, her prosperity came with a price: "I rarely saw my dad. [Every time] he visited me, he would give me everything I wanted. But after he left [to work], it's difficult for my mom to take care of me on her own" (HBICtv). Meanwhile, Coco appears to be even more estranged from her parents, to the point where she is still unsure about their professions and where her family's wealth comes from. Instead of family, her constant companion is a personal assistant named Mio; and although she remarks that she does not need anybody else in her life, it is said with a twinge of sadness that suggests otherwise (HBICtv). Meanwhile, Florence seems to come from a warmer family background; as someone who immigrated to Canada in her teens, she carries memories of how her parents had struggled to make ends meet in China with an income equivalent to "$20 to $30 CDN monthly salary" (HBICtv). It is this background of poverty, then, that she credits for her business acumen as an adult (HBICtv). Indeed, the cast members' complex family situations have conditioned them to become independent at a young age, but it has also engendered an environment in which achieving financial success is more important than emotional, mental and social development: a jarring parallel to the complaints about young Asian Canadians in *Maclean's* "Too Asian?" article.

In addition, as the producer, Li is aware of a problem that frequently arises with more recently arrived Chinese immigrants and their children: disconnect from the hardships that their predecessors had endured during the Exclusion Era. For them, the Chinese Canadian community was the one that developed after the repeal of the Exclusion Act and the implementation of Canada's points system that favoured moneyed and professional immigrants. However, this has

[17] This is a point I am drawing from personal experience, in which I frequently heard the use of the Cantonese word for "astronaut" in reference to such individuals, rather than an academic source.

an unintended side effect: they could potentially remain blissfully unaware of how discourses such as the Yellow Peril and Model Minority have been integral parts of the history of Chinese immigration to Canada, and how they themselves are viewed by mainstream society through those lenses. Thus, the production arranged for the four cast members to visit Victoria in the second episode of *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*, where in addition to having afternoon tea at the opulent Fairmont Empress hotel, they visit the city's historic Chinatown for a guided tour focused on the early history of Chinese immigration to Canada.

Interestingly, although the cast is passionate about learning the history, their ignorance of many of the details as well as early racism against Chinese immigrants soon becomes apparent. Yet, despite this, there appears to be a certain degree of competition within the cast, as they each try to prove their own personal knowledge of both Chinese and Canadian history. For instance, Chelsea poses many questions to the tour guide, but her surprise when he then describes Dr. Sun Yat Sen's visit to Victoria while campaigning for his revolution against the Qing Dynasty, causes Florence, in her own confessional, to deride her companion's ignorance (HBICtv). Meanwhile, Coco explains that Sun's legacy is ubiquitous in Taiwan, where she grew up; and Joy, while given the longest confessional sequence in which she explains the history of early Chinese immigration to Victoria, is revealed by the camera to be reading the facts off her cell phone (HBICtv). All things considered, however, the cast acknowledges by the end the value of the history lessons they were given, and are even delighted that a local Chinese Canadian boy, who accompanied them throughout the tour, was more knowledgeable than they were, expressing hope in how younger generations are being educated in Canada (HBICtv).

Another incident worth noting from the excursion to Victoria for the same tension between knowledge and ignorance among the cast members is a visit to a small Chinatown

temple. While all four cast members possess at least some knowledge of the prayer and divination rituals practiced in the temple, they are impressed that Coco, whose appearance thus far has been the least worldly-wise of the group, appears to be the most aware of the steps involved. However, this moment is undercut by Coco's own confessional, where she admits that she is simply going through the motions that she has observed: "Actually, I don't know who I'm praying to; I'm just going with the flow" (HBICtv.) In addition, the praise soon dies off when the others observe her perform the divination several times in a row, which suggests to them that she was too casual about the ritual; Coco, however, defends her actions by explaining that she only wanted to ensure that the results she had received were accurate (HBICtv). Meanwhile, Chelsea draws what is implied to be an undesirable fortune; although the exact details are not revealed to the audience, Joy, looking on, hypothesizes that it could be because they were in a Buddhist temple and Chelsea was wearing a Christian cross at the time (HBIVtv). This scene at the temple thus suggests the precarious place the performance of historical and/or traditional Chinese cultural practices holds in the cast members' lives: these rituals are important tools in their attempts to prove their own cultural authenticity and sophistication, but all the women are also quick to deride customs like divination as backwards superstition when their lack of knowledge is revealed. Clearly, from these examples, the cast members face pressure – from within themselves, from their companions, and presumably from viewers – to perform a particular Chineseness: one that is in line with multiculturalism and the Model Minority discourse's emphasis on knowledge of Chinese Canadian history and Chinese cultural practices.

Although the middle episodes focus on an excursion to Florence's cottage on a private island and a shopping spree in Italy, the eighth and final episode takes a sharp turn. In this case, much of the conflict within the episode focuses upon the cast's impressions of Coco, who they

suspect is a fraud: not so much in that her wealth is faked, but that she is portraying herself as richer than she actually is. Although all four cast members, from the perspective of the viewers, have clearly been putting on a performance for each other, what matters most is not whether the images or avatars they present of themselves are real, but whether that façade and performance of cosmopolitan economic success could be maintained. Yet here was an instance where, for Coco, the pretense was starting to fracture; not only was her reputation in front of the other cast members at stake, but the entire identity she had constructed for herself on *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*.

From their first encounter, there had already been doubts about Coco's belongings, which she claimed were limited edition items from designer brands, but came across to the others as unfamiliar, or reminiscent of a "cheap Chinese Taiwanese nightmarket" (HBICtv). By the conclusion of *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*, there have been several more incidents that seemed suspicious to the other women. For instance, Coco had confided in them that she had attended a public high school in Vancouver and was bullied by her classmates for her privilege, of which she provides this example: "Like when we went shopping, a thing over [a] couple hundred dollars is super expensive to them…and I bought a couple at once" (HBICtv). Chelsea in particular finds Coco's story difficult to believe, but it is important to note the reason for her incredulity. In Chelsea's own experience, being bullied for one's wealth or privilege was a foreign concept, and upon hearing that Mio's friendship with Coco stemmed from these high school experiences, she remarked to the confessional camera, "Money bought you some assistant, they can buy you some friends as well" (HBICtv). Coco, however, is unflinching throughout the confrontation: she sticks to her own autobiographical version of her personal

history, a pattern that continues afterwards into the backstage confessional, where she insists that everything she has presented is true[18] (HBICtv.)

What is important to note here is that since *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* was intended to function as an ethnographic look at the lives of some of the wealthiest Chinese Canadians in the country, the line between confidence and ignorance is very much blurred. The final episode, which culminates into a heated confrontation between Chelsea, Florence, and Coco about the inconsistencies in Coco's words and behaviours, forces the viewer to question the extent to which this reality series is, in fact, reality. To be fair, part of this stems from the tropes of the reality genre itself: the constant flickering between truth and fantasy, between on-screen interactions and supposedly more honest backstage confessionals. However, what is apparent to me as a viewer, particularly in light of Li's original vision, is that all four cast members are very self-aware in how they choose to present themselves both to the audience and to each other. It is for this reason in particular that I chose to include *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* in this study as a form of life writing, despite its not qualifying as a conventional autobiographical text. All four cast members inhabit an on-screen world in which their very identities and lives are being shaped, formed, even re-formed, as in Coco's case, through what is recorded on camera, pieced together in the production studio, and then broadcast onto YouTube for the audience. They have, over the course of the series, become conscious of the ways in which they and their lifestyles are viewed by mainstream Canadian society as precariously balanced between the Yellow Peril and the Model Minority discourses. They realize how they are lampooned by the press for their extravagances, but are also determined to pursue their individual careers to prove their own capabilities. In addition, as one of the greatest points of character development in the series, the

[18] In the final moments of the show, it is revealed that at least one of her handbags, which the others suspected were counterfeit, is, in fact, genuine, thus implying that the rest of her self-representation was real as well.

cast members, a number of whom have lived very lonely money-focused lives up to this point, end the show by espousing the virtues of being authentic to themselves and the value of friendship: thus learning to acquire the traits that critics of the new Yellow Peril have claimed that Chinese Canadians lacked.

However, as it turns out, the story of *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* was far from over. Although Coco was the main subject of intense scrutiny over the course of the first season of the show, a second greater controversy erupted in May 2015, when one of Vancouver's Chinese Canadian multimillionaires, Yuan Gang, was found dead in his mansion (Proctor). During the investigation, one of Yuan's close friends and business associates, Zhao Li, Florence's father, emerged as the prime suspect in the murder. According to Yuan's family's lawyer, Yuan had provided financial support to Zhao and his family when they immigrated to Canada from China, and both men had even claimed co-ownership of Yuan's mansion (Proctor). Thus, from such a standpoint, Zhao appeared to be the greatest beneficiary in Yuan's death, as he could become sole owner of the shared properties as a result (Proctor). These properties, as it turned out, also included a private island that was used as a filming location in *Ultra Rich Asian Girls*: Florence had hosted a sleepover there for herself and the other cast members, claiming to them that her family had purchased it several years prior (HBICtv). Li, as the series' producer, moved to defend the show, stating in an interview with *Al Jazeera* that he had not been aware of the history between Yuan and the Zhao family: "As far as I understood it, she and her family settled in Canada first before [Yuan]" (Rapp). Ultimately, however, the controversy came to an end when Zhao confessed to second-degree murder to the West Vancouver police: a truth that came out when the case went to court in the spring of 2017, two years after it all began (Fraser).

Where this new controversy surrounding *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* will go in the future is difficult to say. At first glance, it appears that Li's attempts to subvert the stereotypical revived Yellow Peril image surrounding Vancouver's *fuerdai* has ultimately failed: if he could not even prove that his cast members' wealth had not been acquired through fraudulent or criminal means, then what more is there to say in their defence? Was the entire production of *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* simply a sham or an exercise in artificiality? If so, then what does this imply about the other performances that the four cast members participated in over the course of the series: their claims to higher education and independent careers, even their assertions of Chinese "authenticity" in each other's presence? However, perhaps what matters most is that regardless of where these young women's money comes from, they are seeking to construct and invent – even re-construct and re-invent in perpetuity – public versions of their lives that strongly parallel the same trajectory as the informants in the Park's Chicago Study of 1924 or the interviews in *Chinese Canadians* in 1992. Even now, even still, the desire to create an impression of financial – and thus social, cultural, and political – success continues to hold. The Model Minority discourse, despite its criticisms and its changing permutations, still remains as an undercurrent in Chinese Canadian life writing. Given the ways in which the creation of life writing is a means of forming and becoming (Karpinski "Migrations" 172), that means that, by extension, the Model Minority discourse and its performance are still key components of Chinese Canadian lives and experiences as well, despite the efforts of a number of community members to dismantle and criticize it.

Conclusion: Finding a Balance: Is It Possible?

Racism and multiculturalism; Yellow Peril and Model Minority; the cultural and social dynamics surrounding Chinese Canadians at times appear to be a series of contradictions and paradoxes. Although it is easy to think of these disparate discourses and ideologies in dichotomous terms, the reality as evidenced by this study is markedly different. From analyzing both the history of racialized discourses in Canada, particularly in regards to their impact on Chinese immigration, and the lived experiences of Chinese Canadians as revealed in their life writing and self-representations, it is clear that there has been, for the past 150 years, a continual balancing act between the two poles in either spectrum. The Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses, on the one hand, are direct contradictions of each other; however, they are also opposite sides of the same coin, and characteristics associated with one could switch to the other depending on the social, cultural and political context in question.

Oftentimes in examining multiculturalism from an anti-racist perspective, it is easy to focus on the ways in which state apparatuses utilize official histories and narratives to maintain systemic hierarchies and privileges. However, as much as I am in agreement with such criticisms as a scholar, on a fundamentally personal level, they have also tended to sit uncomfortably in my mind. There are two reasons for this. First, as a Chinese Canadian, I saw myself in neither of the two main sides presented in North American discussions of race and multiculturalism: neither black nor white; neither fully privileged nor fully marginalized. Secondly, interrogations of official ideologies like multiculturalism that emphasize top-down forms of oppression have silenced the role that racialized minority communities have had in shaping their own destinies.

By studying the histories of racial discourses in Canada, ranging from multiculturalism in a broader sense to the Yellow Peril and Model Minority stereotypes more specifically, what has become clear to me is the degree of agency practiced by Chinese Canadians throughout their history. Even when Canadian racial and immigration policy was at its most restrictive towards Chinese, barring them from entering the country almost entirely during the Exclusion Era of 1923 to 1947 and disenfranchising even Canadian-born descendants of Chinese immigrants, the fledgling diasporic community sought ways to assert themselves both within and outside the boundaries. Whether I speak in reference to the institution of "paper children" and other networks that allowed prospective immigrants to circumvent the laws excluding them from entry or the attempts of legal brokers to present an assimilated, "civilized" face of Chinese Canadians in direct contradiction to the stereotypes of poverty, backwardness, and vice, Chinese Canadians have never allowed the state to dictate to them who they could or could not become. Rather, they have turned the state's own apparatus onto its head: selectively appropriating, internalizing, and then performing the few positive and desirable traits of the imagined Chinese immigrant subject from the Exclusion Era they had at their disposal.

Closer to the present day, when the increasing popularity of both multiculturalism and the Model Minority discourse allowed Chinese Canadians a more open space to navigate and a greater opportunity to speak openly about their histories and experiences, the material that has been produced, of which only a small portion was discussed in detail in this dissertation, testifies to a broad spectrum of experiences that show both those who accept the concessions of the state as the new guidelines by which to conduct their lives, and those who either cannot or will not accept the way these new terms continue to constrain them. From the various works of life writing I have analyzed for this study, I could see that there is no right or wrong way to be

Chinese Canadian, nor is there a right or wrong way to navigate the liminal space between the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses; because in reality, Chinese Canadians occupy neither one side nor the other, but a cultural space that includes both.

What, however, I do believe is needed at this point in time, in which both the Model Minority and Yellow Peril discourses overlap so much as to be different aspects of the same phenomenon, is a moment of self-actualization from within Chinese Canadian communities that allows individuals to critically examine their own position within Canadian society. By understanding oneself as simultaneously privileged and marginalized, by understanding the supposedly positive image of the Model Minority discourse as one born from both hegemonic interpellation and subaltern agency, one will be able to comprehend both how full racial equity has not yet been attained in Canada and how far one's own community has already come in relation to others. The success of Chinese Canadians as a diasporic community overall should not become an excuse to rest upon one's own laurels; those who have attained Model Minority status should not look back at others who are still struggling and refuse to extend a lending hand. However, the persistence of the Yellow Peril discourse should also not become a reason to adopt a subjectivity of victimization, as simply viewing oneself in the role of the persecuted and oppressed could cultivate survival, but not an improvement of one's circumstances.

While it is true that Chinese Canadians' own agency has led them this far, responsibility should not be solely to oneself, one's own family, or one's own ethnic community. Although that was the basis for the support networks that had developed during the Exclusion Era, the insularity of Chinatown communities was a symptom of the systemic racism that Chinese immigrants and their descendants were subjected to at the time. By this point in the early 21st century, the circle of influence that Chinese Canadians possess is far broader than that, as

evidenced by those who have become nationally renowned writers, artists, businessmen, scholars, and politicians among others. The presence of Chinese Canadians in positions of significant social, cultural, and political power has changed the face of Canadian national institutions, even if it has not yet shifted popular conceptions of the imaginary Canadian beyond an English- or French-Canadian subject. Whether that happens as a next step will depend upon what Chinese Canadians, as a privileged minority, do while in their places of influence to build alliances with both marginalized and privileged Canadians of all sorts.

Further Research and Next Steps

While an analysis of published life writing allows me as a scholar to gain an in-depth perspective on authors' individual truths and subjectivities, a limitation inherent to this methodology is the constraints of Canada's publishing industry and its selective criteria in choosing authors and works for publication. Those who have published memoirs and autobiographies are most likely individuals who have already reached success per the Model Minority discourse, although, fortunately, there were exceptions to that norm such as *Runaway* and *Out of the Blue*, which allowed me to find voices to the contrary. In addition, the work of scholars and activists to compile the voices of Chinese Canadians from a broader sample such as *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a Community*, *Jin Guo*, and *Voices Rising* reveals more accurately the plurality of individual and community experiences throughout the history of Chinese immigration to Canada. Nevertheless, the biases of the mainstream media and publishing industries and the power they possess to allow or bar works from publication means that inevitably certain voices will be neglected, omitted, or marginalized in the process, an example of which is *Out of the Blue*, where only Jan Wong's decision to self-publish allowed her experience of depression to be known to the public.

Thus, I believe it would be rewarding to see what could be done on the topics discussed in this dissertation if one were to use a social sciences or statistical approach. While there is less room for respondents to speak in their own terms, depending on the format of the surveys and/or interviews used by the analyst, a broader random sample of individuals could create a more complex and more demographically accurate picture of the Chinese diaspora in Canada for analysis. Another way in which scholars could overcome the limitation that I have previously expressed would be to incorporate Chinese-language sources into their data corpus. In particular, such texts would be helpful in examining whether there is a marked difference between how Chinese Canadian authors present their experiences to a mainstream Anglophone or Francophone audience and to their fellow Chinese in Canada or abroad. Are there, for instance, examples in the present day akin to the actions of the Exclusion Era brokers, who consciously hid social problems in Chinatowns across Canada and the United States in order to present a more favourable image to immigration officials, political allies and academic scholars alike? In this respect, the wall writings compiled by David Chenyuan Lai are an enlightening glimpse into this alternative perspective, and further research into other Chinese-language writings intended only for Chinese immigrant audiences could potentially be revealing of a very different self-representation than what has been seen in this study.

Finally, while the emphasis on this study has been on Chinese Canadians, the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses have not solely been applied to them. It would be interesting to take the methodology from this study and apply it to other Asian diasporic communities, each of which has its own distinct history of negotiating the discourses surrounding them. How, for example, is the experience different between Japanese and Chinese Canadians, whose positions in the eyes of mainstream Canadian society have at times fluctuated

in opposite directions: one favoured as the other is reviled? What about a different geographical context, such as comparing Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians? I believe that it would be particularly beneficial to examine Asian diasporas that have thus far been neglected or omitted in discussions of Asian American and Canadian history, particularly Southeast Asian and South Asian communities; or, in the case of East Asians, including Korean or Mongolian diasporas into the discussion. All of these could potentially reveal whether the complex negotiations between the Yellow Peril and Model Minority discourses in the early 21st century are common to multiple Asian ethnicities in North America, or are idiosyncratic to the Chinese diaspora in particular due to the unique economic and political situation of the People's Republic of China as the newest emerging Asian superpower. Perhaps, in the future as I continue my academic career, I could return to some of these questions in order to gain a deeper understanding. Even if I cannot, for whatever reason, I hope that this study could contribute to the broader conversations about Asian American and Canadian identity in the years to come, and possibly inspire future scholars to continue where I am leaving off.

<u>Works Cited</u>

<u>Primary Sources</u>

Bates, Judy Fong. *The Year of Finding Memory: A Memoir*. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2010. Print.

Chong, Denise. *The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided*. Toronto: Viking, 1994. Print.

Chow, Olivia. *My Journey*. Toronto: HarperCollins Canada, 2014. Print.

Choy, Wayson. *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Childhood*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2000. Print.

---. *Not Yet: A Memoir of Living and Almost Dying*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2009. Print.

Clarkson, Adrienne. *Heart Matters: A Memoir*. Toronto: Penguin Books, 2006. Print.

Djao, Wei. *Being Chinese: Voices from the Diaspora*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003. Print.

HBICtv. *Ultra Rich Asian Girls, Season 1*. *YouTube*, 3 June 2014 to 19 June 2016, www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLh7HCFDCBqShgBBYZ0DjLhP2-uGImrY1q Accessed 19 September 2016

Huang, Evelyn, and Lawrence Jeffrey. *Chinese Canadians: Voices from a community*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 1992. Print.

Lai, David Chenyuan. "A 'Prison' for Chinese Immigrants." *The Asianadian: An Asian Canadian Magazine*. 2.4 (1980): 16-19. Print.

Lau, Evelyn. *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1989. Print.

---. *Inside Out: Reflection on a Life So Far*. Toronto: Doubleday, 2001. Print.

Lee, James-Jason. *The Measure of a Man: The Story of a Father, a Son, and a Suit*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2011. Print.

Lee, Sky. *Disappearing Moon Café*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd, 1990. Print.

Li, Xiaoping. *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. Print.

Lui, Elaine. *Listen to the Squawking Chicken: When a Mother Knows Best, What's a Daughter to Do?: A Memoir (Sort Of)*. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2014. Print.

Poy, Vivienne. *Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada*. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. Print.

The Women's Book Committee and Chinese Canadian National Council. *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women*. Toronto: Women's Press, 1992. Print.

Wong, Jan. *Red China Blues: My Long March from Mao to Now*. Toronto: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1996. Print.

---. *Out of the Blue: A Memoir of Workplace Depression, Recovery, Redemption and, Yes, Happiness*. Canada: Jan Wong, 2012. Print.

Wong, May Q. *A Cowherd in Paradise: From China to Canada*. Surrey: Brindle & Glass Publishing Ltd., 2012. Print.

Ye, Ting-xing. *A Leaf in the Bitter Wind: A Memoir*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1997. Print.

Secondary Sources

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print.

Alcoff, Linda. *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.

Allemang, John. "*My Journey*: Olivia Chow's memoir waffles between the personal and political" *The Globe and Mail*, 24 Jan. 2014, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/my-journey-olivia-chows-memoir-waffles-between-the-personal-and-political/article16491154/ Accessed 4 Feb. 2018.

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Ben Brewster, trans. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971. 127-186. Print.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.

Ang, Ien. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

Arthur, Paul Longley. "Digital Biography: Capturing Lives Online." *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 24.1 (2009): 74-92. Print.

Bakht, Natasha. "Mere "Song and Dance": Complicating the Multicultural Imperative in the Arts." *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*. May Chazan, Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley, and Sonali Thakker, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011. 175-183. Print.

Bannerji, Himani. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism, and Gender*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2000. Print.

Beauregard, Guy. "The Problem of Diaspora: On Chinese Canadian Cultural Production in English." *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English*. Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie, eds. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. 129-149. Print.

Beckett, Gulbahar H., and Jiangua Zhang. "Moderation, Modesty, Creativity, and Criticalness: A Chinese American Medical Professor Speaks." *"Strangers" of the Academy: Asian Women Scholars in Higher Education*. Guofang Li, and Gulbahar Beckett, eds. Sterling: Stylus Publishing, 2006. 233-248. Print.

Bissoondath, Neil. *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*. Toronto: Penguin, 2002. Print.

Bouchard, Gérard, and Charles Taylor. *Interculturalism: A View from Quebec*. Howard Scott, trans. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. Print.

Bula, Frances. "The Dragon in the Room" *The Globe and Mail*. 30 July 2016, https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/vancouver/meet-the-wealthy-immigrants-at-the-centre-of-vancouvers-housingdebate/article31212036/ Accessed 29 Oct. 2017.

Burns, John. "Adrienne Clarkson lets down her guard" *The Georgia Straight*. 19 Oct. 2006, https://www.straight.com/clarkson-lets-down-guard Accessed 4 Feb. 2018.

Cain, Susan. "Soft Power: Asian-Americans and the Extrovert Ideal." *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2012. 181-202. Print.

Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. *Debates*, 28th Parliament, 3rd Session, Volume 8 (8 October 1971): 8545-8548, Appendix, 8580-8585. Print.

"Canadian Multiculturalism Act." *Statutes of Canada, c. 24*. Canada. Department of Justice, 1988. Print.

Chao, Lien. *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English*. Toronto: TSAR Publications, 1997. Print.

Chau, Elaine. "Ultra Rich Asian Girls: more than flaunting wealth?" *CBC News*, 17 Oct. 2014, www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/ultra-rich-asian-girls-more-than-flaunting-wealth-1.2802799 Accessed 4 May 2017.

Cho, Lily. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia: A Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*. 17 (2007): 11-30. Print.

---. *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Print.

---. "Mass capture against memory: Chinese head tax certificates and the making of noncitizens." *Citizenship Studies*. 22.4 (2018): 381-400. Print.

Coloma, Roland Sintos. "'Too Asian?' On racism, paradox and ethno-nationalism." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. 34.4 (2013): 579-598. Print.

Corner, John. "Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. 2nd ed., Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, eds. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 44-64. Print.

Couldry, Nick. "Teaching Us to Fake It: The Ritualized Norms of Television's "Reality" Games." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. 2nd ed., Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette, eds. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 82-99. Print.

Coulthard, Glen S. "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the "Politics of Recognition" in Canada." *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*. May Chazan, Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley, and Sonali Thakker, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011. 31-50. Print.

Dei, George J. Sefa. "Speaking Race: Silence, Salience, and the Politics of Anti-Racist Scholarship" *Race and Racism in 21st-Century Canada: Continuity, Complexity, and Change*. Sean P. Hier, and B. Singh Bolaria, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 53-65. Print.

Demerson, Velma. *Incorrigible*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004. Print.

Dhingra, Pawan. *Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian American Professionals and the Challenge of Multiple Identities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. Print.

Diehl, Lindsay. "Disrupting the National Frame: A Postcolonial, Diasporic (Re)Reading of SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* and Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*." *English Studies in Canada*. 42.3-4 (2016): 99-118. Print.

Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship: Study Guide. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2012. Print.

Egan, S. (2007). "Being governor general." *Canadian Literature,* (195): 131-132,201. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/218828434?accountid=15182 Accessed 4 Feb. 2018.

Erll, Astrid. *Memory in Culture*. Sara B. Young, trans. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. Print.

Fong, Timothy P. *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*. 3rd ed., Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2008. Print.

Fraser, Keith. "Confession admissible in West Van murder case, judge decides" *Times Colonist*, 13 June 2017, http://www.timescolonist.com/news/b-c/confession-admissible-in-west-van-murder-case-judge-decides-1.20558875 Accessed 29 October 2017.

Ghabrial, Sarah. "Pink Panics, Yellow Perils, and the Mythology of Meritocracy." *"Too Asian?": Racism, Privilege, and Post-Secondary Education*. RJ Gilmour, Davina Bhandar, Jeet Heer, and Michael C. K. Ma, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012. 38-52. Print.

Gillis, Carla. "Reviews: *My Journey*" *Quill and Quire*, Jan. 2014, https://quillandquire.com/review/my-journey/ Accessed 4 February 2018.

Goldberg, David Theo. *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993. Print.

Hassan, Farzana. "Let's celebrate how Canadians now take pride in not being racist." *Toronto Sun*. 29 Jun. 2017. https://torontosun.com/2017/06/29/lets-celebrate-how-canadians-now-take-pride-in-not-being-racist/wcm/cc783227-36c1-4d22-8111-cdd9f1cae1b3 Accessed 10 Sept. 2018.

Hirsch, Marianne. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29.1 (2008): 103-128. Print.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Paul Yee b. 1956." *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*. Linda Hutcheon and Marion Richmond, eds. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990. 334-348. Print.

Jiwani, Yasmin. *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007. Print.

Joseph, Rebecca. "Majority of Canadians want a 'Canadian values' screening test for immigrants: poll." *Global News*. 13 Mar. 2017, https://globalnews.ca/news/3306955/canadian-values-screening-test-poll/ Accessed 19 Jan. 2018.

Jung, Moon-Ho. “The Influence of “Black Peril” on “Yellow Peril” in Nineteenth-Century America.” *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*. Gary Okihiro, et al, eds. Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995. 349-363. Print.

Kadar, Marlene. “Coming to Terms: Life Writing – from Genre to Critical Practice.” *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*. Marlene Kadar, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. 3-16. Print.

---. “Introduction: What is Life Writing?.” *Reading Life Writing*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993. ix-xv. Print.

Karpinski, Eva C. “Multicultural ‘Gift(s)’: Immigrant Women’s Life Writing and the Politics of Anthologizing Difference.” *Literary Pluralities*. Christl Verduyn, ed. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1998. 111-124. Print.

---. *Borrowed Tongues: Life Writing, Migration, and Translation*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012. Print.

---. “Migrations and Metamorphoses.” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*. 32.2 (2017): 171-173. Print.

Kawai, Yuko. “Stereotyping Asian Americans: The Dialectic of the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril.” *Howard Journal of Communications* 16.2 (2005): 109-130. Print.

Kelly, Tim. “‘No to illegal border crossers’: Markham candidates deliver petition to City Hall.” *York Region.com*. 1 Aug. 2018, https://www.yorkregion.com/news-story/8795379--no-to-illegal-border-crossers-markham-candidates-deliver-petition-to-city-hall/ Accessed 11 Sept. 2018.

Kennedy, Ümit. “The Vulnerability of Contemporary Digital Autobiography.” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*. 32.2 (2017): 409-411. Print.

Kheiriddin, Tasha. “COMMENTARY: poll on race has troubling implications for Canada.” *Global News*. 14 Mar. 2017, https://globalnews.ca/news/3308258/commentary-poll-on-race-has-troubling-implications-for-canada/ Accessed 19 Jan. 2018.

Khoo, Tseen. “Culture, Identity, Commodity: Testing Diasporic Literary Boundaries.” *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English*. Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie, eds. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005. 1-15. Print.

Koh, Karlyn. “At the Edge of a Shattered Mirror, Community?” *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen*. Eds. Eleanor Ty and Donald C. Goellnicht. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. 149-169. Print.

Kraszewski, Jon. “Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV’s *The Real World*.” *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. 2nd ed., Susan

Murray and Laurie Ouellette, eds. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 205-222. Print.

Kwong, Peter. "Asian American Studies Needs Class Analysis." *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*. Gary Okihiro et al., eds. Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995. 75-81. Print.

Kymlicka, Will. "The rise and fall of multiculturalism?: New debates on inclusion and accommodation in diverse societies." *The Multiculturalism Backlash: European discourses, policies and practices*. Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf, eds. New York: Routledge, 2010. 32-49. Print.

Lai, Larissa. *Slanting I, Imagining We: Asian Canadian Literary Production in the 1980s and 1990s*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014. Print.

Lawrence, Bonita. "Rewriting Histories of the Land: Colonization and Indigenous Resistance in Eastern Canada." *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Sherene H. Razack, ed. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002. 47-69. Print.

Lawrence, Bonita, and Enakshi Dua. "Decolonizing Antiracism." *Social Justice* 32.4 (2005): 120-143. Print.

Lee, Robert G. *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. Print.

Li, David Liwei. "On Ascriptive and Acquisitional Americanness: *The Accidental Asian* and the Illogic of Assimilation." *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English*. Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie, eds. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. 253-277. Print.

Li, Peter S. *The Chinese in Canada*.2nd ed., Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1998. Print.

Liu, Eric. *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*. New York: Random House, 1998. Print.

Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Print.

Mannur, Anita. "'Peking Ducks' and 'Food Pornographers': Commodifying Culinary Chinese Americanness." *Culture, Identity, Commodity: Diasporic Chinese Literatures in English*. Tseen Khoo and Kam Louie, eds. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. 19-38. Print.

Mansur, Salim. *Delectable Lie: A Liberal Repudiation of Multiculturalism*. Brantford: Mantua Books, 2011. Print.

Mar, Lisa Rose. *Brokering Belonging: Chinese in Canada's Exclusion Era, 1885-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. Print.

Meer, Nasad, and Tariq Mododd. "How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?" *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 33.2 (2012): 175-196. Print.

Miki, Roy. *In Flux: Transnational Shifts in Asian Canadian Writing*. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2011. Print.

Modood, Tariq. "Multiculturalism, Interculturalisms and the Majority." *Journal of Moral Education* 43.3 (2014): 302-315. Print.

Moodley, Kogila, and Heribert Adam. "Shifting Boundaries and Flexible Identities within Multicultural Canada." Intercultural Education 23.5 (2012): 425-436. Print.

Nourbese Philip, M. *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture*. Stratford, Ont.: Mercury Press, 1992. Print.

Okihiro, Gary. "Part One: Theory, Class and Place: Introduction." *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies*. Gary Okihiro et al., eds. Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995. 1-9. Print.

Okin, Susan Moller. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard, and Martha Craven Nussbaum, eds. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. Print.

Ozkirimli, Umut. "'And People's Concerns were Genuine: Why Didn't We Listen More?': Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Recognition in Europe." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 20.3 (2012): 307-321. Print.

Palumbo-Liu. *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Print.

Poy, Vivienne. *Passage to Promise Land: Voices of Chinese Immigrant Women to Canada*. Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013. Print.

Proctor, James. "Gang Yuan, dismembered millionaire, allegedly killed for his money" *CBC News*, 20 May 2015, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/gang-yuan-dismembered-millionaire-allegedly-killed-for-his-money-1.3081189 Accessed 4 May 2017.

Racco, Marilisa. "Gender equality in Canada: Where do we stand today?" *Global News*. 5 July 2017. https://globalnews.ca/news/3574060/gender-equality-in-canada-where-do-we-stand-today/ Accessed 10 Sept. 2018.

Rak, Julie. *Boom!: Manufacturing Memoir for the Public Market*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013. Print.

Rapp, Jessica. "Chanel, Champagne, Homicide Charges: Vancouver's 'Ultra Rich Asian Girls' Sees Real Drama On Screen and Off." *Jing Daily*, 1 Sept 2016, https://jingdaily.com/chanel-champagne-homicide-charges-vancouvers-ultra-rich-asian-girls-sees-real-drama-on-screen-and-off/ Accessed 12 May 2017.

Razack, Sherene H. *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. Print.

Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration: Report and Evidence. Ottawa: Printed by Order of the Commissioner, 1885. Print.

Ryan, Phil. *Multicultiphobia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Print.

Sharma, Nandita. "Canadian Multiculturalism and Its Nationalisms." *Home and Native Land: Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*. May Chazan, Lisa Helps, Anna Stanley, and Sonali Thakker, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011. 85-101. Print.

Shrake, Eunai Kim. "Unmasking the Self: Struggling with the Model Minority Stereotype and Lotus Blossom Image." *"Strangers" of the Academy: Asian Women Scholars in Higher Education*. Guofang Li, and Gulbahar Beckett, eds. Sterling: Stylus Publishing, 2006. 178-194. Print.

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Live Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2014. Print.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. 2nd ed., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. Print.

Srivastava, Sarita. "Troubles with "Anti-Racist Multiculturalism": The Challenges of Anti-Racist and Feminist Activism." *Race and Racism in 21st-Century Canada: Continuity, Complexity, and Change*. Sean P. Hier, and B. Singh Bolaria, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. 291-311. Print.

Taylor, Charles. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

The Canadian Press. "Newcomers need to learn Canadian values: focus groups." *Global News*. 28 Feb. 2017, https://globalnews.ca/news/3278870/newcomers-need-to-learn-canadian-values-focus-groups/ Accessed 19 Jan. 2018.

Thobani, Sunera. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. Print.

Tizon, Alex. *Big Little Man: In Search of My Asian Self*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014. Print.

Ty, Eleanor. *Asianfail: Narratives of Disenchantment and the Model Minority*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017. Print.

---. "Memory, Digital Media, and Life Writing." *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*. 32.2 (2017): 363-365. Print.

Ty, Eleanor and Donald C. Goellnicht. "Introduction." *Asian North American Identities: Beyond the Hyphen*. Eleanor Ty and Donald C. Goellnicht, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. 1-14. Print.

Weinfeld, David. "Asians and Affirmative Action on Campus: An Historical Canada-US Comparison." *"Too Asian?": Racism, Privilege, and Post-Secondary Education*. RJ Gilmour, Davina Bhandar, Jeet Heer, and Michael C. K. Ma, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012. 28-37. Print.

Wu, Ellen D. *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. Print.

Wu, Frank H. *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Print.

Yee, Paul. *Chinatown: An Illustrated History of the Chinese Communities of Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax*. Toronto: J. Lorimer, 2005. Print.

Yu, Henry. "The Parable of the Textbook: Education, Meritocracy, and Why History Matters." *"Too Asian?": Racism, Privilege, and Post-Secondary Education*. RJ Gilmour, Davina Bhandar, Jeet Heer, and Michael C. K. Ma, eds. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2012. 17-27. Print.

Zhou, Stephanie. "The Man Behind *Ultra Rich Asian Girls* Has Ambitious Goals – But Will Audiences See Past the Superficiality?" *Mochi Magazine: Enabling Young Asian American Women*, Winter 2014, www.mochimag.com/article/ultra-rich-asian-girls-tv-show-review/ Accessed 4 May 2017.

Zimonjic, Peter. "Liberal MP calls Bernier's approach to systemic racism in Canada 'foolishness'." *CBC News*. 28 May 2018. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/bernier-chavannes-racism-exchange-1.4681593 Accessed 10 Sept. 2018.